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Faculty Senate Newsletter, January 2011

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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President’s Message

Brutus, when consigning Caesar to eternity, seeks attention from friends, Romans, and countrymen, asking them to lend them their ears. Had he been living in Baton Rouge in 2011, he might well have added to that list “coalitions.” The Flagship Coalition being the newest among the many supporters and compatriots seeking citizenship in the Tiger Empire. Brutus, of course, was himself not the most dependable of friends; he called for numerous “ears” knowing well that listening would be a wise strategy in turbulent times. He offered a list of affiliated parties—friends, Romans, and countrymen—suspecting that maintaining more than one set of supporters increased the likelihood of safety, possibly of success.

Over the course of the last six months, the nature of the economic and political threat to higher education, especially to the LSU campus, has waxed, waned, morphed, and metamorphosed—not just once, but many times. In that short period of time, LSU, like its sororal campuses around the state, has had need of many kinds of supporters, including a few articulate faculty members. The “crisis” induced by the budget has not been only one crisis, but many sub-crises, with many of those being partly the product of recesssionary times but also partly the product of decades of mediocre management. At each hitch, jump, or turn in the budget crisis, faculty, staff, and administration alike have been tempted to jump aboard one or the other solution bandwagons. Over time, however, the sustaining of various scenarios and the cultivation of assorted supporters has proved the most successful way to minimize turmoil.

Those concerned with faculty governance—not only on the LSU campus or the LSU System campuses, but around the state—have thus welcomed the initial overtures of the new Flagship Coalition. Many of the initiatives presented by that somewhat dispersed body arise from good sense and are long overdue. Especially commendable are proposed changes in procurement, management, maintenance, and capital outlay (building) procedures. Initial proposals, however, are only part of the story, and so it is that LSU faculty governance has entered into a productive dialogue with the upper administration in the hope of clarifying other proposals pertaining to work rules, benefits, compensation, staff job security, the coherence of the statewide higher education program, and, perhaps most importantly, the mission of the University, especially its mission to carry out basic, fundamental research even when that activity is not immediately lucrative. To date, the administration has been welcoming and responsive, with the result that we may expect additional clarifications and better-defined initiatives as our supporters overcome their bashfulness with regard to scrutiny by higher educational professionals.

Coach Curley Hallman used to observe that, in football, it was necessary to win inches before one could win yards. It may be that we need one supportive coalition before we can get two, three, or four. The balance of influences that maintains the comprehensiveness of a research university will be best served by the ideologically averaging that results from a multiplicity of supporters. As that multiplicity develops, faculty governance will remain vigilant, ensuring that all efforts to support the University remain congruent with its goals, missions, and values.

With all good wishes,
Kevin L. Cope, Faculty Senate President

The Ten Most Difficult Course Offerings

Those who believe that “DFW” signifies a major airport are in for a rude awakening. In the acronym-saturated world of student recruiting and retention, that long-dignified tri-letter combo now represents the rate at which the grades D and F and the status W (for withdrawal) are conferred on students. Through the wizardry of spreadsheets, we are able to identify the top (or maybe bottom) ten courses in the University when it comes to production of these grades (we leave it to our readers to ascertain the meaning of that ranking: whether it represents rigor by pedagogues, sloth on the part of students, statistical flukes, or some force that, like dark matter, gravitates through these classes. The courses, from number one through number ten: Economics 2000; History 1003; Mathematics 1022; Chemistry 1201; Biology 1201; Mathematics 1021; History 2055; Mathematics 1022; Geology 1001; and Mathematics 1550. The victory of these courses was absolute in that they not only topped the five-year average but appeared on the top-fifty list during all five years of the analyzed period.

RSVP

Lead With Experience

LSU Graduate to Spearhead RSVP Initiative

LSU graduate and former LSU staff member Karen Powell has joined the Capital Area United Way as the manager of the new “RSVP” (“Retired Senior Volunteer Program”) initiative, which triages talented members for the retired and near-retired community into public service programs where their skills are urgently needed. Contact information concerning an advertisement for this worthy program, which will surely also build community good will toward LSU: Karen Powell, kpowell@cawulf.org, 225-382-3519.

LSU System President Lombardi Addresses, Mesmerizes Faculty Senate

2011 opened with a major event at the Faculty Senate: a visit from LSU System John Lombardi, who devoted over an hour to enlightening, answering questions from, and otherwise dazzling both faculty members and Senate guests. Addressing every aspect of the budget crisis and envisioning LSU’s future in his erudite, sometimes soft and sometimes satiric way, Lombardi cautioned demoralized faculty not to pay heed to every irrational utterance emanating from the educational apparatus but, instead, to maintain poise, focus, and purposiveness. As is the case with all Senate meetings, the Lombardi event has been video-recorded and is available for general consumption and public edification. This worthy video may be viewed directly or via the “meeting video” page of the Senate web site. The Lombardi appearance occurs in the video for January 20th, 2011 at approximately seventeen minutes and fifty seconds into the recording.

