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Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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$President’s Message$

Nearly two months have slipped away since LSU completed a football season that produced an astonishing record of victories: a record that, even without a national championship as garnish, must surely count as a super-size main course in the greatest of sports. Remarkably, what lingers from the past season is not the sweet aroma of victory but rather something of a bad taste. Football, like most sports, allegorizes the institutions that sponsor it. Identifying the reason that one of the greatest seasons in sports history is creating only a paucity of post-season joy is a good way to figure out what might be going wrong with Louisiana higher education.

As is evidenced by the fervor with which adoring fans have defended the late Joe Paterno, a scuffle or scandal here or there seldom sours an audience. History will eventually show whether “Joe Pa” was a good or bad man. What his story now teaches us is that a charismatic figure with a bit of cultural savvy (and academic snobbery) can stir up hope, enthusiasm, and support even when knocked to the deck. When we look at the leadership of the LSU football program, on the other hand, we find little in the way of vision, solidarity with the home institution, or even plain old warmth. Whether or not the leaders of the gridiron gang develop wise strategies, the strange introversion that contrasts with LSU’s sports success seems to undo any good will that an undoubted record of achievement produces.

The shortfall of sympathy and gregariousness among the pigskin princes analogizes the character of not only LSU but most Louisiana institutions of higher education. Over the last several decades, Louisiana’s schools have metamorphosed from isolated encampments to major urban institutions. By and large, campus administrations—which, like football teams, come under opposing pressure from both down-home culture and from national aspirations—have not been able to keep pace with the maturation of colleges and universities. Campuses all over Louisiana have developed complex, multi-constituency operating environments characterized by vigorous dialogue, something new and still threatening in easygoing Louisiana.

Under pressure from target-seeking legislators who look for and attack failure, hobbled by small legislative and lobbying support, campus administrations tend to play it safe, turn inward, and avoid public disagreement in even its most mild forms. Collectively, Louisiana higher education suffers from what might be called “glass-jaw syndrome.” Political circumstances allow the delivery of only minimal punches while even mild blows raise fears of terrible consequences. Higher education management thus plays a two-quarterback system with only one quarterback. It must develop robust faculties, programs, and research records but yet it remains nervous about experimentation. In such an environment, even the support coalitions that do good work for the campuses develop a high degree of uniformity and conformity as well as caution, as if every player on the team were a defensive lineman.

Louisiana’s universities need to come to grips with the public culture and the tradition of vigorous debate that made western universities the greatest in the world. Before we start talking about flagships or about restructuring or about anything at all, we need to create the social and cultural foundations of institutional greatness. Reducing the flow of diverse ideas also allows the governor and the legislature to set one campus against another—the equivalent of building an entire season on in-state rivalries and rent-a-win teams—thereby discouraging statewide solutions. Structural changes—a new offense—are needed, but not in the form of shuffling campuses from one system to another or kicking up turf wars. What is needed is a new species of administrator who is skilled in inter-campus exchanges and adept at faculty relations. We need a few folks who can call the big play, who can go deep and otherwise take risks safe in the knowledge that even when failure is probable, the people and even the opposition will applaud courage more than censoring and will always give their support to those who try.

$Jindal-Sponsored Legislation Imposes Heavier Burden on Retirees While Raising Retirement Age and Reducing Benefits$

Mortarboards went whirling when the governor announced his latest plans for the reform of retirement programs in Louisiana, which, far from liberating academic employees and universities from the payment of tribute into the notorious unfunded accrued liability, would increase the degree of centralization and the level of taxation demanded by an allegedly “conservative” regime. Included among the Jindal proposals, expressed in HB53 along with circa ninety other bills, are a three percent increase in employees contributions (also known as a “tax” except when imposed by a neo-conservative administration, in which case the term “fair share” is substituted); a delay in retirement age to sixty-seven; reduction or elimination of cost of living adjustments; and a complex scaling down of benefits via assorted adjustments in retirement benefits and procedures for those under the age of fifty-five. Unintended consequences would include a gigantic number of retirements among state employees between the end of the legislative session and June 30th as affected employees retire before deadlines pass. However cynical the retirement reform undertaking might be, the situation “on the ground” is only about half as severe as it might be owing to the heavy participation by academic employees in the beleaguered Optional Retirement Plan (“ORP”), which is not affected by this legislation. The LSU System campuses offer a case in point. Of the 25,000 employees, approximately 13,000 are exempt from these new charges and restrictions owing to age, to participation in the ORP, or to participation in other programs. Some types of campuses are affected more than others, with the lion’s share of affected employees abiding in the hospitals and medical facilities. None of this is to say that the situation is a good one or that the retirement problem is solved, for the problems with the ORP and the unfunded liability continue. Newsletter readers should also take heart in the establishment of a new working group on the retirement problem which is enjoying some behind-the-scenes success in negotiating with decision-makers (more on that in later issues of this publication).