Statewide Higher Education Budget Proposals Posted to Web

In a laudable moment of inter-system cooperation, LSU System President John Lombardi has developed, with the endorsement of the heads of the University of Louisiana System, the Louisiana Community and Technical Colleges System, and the Southern University System, a set of documents and proposals suggesting ways in which Louisiana higher educational institutions may weather the economic storm and laying down the break points at which financial exigency must be declared. One of the most clear-headed arrays of proposals to come forward amidst the fog of budgetary war, the proposals diffuse false threats and identify the verifiable menaces with clinical precision. The proposals may be viewed either via the LSU System web site or via the Faculty Senate web site by clicking the link on the big budget information box.

University Retention Committee Formed

The number-one neglected revenue source for higher education is the retention of students. To the achievement of that end, the permanently percollating Saundra McGuire has created a new University Retention Committee that counts seventy or more no-nonsense academic professionals and policy wonks among its members. McGuire has subdivided this battalion into five companies dealing with academics, administration, engagement, campus life, and the ever-present deans. The public kick-off of this initiative will take place at a “Provost’s Seminar” organized by McGuire on February 8th (see the advertisement in this issue of the Newsletter).

Speaking of retention: Vice-chancellor for Student Life and Enrollment Services Kurt Keppler reports that the retention rate among students living in residence halls tops out at 89%, well ahead of LAGRAD Act-based hopes (in comparison to an overall retention rate in the first year of 84%). It looks as if it’s time to break down some regulatory barriers and start constructing dormitories.
 ADMINISTRATOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT
James Frazier, Associate Director

For Associate Director of Purchasing James Frazier, there’s no place quite like Louisiana. A native of Baton Rouge, Frazier spent seven years out of state while holding positions at East Carolina and the University of Houston. Commenting on how he felt to return to his roots, Frazier says, “I couldn’t wait to get back.”

While most of the LSU community may not have met Frazier face to face, nearly every person across campus has likely benefited from his efforts. Whether it is an order for text books, paper supplies, catering, equipment for janitorial staff, or for any of the myriad items and services that keep LSU functioning day in and day out and year to year, all purchases the university makes ultimately go through Frazier’s office. Though proud to serve LSU in this capacity, Frazier is quick to downplay the critical service his office provides. Frazier recalls, for instance, seeing with his own eyes a mass spectrometer that his office purchased. “Everyone in our office likes to see that we played a small role in bringing things of that nature to the university,” he says with sincerity.

Frazier’s fondness for serving the LSU community reaches back to his undergraduate days. An LSU graduate with a degree in Kinesiology, Frazier worked as a student equipment manager for the late Jeff Boss, for whom the football team’s locker room is now named. When Frazier came back to the area, switching careers in the process, he started out as an entry level purchasing coordinator. Where some may have been put off by the challenges a career change presents, Frazier feels fortunate to have been able to serve the people of his alma mater. “The people at LSU are what make this university great,” he comments.

Frazier’s responsibilities are not as straightforward as one might think. For starters, the Office of Purchasing must contend with state rules and regulations when drawing up large purchasing contracts. Frazier observes, for instance, that state law restricts the majority of contracts to three years, while others may be for five. As a result, one contract or another is usually in the pipeline. Moreover, the university is sometimes at the state’s mercy should the government decide to cancel a contract. Such was the case with LSU’s office supply contract with Corporate Express, which the state terminated in April of last year.

Like each and every department across the LSU system’s campuses, Frazier’s administrative team has had to contend with the ongoing budget crisis. For the Office of Purchasing, this has meant dealing with restrictions on what may or may not be purchased in general. And like many other administrators who have been directly or indirectly affected by the crisis, Frazier’s attitude is stoic. “Just like any department,” he observes, “we are doing the best we can with what we have.” Above all, Frazier’s focus is on the people whom he serves throughout the LSU community. “We’re trying to make sure that we deliver outstanding service to all the departments and professors who need our help in purchasing items,” he declares.

Regents Color Code Grad Act

Never reluctant to search for improbable metaphors, the Board of Regents has quietly begun its review process for the LA GRAD Act, the legislative decision that ties tuition increase authority to an assortment of measures, especially six-year graduation rate. Institutions will be cyclically color-coded, rather like those old-fashioned floodlights that shine through rotating glass color screens so as to change the hues of aluminum Christmas trees. Those institutions performing at a satisfactory level at any given time will be coded green (the Kermit-aware Regents being well aware that “it isn’t easy being green”); those on probation will be coded yellow; those on suspension get an orange pallor; and those headed for revocation of tuition authority will be handed the red card. Not content with only this simulacrum of the Bush-era color-coded threat levels, the Regents have created an elaborate table in which colors, scores, and assorted “metrics” interact in a way worthy of Paracelsus and Pythagoras. Fans of accountability will be pleased to learn that all of the foregoing will be calibrated with salary histories for major administrative officers (thus importing yet another type of green into the equations), although it is unclear whether the Regents staff will be included in the complicated disclosure table.

Regents Fumble New Programs Initiatives: Revisit Elimination of Curricula

Life has been something less appealing than a bowl of cherries down at the Board of Regents office. January opened with the preparation of a list of endangered curricula, some of which had been granted parole or probation or extensions only a few months earlier but all of which were once again in jeopardy. This program, a more insidious replay of its predecessor in 2010, seems calculated to make the Regents look dynamic and thrifty but will surely issue in costly and time-consuming assessments, evaluations, and discussions. The third and most serious gaff at the top level of higher education administration remains the ongoing blunder of avoiding any kind of faculty involvement in the search for a new Commissioner of Higher Education—yet another failure for transparency and for the use of the state higher education talent pool.

Rolling Policy Review of PS Document Under Consideration

Many of LSU’s policy statements remain egregiously out-of-date. Although policy statements are meant to age very, very slowly, they do eventually become obsolete as changes work their way through the cracks in our kudzu-covered halls. To date, the usual method for revising “PS” documents has been to wait for a calamity and then recalibrate the pertinent policy so as to forestall any similar future problems. Sources tell us that this spurious, impromptu procedure is very back-woods and that we may soon see a program of rolling policy review, with all policies coming under scrutiny according to an explicable if not rational schedule.

Los Angeles Faculty Conference Discusses Future of Higher Education

In a move to rebuff economic and political threats to higher education and to articulate a vision for collegiate study that moves beyond workforce development and that underlines the value of basic research, liberal arts, free inquiry, and the pursuit knowledge, academic from twenty-one universities recently convened in Los Angeles to develop an alternative vision of the future of higher education that is not subordinate to industrial or other economic agenda. Involving faculty members from twenty-one states, the event celebrated faculty self-determination and reminded administration nationwide of fundamental values of the academy, including the commitment of academies to the life of the mind. Details are available on Insidehighered.com, as is a link to the manifesto of this new syndicate of learners.

Faculty Governance Committee Membership

Several colleagues have asked about the procedure for joining a committee within the faculty governance system. Each spring, Committee on Committees Chair Louay Mohammed (Louaym@lsu.edu) solicits volunteers for the various committees that allow our university to operate efficiently and competently. Anyone wishing to serve on a committee should contact Louay. Some committees are open to any and all volunteers; others assign seats to members of specific colleges according to procedures outlined in the constitution and bylaws of the Faculty Senate; still others are staffed by election; and a few arise on an ad hoc basis to deal with specific tasks.

CIO Brian Voss Showcases Musical Talents

Setting an example for employee care by sponsoring a magnificent if economically-aware holiday party for his devoted helpers, Chief Information Officer Brian Voss has revealed yet another accomplishment in his accordion-devoted helpers, Chief Information Officer Brian Voss has revealed yet another accomplishment in his accordion-devoted helpers, Chief Information Officer Brian Voss has revealed yet another accomplishment in his accordion-devoted helpers, Chief Information Officer Brian Voss has revealed yet another accomplishment in his accordion-devoted helpers, Chief Information Officer Brian Voss has revealed yet another accomplishment in his accordion-devoted helpers. In Los Angeles to develop an alternative vision of the future of higher education that is not subordinate to industrial or other economic agenda. Involving faculty members from twenty-one states, the event celebrated faculty self-determination and reminded administration nationwide of fundamental values of the academy, including the commitment of academies to the life of the mind. Details are available on Insidehighered.com, as is a link to the manifesto of this new syndicate of learners.