$Regents, Rockefeller Moving on College Readiness$

Probably the number-one problem in Louisiana is that of maintaining a steady stream of college-ready students who can be retained without grading standards deteriorating and who require no remedial education. In a promising move, the Board of Regents, in collaboration with PARCC (the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), has received and is in the process of deploying a three-year grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in the sum of $200,000.00 per year for the purpose of developing a “core to college” program that would ensure that students arrive at college equipped with basic skills (such as mathematics and English) as well as in a state of overall college readiness. As is often the case with Regents projects, the deployment procedures run on for many pages and invoke a bewildering range of acronyms, but the overall goal and purpose seems sound. Additionally, the Regents will allocate $35,000.00 to each participating university for “CITAL” (Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning) funds in order to provide university faculty with professional development pertaining to the Common Core State Standards and new Louisiana Department of Education evaluation tools for teachers and leaders (COMPASS) (only the Regents could deploy two new acronyms in a single paragraph). We have high hopes for a program that may increase in focus as it develops.

$Regents Ask Higher Ed Administrators for Cost Analysis of Projected Reduction in Applicants to StateUniversities$

No one could ever accuse the Board of Regents of doing anything in a loudly public way. So it is that this temple of discretion has quietly directed university system heads to develop “admission criteria transition plans” by midsummer. It being an axiom among connoisseurs that quality and quantity are inversely related, the wits atop the Claiborne Building have deduced that the increasing admissions requirements for Louisiana universities may reduce the number of applicants headed for our kudzu-covered halls. System chiefs have asked their counselors to assess the possible economic and, with that, curricular impact of what Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell, in a directive dated February 1st, denominated “the new normal.” It appears that the Board of Regents will not only receive but will adjust—meddle with—the plans, or, as the letter says, “aggregate the various approaches” (never underestimate the power of the princes of the profession to produce mixed metaphors worthy of a John Donne or a George Herbert). Some of the areas that system heads and their counselors have been directed to address include mergers of programs, degree eliminations, employee/position reductions, faculty recruitment with limited compensation options, and “impact of inflation on base level core support.” The development of these “transition plans” is obviously a matter that will require close monitoring as faculty are again called on to do the impossible: produce more degrees with fewer students and little support.
ADMINISTRATOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT
Brian Nichols, Interim CIO

LSU may be forever, but the people who keep the cogs of its hallowed halls running smoothly are not. A fact of university life is that students graduate, researchers land jobs at other institutions or in the private sector. The same holds true for LSU's administrative staff. Of course, universities don't shut down when a key person leaves for other pastures. Rather, existing personnel are frequently asked to take on additional duties while the university conducts a national search for a replacement.

Brian Nichols, interim Chief Information Officer, is such a person. Nichols, who normally serves as Executive Director of Administrative Services and Risk Management, began overseeing ITS on top of his regular job when Brian Voss left to head up the IT department at the University of Maryland.

Nichols' job as interim CIO is hardly a walk in the park. IT administers the entire LSU network and runs the back end of all of the university's mission critical systems, including payroll, Human Resources, and Student Financial Aid. In addition, Nichols oversees the support role ITS plays for computer labs on campus and for faculty, staff, and students. On top of this, ITS works in close concert with the Center for Computing and Technology (CCT) and manages LOUIS and its sister system LONI (Louisiana Optical Network Initiative), each of which provides researchers at Louisiana's universities statewide access to digital materials.

Despite the daunting tasks that all of these duties present him, Nichols has not shirked from his responsibilities as interim CIO. Far from it. 'This is a great opportunity to help LSU, to serve the university, to keep it moving forward,' he says. Nichols is aware that keeping the wheels of LSU's IT systems moving forward while also overseeing the migration of the university's email servers from the data center to the cloud is no small task. In addition, he is assisting with the purchase of a new supercomputer that will replace the now aging Tezpur.

Part of Nichols confidence in his position as interim CIO may stem from his days as a student worker in LSU's ITS department in the 1990s, a job he continued full time upon graduation. In addition to a Bachelor's of Science in Microbiology, Nichols also holds a Masters in Management Information Systems with a concentration in Internal Audit. Nichols sees a strong connection between the education he received at LSU and the skills that are necessary to perform well in his current positions as CIO and Executive Director of Administrative Services and Risk Management. 'It really gave me a chance to work with lots of people in management in Higher Ed,' Nichols observes.

Like many of LSU's administrators, Nichols is fiercely loyal to the university, its traditions, and its people. 'I believe in the purple and gold;' he says. Nichols is also aware of the challenges that the Flagship university faces in a state that is sometimes better known for the Saints and the tourist culture that has grown up in the French Quarter: 'there's just so much more to Louisiana than that,' he says fervently. Such a perception can add to the difficulties any university sometimes has in recruiting new researchers and administrators and retaining them when presented with opportunities elsewhere. Yet Nichols remains optimistic about the value that LSU provides to the state as well as the part that each member of the community plays in making LSU a great university: 'We have an opportunity as an institution to continue to be a leader in everything that we do, be it the academic side or the administrative side.'

UL Intellectual Property Policy Proposed Without Faculty Input

T.S. Eliot opined that April is the cruellest month, but February 2012 was surely a non-Valentine event for those researchers in the University of Louisiana System who create intellectual property. Launching first at McNeese State University but then gaining momentum statewide, the draft policy, which can be viewed online, seems to authorize University of Louisiana system officials to intrude as co-signatories on any and all "IP" contracts and to grab up to a sixty percent of book royalties, inventions, or anything else that professors might devise. Unprecedented in higher-education history, the draft policy would give the cash-strapped University of Louisiana System the right to approve any and all publishing contracts and to confiscate royalties earned on books used in an author's classroom. Even more remarkable was the attempt to implement this policy through campus committees with no or minimal faculty involvement, committees that included only a mix of administrators and auxiliary operators such as bookstore managers. The normallyintroverted University of Louisiana System was taken by surprise when the story went viral, emerging as headline news on The Chronicle of Higher Education. University of Louisiana System Brad O'Hara scrambled to link the draft policy with allegedly similar policies in other higher education systems such as that of Louisiana State University, but O'Hara cited no particulars (those particulars have also eluded the eyes of Newsletter editors). Fortunately, the "IP" policy eruption may be headed into a dormant phase. One campus is already declaring that policy interpretation and implementation procedures be developed by an "appropriate committee" and that the University of Louisiana System policy gives the campus President authority over "stewardship" of intellectual property. "To steward" not meaning the same as "to seize," professors may be cautiously hopeful that the University of Louisiana System is in the process of backing away from a policy that would put the damper on the intellectual productivity that it ought to be encouraging.

ASH Committee Making Headway on Bevy of Issues

The LSU campus Admissions, Standards, and Honors Committee, colloquially known as "ASH," has been on a productivity binge. Following up on a suggestion from retention czarina Sandra McGuire, ASH has endorsed a new policy regarding readmission standards for re-entering students. In response to a request from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, ASH has been researching assorted questions relating to the scheduling and economics of intersession classes and expects to file a report soon. ASH has decided that the "repeat-delete" policy might be a good idea but is also investigating questions pertaining to the implementation of such a policy. The dual enrollment initiative, a program intended to smooth the route from the best high schools into college, has emerged as a larger challenge than anticipated but is also eliciting a favorable response from ASH committee members pending analysis of the mechanics of such a program. Following up on a resolution now being considered in the LSU Faculty Senate, ASH has indicated initial favorable disposition toward a "plus-minus" grading system but is also probing alternatives (such as the University of Wisconsin grading system, which deploys intermediate grades such as "AB" or "BC"). Finally, ASH has created a new online mechanism for the submission of proposals that will soon debut on the new ASH website. One could not ask for more from any committee!

Vice-Provost Reeve Tapped to Serve on E-Learning Task Force

The transfer of UNO to the University of Louisiana System has resulted in some reassignments and new appointments for the various committees and task forces that operate in and through the Board of Regents. The latest adjustment involves the appointment of LSU Vice-Provost Gil Reeve to the E-Learning Task Force, an entity in the Regents' office that monitors and promotes online education and that eventually may enjoy a higher profile than it presently receives. Reeve, whose expertise in matters related to accreditation cannot be doubted, should be a strong advocate for the quality of online education, but faculty members will need to keep an eye on this committee. As reported elsewhere in this issue, faculty in the Southern University System have expressed grave concern about the impact of e-learning options on the maintenance of the character of institutions and on the completion of institutional mission. E-Learning has also been a flash point with regard to faculty compensation and working conditions, with some suggesting that e-learning will create the next generation of professional sweatshops.

Jindal Appoints Lawton to Higher Ed Board Position

With the passing of Ben Mount, the LSU System lost a distinguished representative from overlooked South-west Louisiana. Replacing the buoyant Mount is oil tycoon Jack Lawton, of picturesque Sulphur, home base of Bargain Bee group coupons and economic center of the aforementioned decentralized region. Yet another Jindal appointee to a higher education management board, Lawton, whose family gave its name to the "L Club" alongside LSU's Tiger Stadium, shows promising signs insofar as his service to the Center for Coastal Conservation indicates an acquaintance with rural Louisiana. The future will provide Lawton with an opportunity to show that the ancient traditions of variety that have given Louisiana its merit will overcome to push to uniformity that characterizes state government in recent times.
MOVIE REVIEW: The Descendants (Alexander Payne, 2011)  
BY CARL FREEDMAN

Editor's note: Louisiana faculty are noted for the multiplicity of their talents and indomitable- 
ness of their spirit. So it is that, after a pupation period as a restaurant critic, our ever-Pygammon- 
ing columnist Carl Freedman has returned to our pages, this time in an ever-more-glorious 
form as a movie reviewer. Freedman hopes to keep our readers up-to-date on the best and 
the worst in current as well as historic cinema and to keep the tickets vending and the DVDs 
dispensing through his persuasive cultural commentaries. Welcome back, Carl, and, readers, 
enjoy this first informative review of The Descendants!