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Second Faculty Summit in Alexandria Draws Big Turnout

The LSU Faculty Senate has sponsored a second statewide summit meeting on the status and influence of faculty with respect to Louisiana higher education. Following up on the initial “mini-summit” held on December 4th, 2010, this meeting, which convened on January 22nd, 2011, attracted nearly fifty Louisiana educators from all four higher education systems and from many campuses around the state. Keynoting the event was Sara Zimmerman, executive director of LOUIS (Louisiana Online University Information Service), who spoke about both the future and functions of LOUIS and the challenges faced by statewide services to higher education. Following Zimmerman’s ovation-attracting presentation, the conferees divided into three discussion groups, each of which tackled three different topic areas relating to the governance of Louisiana higher education, the public image and communication challenges of college educators, and the economic, working, and lifestyle challenges besetting the professionals in Louisiana institutions of higher learning. A large contingent of staff members also joined with the professors in an attempt to find common ground and develop joint plans and programs. Also in attendance were representatives from the Louisiana Association of Educators, the American Association of University Professors, and the Louisiana Federation of Teachers. The conferees created several committees that will continue to work on these topics and that will present both reports and action strategies at the next statewide meeting later in the spring.

REDSTICK RESTAURANT REVIEW: MANSURS ON THE BOULEVARD

By Carl Freedman

I have sentimental reasons for liking Mansurs on the Boulevard, since it is—and will always be—the first restaurant where I had dinner with the woman to whom I am now married. But I liked Mansurs long before that delightfully fateful meal. There were, after all, reasons that I chose that particular restaurant for that special dinner date (admittedly, one of them was that Mansion Lacroir—previously reviewed in this space—had been closed for the evening).

When Mansurs first opened in 1989, I took to referring to it in conversation as “like Jaban’s, but even better.” That still seems to me an accurate description—though, in fairness, I should add that Jaban’s has a somewhat more relaxed and luxurious atmosphere as well as the best bar in Baton Rouge. But the actual food at Mansurs is, I think, measurably (though not overwhelmingly) superior. Like Jaban’s, Mansurs is an upscale restaurant that specializes (but not exclusively) in seafood, with a pronounced southern Louisiana inflection—without, however, quite being a Cajun/Creole restaurant of the traditional sort (for example, gumbo is on the menu, but jambalaya and crawfish étouffée are not). My personal favorite among the main courses is probably the redfish, roasted (and served) on a cedar plank with lemon caper butter—as good a version of this exquisitely delicate and quintessentially Louisiana fish as I have eaten anywhere. But the various “visiting fresh fish” are nearly always worth trying too, and I doubt that any restaurant in town serves better broiled lobster. If you find yourself at Mansurs but not in the mood for fish or shellfish, I would especially recommend the steaks, the veal Oscar, or the “Duck Mansur” (roasted and topped with a blackberry sauce).

The starters and side dishes tend to be excellent too. The charbroiled oysters and the “Acadiana egg rolls”—the latter an ingenious fusion of local and East Asian culinary traditions—make particularly good appetizers; and my wife, a connoisseur of spinach salads as I am not, assures me that the version on offer here (a warm spinach salad with a bacon-and-shallot vinaigrette, topped with feta cheese) is among the best she’s tasted. Special praise is due the macaroni and cheese at Mansurs. Though the recipe varies somewhat, it is most commonly made with smoked gouda; and it is guaranteed not to remind you of anything you might find in a rectangular box on a supermarket shelf.

The service is first-class as well. In my experience the servers are consistently courteous, efficient, and helpful—and particularly full of good advice regarding the excellent wine list, without being in the least condescending. One measure of a restaurant is how (or if) they fix the mistakes that are bound to occur occasionally at even the best places. I can recall only one occasion at Mansurs when there was a serious problem with my food: a plate of otherwise delicious “shrimp Vacherie” (stuffed with seafood, lightly fried, and topped with a spicy hollandaise sauce) that had somehow been allowed to sit until it was at room temperature. When, in response to her query about the food, I informed the waitress of this unfortunate blunder, she apologized at once and within a few minutes had cheerfully replaced it with a brand-new—and piping hot—order.

I have only one significant complaint about Mansurs: the annoyingly loud piano music that often fills the air. The quality of the play does not suggest a future at Carnegie Hall for the performers, but that is not even the main point. I love good piano music in an appropriate setting, say in the concert hall or on my iPod; but, when I’m trying to enjoy dinner and conversation, I would not care to be distracted even by Horowitz or Glenn Gould or James Booker banging away at the keyboard. The management of Mansurs evidently thinks that play by infinitely lesser talents enhances the dining experience. But I think it does the opposite; and, in any case, the quality of the food, wine, and service is such that no further enhancement is needed.

Mansurs on the Boulevard is located at 5720 Corporate Blvd. in Baton Rouge; phone: (225) 923-3366. Reservations are advisable.

Cotton Bowl Scores Increase in Applications

Final figures have yet to come from the umbrellas in accounting, but it appears that LSU’s victory in the Cotton Bowl has triggered an application rush from students in the Dallas area who would like to come to LSU and partake of its miraculous merger of sport and savannery. With those students will come four or more years of tuition. We await the numbers. Meanwhile other numbers are in, and those numbers are better than stereotypes suggest.