People often complain, quite justly, that Hollywood cinema is far too larded with special ef- 
ects, explosions, car chases, and fart jokes. Wouldn’t it be nice—so you think—if there were 
more films about human feelings and human relationships? But then, just as you think that, 
Alexander Payne makes a movie about human feelings and human relationships, and you 
find yourself wishing for special effects, explosions, car chases, and fart jokes.

Is this judgment a bit too harsh? Perhaps. But About Schmidt (2002) seemed to me almost un- 
watchably bad, not least because it amounted to the professional funeral (or burial) of a once-great actor, Jack Nicholson— 
not to mention the shamefully weak use it made of Kathy Bates, a fine and underrated actress. As to Sideways (2004), Payne’s 
most widely discussed effort, my first reaction to it was an inability to look at the bottles in my wine racks without feeling 
slightly sick. A few more viewings, however, did convince me that it could actually have been a pretty good film had it starred 
someone with an acting style less annoying than Paul Giamatti’s.

Payne’s latest film, The Descendants, has two strengths: some pleasant cinematography of three of the Hawaiian islands 
and a strong starring performance by George Clooney, a first-rate actor now in his prime. Clooney plays Matt King, a wealthy 
attorney and the scion of a large Hawaiian family whose haole (i.e., white) roots in the islands go back to the middle of the 
nineteenth century and whose Native Hawaiian roots go back centuries earlier than that. As the film opens, Matt’s wife is in 
a coma caused by a boating accident. The doctors tell him that there is no chance she will regain consciousness and that, by 
the provisions of the living will she had signed, the life-support machinery must soon be disconnected. Before he can come 
to terms with becoming a widower and the sole parent of two daughters (one 10, the other 17) to whom he has never been 
close, he learns that his wife had been having a torrid affair and was planning to divorce him. Meanwhile, he is tasked with 
administering a complex (and potentially very lucrative) land deal for his extended family.

Summarized thus, the film’s set-up may seem promising. The problem is that the writing is so lame that none of the human 
drama ever becomes real. The film wants us to believe that Matt develops a better relationship with his daughters but can’t re- 
ally show us how that happens. The daughters themselves are defined mainly by cliché (though the older one has a boyfriend 
who initially seems to stereotype teenage slack but who turns out to have more depth and sensitivity than we expect); the 
land deal is supposed to mess around with the family problems, but the connections are entirely forced, without much 
intellectual or emotional logic. Most of the (very slow) action of the movie, in fact, concerns Matt’s attempts to track down his 
wife’s lover, though it never seems clear, even to Matt, exactly why that is such an urgent task.

The only genuine drama of the film, in fact, is Clooney’s mighty battle with the abysmally bad screenplay. Again and again this 
hugely talented actor struggles to supply the complexity and emotional subtlety that the writers were unable to achieve and 
and about which Payne himself (a co-screenwriter as well as the director) appears simply not to care. Clooney does a heroic job, 
but even the greatest actors are limited by their material. I doubt that Laurence Olivier at his best could have made Matt King 
seem interesting, important, or actual.

I will end with a detail that, though minor in itself, nicely illustrates how clueless a filmmaker Payne can be. There is a won- 
derful moment in Hitchcock’s North by Northwest (1959) when Cary Grant, on the run from the bad guys, crashes through 
the window of a young woman’s room. When the woman sees only that someone is breaking in, she yells “Stop!” in tones of 
shock and fear. But then, when she sees that the man in her bedroom is Cary Grant, and that, from trying to molest her, he 
is dashing through the room in order to get out the door as quickly as possible, she repeats, “Stop!”—this time in a pleading 
voice dripping with sexual desire. Payne has a chance to achieve something a little bit similar in a scene where Matt, taking 
his leave of the woman married to his wife’s lover in a social situation that formally calls for a handshake or, at most, a friendly 
hug, instead takes her in his arms and kisses her right on the mouth. A director paying much attention to his own film might 
be outraged when faculty members are being branded as cranky 
for inquiring into connections, reciprocal or other- 
wise, between campus executives, boards, and interest 
groups, a provocative study in The Chronicle of Higher Ed- 
cation explores this very topic and defines a host of con-
flicts and ethical problems. In its January 20th issue, the 
Chronicle raises questions about campus executives who 
son boards which exert influence on campus or system 
decisions. The story is available online(note: purchase or subscription may be required to view the entire story).

Newsletter Restaurant and Movie Critic 
Carl Freedman Appears on Major Radio 
Talk Show

Fans of Carl Freedman’s restaurant and now movie re- 
views will rush to the online podcast of Carl’s appearance 
on the hit WRKF morning talk show, The Jim Engster Show. 
Carl has recently released a new book, The Age of Nixon: 
A Study in Cultural Power, which has the over-forty nation 
jumping, which makes a great gift for the fan of mid-cen- 
tury strong men, and which has future historians waiting to 
be born so as to read this already essential book once they 
get through graduate school. Freedman’s lively 
broadcast can be experienced by visiting the WRKF web 
more than a few faculty members were startled 
with a less than an hour before the center of the movie’s situation: 
the Descendants, for the most part, is a dramatically comatose film.

Secrets of the Policy Statements: Mixology in the UL System

Last month, the Newsletter began a new feature, “Secrets of the Policy Statements,” that revealed little-known, unusual, or 
quirky aspects of the rules and regulations that govern higher education in Louisiana. This month, “Secrets of the Policy 
Statements” looks at University of Louisiana System policy number FB-IV.VII.-1, which governs the dispensing of alcoholic 
beverages on University of Louisiana campuses. What immediately strikes the reader about this policy, seemingly crafted 
for the most part, is a dramatically comatose film.

LSU’s Francioni Hall Hazards Cleared

The law of unintended consequences never spares LSU. 
Everyone applauds the erection of a new agriculture 
building adjacent to A. P. Turaud Hall on the LSU cam- 
pus, but more than a few faculty members were startled 
with a less than an hour before the center of the movie’s situation: 
the Descendants, for the most part, is a dramatically comatose film.

LSU’s able traffic czar, Gary Graham, came to the rescue, 
arranging for the contractor to resolve the access prob- 
lems. Thanks, Gary, for lending a hand to those in need.
Letter to the Editor: RE: Southeastern Provost Attempts to Align Tenure Evaluation with LAGrad Act Criteria

By Richard A. Schwartz, President of Faculty Senate in Southeastern Louisiana University

An editorial appearing in the January 2012 edition of this newsletter highlighted the concern of many that performance expectations for universities stemming from the Grad Act may lead to undesirable consequences that defy the sanctity of the learning process and the values that we, as educators, hold true. Indeed, as suggested in the editorial, reducing rigor in the classroom or otherwise ensuring that students remain in good standing, regardless of their true level of achievement, is one means through which universities can realize increased retention and progression rates (i.e., Grad Act criteria).

But, let’s not be foolish. Above the fog and hysteria created by the Grad Act, where rational thoughts void of reactive emotion are possible, a maneuver by a university’s administration with the goal of placing achievement of Grad Act performance goals above achievement of excellence in the classroom, no matter how cleverly disguised, would be easily recognized and met with scorn and contempt by faculty. (A public lynching would occur and resolutions of condemnation by faculty senates across the state would ensue. Wouldn’t it?)

To recap, the opinion presented in the editorial was based on a memo by Southeastern’s Provost, Dr. Tammy Bourg, to a committee to be tasked with the responsibility of reviewing Southeastern’s tenure, promotion, and annual evaluation guidelines. The committee was formed, in part, due to a resolution passed unanimously by the Southeastern Faculty Senate on February 9, 2011. The resolution can be found at the following link:

http://www2.selu.edu/Academics/Depts/FacSen/resolution101106.pdf

The editorial condemned Dr. Bourg for using the Grad Act as the backdrop against which the review should proceed. I served on the committee along with ten other educators from many disciplines whose concern for student achievement and respect for the profession are unquestioned within the Southeastern community. With full knowledge of the process, I offer the assurance that the referenced memo, merely one among many documented communications with Dr. Bourg, presents an incomplete view of the committee’s charge, especially if considered by itself.

Generally, the committee’s responsibility was 1) to better understand why many students become disconnected, stop out, or drop out (an issue confronting all institutions of higher education), 2) to identify the essential parts of faculty members’ jobs that may address the problem in new and effective ways, and 3) to communicate what is found through adjustments to guidelines that provide direction and inform practice. From the outset, the sentiment of the committee, one also shared by Dr. Bourg, was that we were addressing a matter of concern in a substantive way that has been, and will continue to be, a focus of all of higher education. From this perspective, the Grad Act was moot. A review of the explanatory notes submitted with the revised guidelines best reflect the spirit of the committee’s work. Excerpts are provided below and the entire text may be found on the Southeastern Faculty Senate website at:


“The committee believes that the new language reflects the essence of teaching. Further, the literature suggests that faculty activities reflecting engagement, purposive guidance, support, and interaction promote retention, progression, and completion.”

“Based on the presentations of committee members and consideration of the literature…engaging and supporting students, providing guidance, and interacting with them…are important activities of all faculty (whether in the classroom or outside of it), and we, as a committee, would argue that these activities more than adequately capture the essence of mentoring.”

“New language has expanded the definition [of professional activity] to place greater emphasis on the need for student involvement/participation with faculty in scholarly pursuits. As with teaching, the literature suggests that engaging students through involvement/participation in research projects (e.g., for publication, for class) engenders a ‘connectedness’ to classmates, faculty, their discipline of study, etc., that promotes retention, progression, and completion.”

“New language…further expands the definition of service, especially service to students…language was kept…to create an emphasis on approachability, understanding, ability to listen, caring, willingness to guide, and general rapport, all of which are qualities that promote retention, progression, and completion.”