At the American Football Coaches Association meeting in Waco, LSU was recently recognized as one of forty-two institutions that graduated 75% or more of their football players, a rate that would, if it were extended across the institution, produce instant, multi-year compliance with the LA GRAD Act.

Board of Supervisors Pays Large Post-Season Compensation Awards

Without the blink of an eye or the throwing of a penalty flag, the LSU Board of Supervisors reaffirmed its policy regarding post-season compensation for football coaches involved in Bowl Games. That policy, which can be viewed online, allocates 8% of salary to coaches involved in non-BCS games, which, in the case of our head football coach, would come to around $300,000.00, with the more visible assistant coaches bagging in the $20K–$30K range and with an extensive definition of “coach” attract- ing handy holiday gifts for an assortment of pigskin- pushing para-professionals. No mention has been made of a good idea: a stabilization surcharge on these wind- falls for the betterment of a university whose mana with the people makes the collection of bonuses possible.

Rainmakers Program Up for Revision

Rumors are circulating that the old “Rainmakers’” program may be revised so as to honor not the alleged top 100 faculty of the year but rather to floodlight six colleagues at junior, mid-career, and senior levels—three each in the sciences and in the humanities and liberal arts orbits. While those categories may tend to marginalize some disciplines, they represent a turn from faith to reason, the first Rainmakers program being constructed atop the remarkable assumption that chairs and “unit heads” infal- libly pick the best faculty for procedure-free awards.

Board of Supervisors Approves Green Acres-esque Hill Farm

Among the many touching efforts at the December LSU Board of Supervisors meeting was the approval of the master plan for the Hill Farm, a Green Acre or two adja- cent to the Lod Cook Hotel. Landscape architects with an LSU pedigree used powerful graphics programs to syn- thesize a vision of an installation that would make Stow, Sissinghurst, or Blenheim look like third-rate highway rest areas by comparison. While it is refreshing to see that at least the LSU System office has some palatial ideas and is free of the Philistinism of public higher education, it is less refreshing to note that no completion date was set for the plan.
JAIRO ALVAREZ ADDRESSES FRIENDS OF SPANISH STUDIES
By Gaines Foster, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences

Jairo Alvarez, a successful home builder in Baton Rouge, addressed a crowded room of students Wednesday night. Sponsored by the Faculty Senate and the Friends of Spanish Studies, Alvarez held his audience's attention with his enthusiasm and humor. Most important, his compelling personal narrative gave credence to the theme of his talk, how to overcome adversity.

Alvarez grew up on a small farm in Columbia, where his father insisted on education and instilled fundamental values that continue to shape Alvarez's life. He graduated from Columbia's national military academy, fought guerillas in its jungles, and then became part of the presidential guard. Recruited by anti-democratic forces hoping to overthrow the president, Alvarez spent several months working as a double agent to prevent the coup. Its leaders were arrested but later freed—and then threatened to kill Alvarez. Fearing for his life, he left for the United States. In Albany, New York, he worked at menial jobs, taught himself English, and graduated from college. He then returned to Columbia, where he succeeded in business, married, and began a family. Believing that he would have greater opportunities in the United States, he returned, this time to Baton Rouge. He failed in four businesses before in his fifth he became one of the city's foremost developers.

After telling his personal story, Alvarez offered extensive advice on how to overcome adversity. He discussed various general laws and outlined what he called his "Triple A formula"—Accept, Adapt, Action. In pursuing all three, he stressed the importance of a positive attitude and of helping others. Alvarez also shared his father's advice: "Ask yourself if it is right—then do it faster and better than anyone else."

Alvarez's presentation not only offered practical advice, Alvarez himself provided an engaging and inspiring example of Hispanic influence in Louisiana.

LSU Automates Emergency Contact Phone Line

In the good old days—when those were—those who needed to make an emergency contact with LSU with LSU could dial up 578-3202 and find a friendly voice ready to articulate directory assistance information. Alas, the voice of LSU has apparently been replaced by, if not a machine, then by the same saccharine quasi-feminine voice that seems to blabber on every robo-call or voice-activated menu. Said robo-voice also evidences a distinctively administrative bias and a taste for sales in that it provides direct access information for such out-and-out subversive-oriented services as admissions, the registrar, the bursar, and parking, finally arriving at something that looks like an academic activity, "TT" way down on the fifth menu option, after which callers are quickly diverted to a web site. Presumably never without a smart phone capable of displaying LSU's screen-challenging "LSU A-Z" menu, wise faculty members will never find themselves in the compromised position of the newsletter editor, who was stuck in an Office Depot parking lot and unable to obtain authorization to purchase stationery supplies because unable to extract the correct telephone number for Accounting Services from the robo-voice (the day was saved when resource-consuming calls to other offices and to the good Samaritans who inhabit them led to a party willing to search for the requisite number).

IT Services to Stage First “Techpawloosa”

Louisiana State University Information Technology Services will host its first TechPawLoosa event on Thursday, March 3, 2011 from noon until 5pm in the LSU Student Union Royal Cotillion Ballroom.

TechPawLoosa is designed as an opportunity for LSU students, staff and faculty to interact with and learn about the technology being utilized on campus to enable research, teaching and learning. Technology vendors will be on hand to demonstrate how their products are enabling the classroom and IT support for higher education; they will bring the latest desktops, laptops, i-devices and other new mobile devices. Faculty will showcase their use of technology in teaching, research, and broadening the student perspective on learning. The Center for Computation and Technology will showcase exciting research, such as a tactile table with video game class finished projects, digital media animation, and a student built high performance computing cluster. Numerous presentations will be made regarding how the use of innovative technology is enhancing productivity and communications in the academic and administrative departments. Interactive areas will allow the student to engage with technology and learning!

LSU faculty, staff and students in attendance will be eligible for door prizes including an HP laser printer, Dell laptop, MS XBox 360, Adobe software, display screen, T shirts, books, dining certificates, LSU Athletic Department gift packs, and memory keys. Check on the ITS Facebook event site for a chance to win a Samsung Focus with Windows Phone 7 by responding "I'm Attending" As well, students may compete in a poster design contest for a chance to win Adobe Creative Suite Design Premium. This event will be fun, engaging, and a chance to meet with those in the field of technology today.

TechPawLoosa involves participation from LSU's Center for Computation & Technology, Communication across the Curricula, Division of Continuing Education, LSU Libraries, and the IT Residential College. TechPawLoosa is sponsored by LSU Information Technology Services, Adobe, Antares Technology Solutions, Apple, AT&T, Capital Area Corporate Recycling Council, Creative Presentations, Dell, Lenovo, Lynda.com, Microsoft, Symantec, and Turning Technologies. Additional information may be found online.

SACS Redefines General Education Competence

Those who follow LSU's non-stop adventures in accreditation (and those who recognize that accrediting boards induce what should be a violation by costly demands that divert funds from accreditation-worthy teaching and research) will be darkly amused to know that our accrediting board, SACS (The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) has redefined competence so as to avoid hurting the feelings of the incompetent. Sources who require anonymity have advised the Newsletter that the new definition of general education competence hinges on "institutional awareness" of the level of general education competence among its students. By these criteria, an institution that is "aware" that it is doing a poor job in educating its students could outpace an institution that produces Einstein after Einstein without the requisite rumination.

Faculty Senate President Publishes Article on Budget Vetting and Management Process

It is perhaps a marker of the perversity of our times that the stress and strain of the budget cutting process should now become a topic of scholarly study, yet much is to be learned by an analysis of the cultural and psychological dimensions of the budget-cutting and management process. Faculty Senate President Kevin L. Cope has recently published such a study of the budget-trimming and budget-management process and mentality in Louisiana Communication Journal 12 (2010): 81–91.

LSU Foundation Rebounding From The Recession

Although numbers are still sketchy, it appears that all measurable indices relating to the LSU Foundation, from giving to productivity of investments, are taking an upward turn after a recession that was not as damaging as it could be. Congratulations to Foundation head General Bill Bowden for superb management and for concentration of efforts in difficult times.

LSU Early Retirement Buyout Extended A Year

If there were ever an exercise in well-intentioned futility, it is that being undertaken by assorted LSU System campus chancellors in their attempt to save money through early retirement options. At its December meeting, the Board of Supervisors of the LSU System approved a request from LSU in Shreveport Chancellor Vincent Marsala to extend for another year the early retirement buyout program. Marsala means well, as does his partner in this inadvertent crime, David Manuel, Chancellor at LSU in Alexandria, but cannot succeed in a state that limits buyouts to half of annual salary savings (by law) and to $25,000.00 (de facto). Meanwhile, across the Sabine River, Texas is offering buyouts that tally to two or more years of salary, as reported by the College Station newspaper.