If providing language in tenure, promotion, and annual evaluation guidelines that place a degree of weight on teaching, professional, and service activities that lead to student persistence (i.e., retention and progression); then so be it - even if doing so might be considered “alignment” with the Grad Act. To assert that less rigor in the classroom will occur is misguided. To the contrary, the revised language in the guidelines encourages faculty members to reconsider their roles as teachers and professionals with regard to fostering student engagement and connectedness, and assists in providing a shared understanding of the true scope of their jobs.

As I alluded to above, the committee intentionally distinguished and kept separate the Grad Act and our task of revising the tenure, promotion, and annual evaluation guidelines, with the support of Dr. Bourg. We discussed several times in committee meetings that educators have seen “Grad Acts” come and go, but our tenure and promotion policy should be written in a way so as to transcend time and circumstance.

In sum, after months of labor, diligence, research, and discussion of the most important aspects of faculty members’ jobs, the committee revised Southeastern’s tenure, promotion, and annual evaluation guidelines in the manner envisioned by Dr. Bourg. Further, I believe that the revised guidelines will continue to promote and recognize true excellence among faculty, place a new emphasis on creating an engaging learning environment, and hopefully cause students to place more value and greater weight on staying in school versus dropping out.

On a closing note, I would like to thank Dr. Kevin Cope for his willingness to listen and provide this opportunity to make others aware of our true effort. Keep up the great work Kevin!
Consulting Firm Showcases Elaborate, Alarming Presentation on “OneLSU” at Shreveport Civic Center

Given the frequency with which, in Louisiana, six-figure consulting contracts are doled out to firms in parts unknown, the unbiased observer would conclude that our money-flinging state is in the midst of a gold rush. Lavish but sterile spending reached a new high point with not only the release of a portfolio of proposals for the restructuring of higher education management in north Louisiana but with the rental of a high-ticket facility in Shreveport for the sole purpose of unveiling the proposals to an audience that may have been smaller than anticipated. The first step in this curious pageant was the commissioning of Eva Klein Associates, a firm whose principal partner bills herself as a member of a “niche real estate development firm” and as someone “focused on the Global Knowledge Economy.” Primary authorship of the report was credited to the MBA-enhanced Ms. Klein and to a businessman, with academic personnel appearing in the report only in a spotty list of interviewees. Chief among the proposals was the consolidation of Louisiana Tech and LSU in Shreveport; absent from the report was any mention of the traditions of these campuses or, for that matter, of the development and fundraising advantages of a campus with some sort of identity with which donors may identify. Release of the report occurred in a strange ceremony at the Shreveport Civic Center, with Minden-based celebrity physician and cardiology clinic entrepreneur Phillip Rozeman mixing the roles of Moses and Hoss Cartwright as he unveiled a series of PowerPoint slides advising the local academic tribes of their past error and future promise while also proposing to rustle LSUS and LaTech out of their corrals and into a new hybrid academy. Also among the slugs in Rozeman’s six-shooter were thoughts concerning medical education in Louisiana, a business in which Rozeman is more than a little concerned.

Reading the richly-illustrated an expansively produced Eva Klein report reveals additional surprises. In the January issue of this Newsletter, alarm bells were rung when political hired gun James Carville took aim at regional campuses in the state and lambasted assorted challengers who were not present to defend themselves. The Eva Klein report not only acknowledges this and other attempts to rearrange (or raid) campuses in south as well as in north Louisiana but combines those attempts in a new logo, “oneLSU,” a new concept that the report associates with the doings of LSU’s Flagship Coalition. Truth having the bad habit of announcing itself, the Klein report thus raises unanswered questions about the relation between booster syndicates at north and south Louisiana as well as about faculty input into the barrage of allegedly objective reports.

Those who have time or interest or perhaps perverse curiosity may enjoy viewing the strange but also alarming Rozeman presentation via a convenient online link. Meanwhile, the LSU System has issued a memorandum reminding members of the higher education community that changes such as those proposed must be accomplished through public debate rather than through private negotiations. Lombardi has established a work group to evaluate and respond to the Rozeman proposal; LaTech and the University of Louisiana have yet to take action. Mathematicians are invited to calculate how much of a raise might have been provided to LSUS faculty by using the funds expended on this project (and its Cannes-style premiere) to support faculty salary increments.