Governor Jindal Appoints WOW Winery CEO to Board of Regents

It appears that the Jindal regime holds a grudge against poultry. After sponsoring the development of a chicken “processing” plant (i.e., slaughterhouse) in north Louisiana, Jindal appointed the WOW Winery CEO to the Board of Regents while LSU officials . Then, to top it off, and with Faculty Senate collaboration, the state-answered LSU administration selected the founder of Cain’s Chicken Fingers as summer commencement speaker. It is a dark day and an evil era for gizzard-bearers.
Mr. BLACKWELL RESURRECTS
The Ten Best-Dressed Men On The LSU Campus

In the new safety and security video being promulgated by the LSU Campus Police, the alert professor who saves her students is appraised in faded jeans and a feminized guayabera, making the point that, over the course of the last several decades, academia has tended toward a kind of faux casualness in which laboratory lairds and classroom tyrants affect a dismissive slovenliness in an attempt to pass as ordinary people or to suggest that the life of the mind overshadows all other concerns. The sad consequence of this otherwise amusing behavior is the loss of iconic power with respect to audiences, including taxpayers and legislators, who equate sartorial splendor with suitability for support. Fortunately, the trend toward scholastic bohemianism seems to be reversing. Today’s LSU campus provides a runway for more than a few fashion phenoms who evidence good taste and who, in their various ways of dressing well, epitomize the variety and inventiveness that characterizes a great university. To help these wardrobe avatars in their quest to improve collegiate costumery, the Newsletter herewith unveils the ten best-dressed men in the LSU family. “Ten” is interpreted loosely; some obvious candidates, such as Ourso Business School Dean Eli Jones, have been set aside owing to their professional obligation to look good, as the aforementioned power-dresser always does; other positions in the top ten have yielded dead-heat ties and are therefore occupied by more than one party. Some may wonder whether a worst-dressed list or a top ten lady dressers list might be forthcoming, to which the editor answers that a gentleman must keep his secrets. Here, in reverse order, with ranking explanations, are the “top ten” tog-toters on our campus!

NUMBER TEN. Agriculture School Dean KENNETH KOONCE. Dean Koonce knows delicate drapery and situational appropriateness. Dignified in bearing and fond of light plaids, the Dean chooses clothing that savors of fresh air and sunshine. Free of frills, Dean Koonce can take a simple blazer and wear it with a refined aplomb, combining both the vigor of the field and the deftness of the flower. He is kept at number ten owing only to the need to cultivate a larger audience, the viewer being as much a part of the fashion experience as is the wearer.

NUMBER NINE. Former Staff Senate President and Education School Assistant Dean CHAD GOTHREAUx. Assistant Dean Gothreaux, a champion for worker’s rights and a staff rather than faculty member, demonstrates by his dress the importance of upward mobility and staff self-improvement. Always appareded in a suit with an unexpected but subtle weave or pattern or adorned with a jacket in an offbeat but tasteful color, Gothreaux appears as an epiphany from the unexpected. Like Dean Koonce, he is held back only by the lack of an adequate audience, which he is now successfully cultivating through his statewide travels.

NUMBER EIGHT. Music School Alumni Professor BILL GRIMES. While it is true that a shabby old emperor might be tricked into buying non-existent new clothes, this king of swing evidences a marvelous transparency. He carries his attire with an ease so great as to suggest that his robing has no weight and spins out effortlessly from his soul rather than from any notion of more ranks to hold all these geniuses!

NUMBER SEVEN. English Department Professor and Newsletter restaurant critic CARL FREEDMAN. Inhabitants of LSU’s main quadrangle cannot help but be familiar with the ever-identifiable Carl Freedman, whose mix-and-match combinations of tropical accessories and linen-look suits nominate him as the spirit of quasiall elegance. Daring Freedman never hesitates to challenge cultural boundaries, accenting Nicaraguan slacks with a Hawaiian shirt or donning a Key West hat while sporting a Panamanian jacket. On the bubble for higher rank, Freedman is the most developmental of the candidates as his look continues to diversify but he may want to test a wider range of weaves and fabrics.

NUMBER SIX. A three-way tie: Vice-Provost GIL REEVE; Engineering Professor FEREYDOUN AGHAZADEH; and Mass Communications Professor CRAIG FREEMAN. How can the wit of mankind distinguish between three such examples of excellence? In Gil Reeve we find experimentalism—with warm-colored suit tones—the cocoa browns, the olive greens—coupled with a conservatism of cut and yet slight rustickity of design that suggests the emergence of a new Ralph Lauren. In Fred Aghazadeh and his tasteful suits, likewise, we sense an appealing confidence and quiet competence that expresses itself in the under-explored pastel range of the olive palette. And in Craig Freeman we find a peppy deployment of blazers with color-squawking ties, expressing both vitality and a readiness for every situation. The only deficit in this bankroll of fashion judgment is the lack of more ranks to hold all these geniuses! (continued on page 6)

Senate Legislation Passes Grading, “W” Policy, “Just Say No” Core Curriculum Resolutions