Memo by Former System President Supports Researchers’ Rights to Intellectual Property

Those who have been following the latest batch of intellectual property controversies in Louisiana universities have reason to celebrate the reappearance of a letter written in the not-so-distant past by former LSU System President Bill Jenkins, who, despite his stubborn insistence on erroneous policies in LSU System document PM-35, nevertheless knew what motivated and what impaired researchers. Drawn up from the archives of the IP equivalent of Charles Dickens’s Ghost of Christmas Past, the letter affirms that the LSU System recognizes that faculty “should, in most cases, own and possess certain exclusive rights of copyright to the scholarly, pedagogical, and educational works that they create while employed with the University” and adds that “such works generally include books, articles, lectures, theses, dissertations, other literary works, works of art or musical compositions” as well as, specifically, materials generated in the offering of “Distance Learning.” This powerful and comprehensive state should put to rest claims by University of Louisiana System Vice-President Brad O’Hara that the University of Louisiana System policy proposal resembles that of the LSU System. Also in question are new policies on various campuses that allow for involuntary taping and podcasting of faculty lectures. Retroactive thanks are due to Bill Jenkins for affirming the intellectual property rights of faculty members.

LIFESTYLE FEATURE

Cultivating for the Cultured, or, the Seeds of Affluence

In the old days, long before the invention of “TurboTax,” a name implying that those nasty taxes that Caesar Augustus levied on the holy land could be as fashionable as jet engines and formula one racing, the first postal delivery day after Christmas brought a mailbox full of Internal Revenue Service forms. Nowadays, with the tax man and his forms safely locked up in Gramercy and Lutcher requires tedious navigation. After something of a communications delay, the Newsletter has learned that the Faculty Senate of Southern University in New Orleans has delivered a blistering letter to the Southern University System administration advising System managers that faculty members have rejected a contract with Education Online Services for the provision of online instruction. The letter scours Southern head-quarters for violating faculty rights, contravening faculty control over the curriculum, making “unrealistic” revenue projections, and ignoring critical elements in the contract, including the question of faculty compensation. The letter further warns that development of an exclusively online “brand” negates the mission of an “HBCU” insofar as it eliminates the “nurturing environment” and “quality education” that leads to minority advancement.

Live Webcam, Time Lapse Video Show Off Progress on Billion Dollar University Medical Center

Always able to make the aesthetic best from an economically curious situation, the nimble web designers in John Lombardi’s LSU System office have created yet another internet marvel in the form of a direct link to a webcam stationed adjacent to and apparently above the construction site for the billion-plus University Medical Center. Accessible via a direct link or via a large button on the LSU System web site, this ultra-cool invention from “Atelier Lakeshore” offers an up-to-the-minute view of the sprawling, machinery-laden hospital venue as well as a time-lapse simulated movie showing long-term action and progress. Also worthy of a view is the link button currently on the LSU System site, which features a bright yellow, hard-hitting, hard-hat-style stencil font suggesting sturdy longshoremen swinging pickaxes and singing not the blues, but the LSU System anthem.

LSU Begins Colossal Internal Study and Review of Student-Athlete Experience

Nicked by a few mishaps but nevertheless less than a few miles from the goal of admirability, LSU and its athletic apparatus have commenced a colossal internal study and review by way of demonstrating that most prized of modern characteristics, pro-activity, to the NCAA. Under the able management of Professors Kelly Rusch and Stacia Haynie, the latest mega-committee on the LSU campus pushes fifty members drawn from every corner of a competence-intensive institution. In addition to a steering committee, the review battalion includes sub-committees on the student-athlete experience; on gender and ethnicity; on academics; and on fiscal management, the latter including LSU Faculty Senate president Kevin Cope and LSU Faculty Senate Secretary George Stanley.

Southern University (New Orleans) Faculty Slams Online Program

Never has news traveled quickly from new Orleans to Baton Rouge; perhaps passing all those levee bonfires in Gramercy and Lutcher requires tedious navigation. After something of a communications delay, the Newsletter has learned that the Faculty Senate of Southern University in New Orleans has delivered a blistering letter to the Southern University System administration advising System managers that faculty members have rejected a contract with Education Online Services for the provision of online instruction. The letter scours Southern head-quarters for violating faculty rights, contravening faculty control over the curriculum, making “unrealistic” revenue projections, and ignoring critical elements in the contract, including the question of faculty compensation. The letter further warns that development of an exclusively online “brand” negates the mission of an “HBCU” insofar as it eliminates the “nurturing environment” and “quality education” that leads to minority advancement.

Kelly Rusch, NCAA Review Co-Director
Burpee’s strong point has always been marigolds, with old W. Atlee Burpee having indulged a lifelong mania for the produc-
tion of a pure-white species of same, yet today a paltry ten varieties of this most diverse of plants barely speckle the Burpee
pages. Park Seed, although also a voraciously gigantic concern that has lately gobbled up novelty plant vendor Waynes Gard-
dens, does a bit better than Burpee by emphasizing plants adapted to warmer weather and by pitching to southern garden-
ers. Unfortunately, recent years have seen too much of an emphasis on Park’s “whopper” varieties, varieties in which fruit or
flower size outstrips both flavor and disease resistance. Park has also made too strong a push for gardening products such as
patented seed starting systems—systems that seldom work as advertised and that trap customers into a single coordinated
line of products and replacement components.

A cultural spinoff from the “nostalgia” companies such as those in the Shumway emprise are the handful of companies that have colonized the “organic” market in the same way that acquisition-hungry Whole Foods has conquered chain after chain of specialty grocer. Chief among these new eco-entrepreneurs is Seeds of Change, which offers only certified organic seeds, even among non-edible flower species. Seeds of Change presents the viewer with a carefully-cultivated neo-UC-Berkeley image, printing in a warm color palette and mixing in pictures of eccen-
cricities (unless they appeared undercover).

The Prairie Home Companion or The Vermont Country Store or Cracker Barrel restaurants or maybe even the Grand Ole Opry. That group of backwoods-titling gardeners has been colonized by a combine of companies that now belong to Jung Seed but that also try to maintain their separate marketing identities, all while hoovering together under the semi-ficti-
tious umbrella of the R. H. Shumway company. R. H. Shumway, who enjoyed phenom-
enaal success as a marketer of farm and vegetable products in the first three decades of the twentieth century, self-fashioned himself as “The Pioneer Seedsman” and thereby joined Justin Wilson, Minnie Pearl, Frederic Remington, and Ma and Pa Kettle

to an opted-out northern Californian from the Gypsy Boots generation, keeps plugging away with its low-priced, sturdy, and

Chairman of the committee to select the official cat of Louisiana, kìndred, does a bit better than Burpee by emphasizing plants adapted to warmer weather and by pitching to southern garden-
ers. Drawing a standing-room-only crowd, the presentation by three TRSL (Teachers Retire-
ent System of Louisiana) representatives covered the full range of retirement issues, from the raw facts about the defined contribution and the defined benefit plans to the array of retirement-related legislation slated for the upcoming Louisiana legislative session. What began as a straightforward PowerPoint summary swelled into the Q&A session of the century as well-prepared and un-
derstandably concerned faculty members pounded TRSL representatives with question after question. Worthy of note was the change in tone from TRSL representatives, who no longer defended the extant retirement plans but presented themselves as the machinery rather than the decision apparatus of the retirement dynasty. Also

Answering questions was Louisiana Association of Edu-
cators Executive Director Michael Walker-Jones. Notably absent from this event were administrative representa-
tives (unless they appeared undercover).

Faculty Senate, LSUnited Sponsored Workshop Gives Faculty Chance to Voice Concerns about TRSL

Faculty outrage over the shortcomings of the retire-
ment programs found a constructive outlet at a mid-
February event co-sponsored by the LSU Faculty Senate and LSUnited, the fledging faculty union for Louisiana academic professionals. Drawing a standing-room-only
crowd, the presentation by three TRSL (Teachers Retire-
tment System of Louisiana) representatives covered the full range of retirement issues, from the raw facts about the defined contribution and the defined benefit plans to the array of retirement-related legislation slated for the upcoming Louisiana legislative session. What began as a straightforward PowerPoint summary swelled into the Q&A session of the century as well-prepared and un-
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**Tip of the Month: Cat Haven**

Anyone who has labored long in universities knows the dangers of hothouse environments and the purebred occupants thereof. So it is that the “pet store” of old, with its purebred “doggy in the window” who commands a price (per the old song), has long gone out of fashion, leaving the purchase of pets to those with a taste for ge-
etic novelty or for blandness of temperament. Adopted animals now carry cachet. Recognizing that no less than

Cardinal Richeieu was a lover of those complex crea-
tures who fill the feline phalanx, the clever people of Baton Rouge have chartered a half dozen or more cat rescue societies. The most ambitious of these is surely Cat Haven, a sanctuary facility that, with its unique cat-appropriate interiors, offers better, more modern archi-
tecture and design than do most of the human homes in Baton Rouge. Cat Haven provides an array of marvel-
ously mixed and temperamentally diverse companions for every sort of colleague, whether the philosopher lost in nocturnal lucubrations or the kinesiologist committed to muscle and movement. Visit the Cat haven website at www.cathaven.org for adoption instructions!
Luncheon Lagniappe, the popular history lecture series at the Capitol Park Museum, is resuming March 7 with four programs covering topics related to Louisiana’s bicentennial.

March 7
Object Lessons: 200 Years of Decorative Arts in La.
Louisiana State Museum curator Katie Hall describes historic furniture and decorative arts on display in the museum’s bicentennial exhibition.

March 14
Claiborne and Louisiana: The “Outsider” as “Insider”
Louisiana State Museum curator Matthew Reonas traces the political transformation of Louisiana’s first governor, William C.C. Claiborne, from Anglo-American “outsider” to Creole “insider.”

March 21
Discovering the CSS Arkansas
Civil War historian Richard Holloway follows the Confederate ironclad CSS Arkansas in action from Vicksburg, Miss., to Baton Rouge.

March 28
The La. State Museum Civil War-Era Submarine
Louisiana State Museum director of collections Greg Lambousy presents the history of a Civil War submarine on display in the Museum’s first-floor gallery.

Location Details
The Capitol Park Museum is located at 660 N. Fourth St. For more information call 225.342.5428 or visit www.crt.state.la.us/museum.