Several major policy initiatives received passing votes during the January 2011 Faculty Senate general meeting. After several months of debate, the Senate lent its approval to the draft of PS–44 developed by Senate Vice-President Pratul Ajmera and several consulting faculty members. PS–44 clarifies the rights and the duties of faculty members with regard to grading and the assignment of grades and lays out protocols for emergencies that may prevent a faculty member from teaching. This draft will now advance to the Office of Academic Affairs, where it has received preliminary approval. In response to requests and presentations from the Student Government Association, the Senate approved Resolution 10–13, which adjusts “W” policies by allowing an extra day for students to try classes before finalizing registrations and which brings LSU policy in this area closer to policy at comparable institutions. Resolution 10–16, passed under the sponsorship of Kenneth McMillin, affirmed LSU’s support for the “just say no” resolution invented at LSU in Shreveport and subsequently passed by many campus Faculty Senates. This resolution urges administrators not to cooperate with state government in the counterproductive manufacture of budget scenarios for outslandish budget reductions. Resolution 10–17, also stewarded by Senator McMillin, calls on the Governor, in parallel with Resolution 10–16, to show more and better leadership in discussions of higher education budgets. Finally, Resolution 10–19, affirming LSU consent to the new college preparatory core curriculum that leads to admission to LSU, elicited unanimous support.

LSU Police Department Initiates Shooting Awareness Training

For several years, the LSU Faculty Senate has been seeking an assessment of the overall safety of the campus, especially of lecture hall and classroom settings. Under the leadership of LSU Police Chief Lawrence Rabalais and LSU Police Sergeant Kevin Scott, a new training program designed to prepare faculty, staff, and students for “active shooter” incidents has been unveiled to an assortment of campus leaders. Featuring both video training and PowerPoint guided learning, the curriculum will soon be made available to all members of the LSU community and should be considered a “must” for anyone concerned with preventing campus violence.

Chancellor-Senate Forum Planned

As the budget crisis morphs and otherwise takes new turns, the LSU community has begun raising questions about the next changes of course for the Flagship University. Hesitant to turn a crisis into a circus, the Faculty Senate has been set aside owing to their professional obligation to look good, as the aforementioned. Resolution 10–16, passed under the sponsorship of Kenneth McMillin, affirmed LSU’s support for the “just say no” resolution invented at LSU in Shreveport and subsequently passed by many campus Faculty Senates. This resolution urges administrators not to cooperate with state government in the counterproductive manufacture of budget scenarios for outslandish budget reductions. Resolution 10–17, also stewarded by Senator McMillin, calls on the Governor, in parallel with Resolution 10–16, to show more and better leadership in discussions of higher education budgets. Finally, Resolution 10–19, affirming LSU consent to the new college preparatory core curriculum that leads to admission to LSU, elicited unanimous support.


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Tip of The Month: The Abita Mystery House and UCM Museum

Occasionally professors, students, and staff leave behind the laboratory and library to wander far afield in the Louisiana hinterlands. Such pilgrimages remind standards-obsessed academics that “normal” only works in the classroom or the examination hall and that the restless deviant energies of our people will always irradiate our culture. Faith in the wonderful union of the perverse and the diverse that is our state may be revived by a visit to the Abita Mystery House and UCM (“you see ‘em”) Museum, which is located just off the main roundabout in the historic district of Abita Springs, in a converted old-timey filling station. This dazzling edifice has two parts: a reception area and gift shop filled with nostalgic offerings that make the Cracker Barrel shop look like the Hall of Modernization; and a hall of novelties that, among other things, features an astounding array of animated mechanical dioramas that conjure up the gothic sensibility of the south (there are plenty of sharply satiric miniature ghost houses). Although the museum is open to all, one of its strong suits seems to be closures, especially bottle caps from the ancient days of soda jerks and bootleggers as well as from historic micro-breweries. Those who appreciate the diversity of art will relish the collection of perfectly rendered paint-by-number canvasses; indeed, experts in promotion and tenure policy will be challenged upon learning that this museum was founded by an independently-minded artist who parted early in his career from Tulane University owing to “differences regarding aesthetic principles.” The prodigious, wondrous, and miraculous find a home here. One may view a vintage airstream trailer that has suffered a crash with a UFO; one may see an astounding number of hybrid and chimerical creatures that have sported off the reptilian line in unprec edented directions. When the visit is complete, a short walk or drive takes one to the Abita Brewery pub, there to savor Louisiana’s best fermentations. This is a visit that will equally appeal to wholesome families and to outright freaks—and all for $3.00!
Wm. Shakespeare's

PERFORMANCES AT SHAVER THEATRE

DEB ALLEY

DIRECTED BY

WM. SHAKESPEARE

SWINEPALACE.ORG 225-578-3527

FEB 2–FEB 20, 2011

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