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## Faculty Senate Newsletter, May 2012

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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# LSU FACULTY SENATE

Monthly Newsletter

May 31, 2012



## *President's Message*

The relentless flow of bad news from the state capitol leads educators around the state to assume that they can do nothing to remedy the problems beleaguering Louisiana's college campuses. In large measure, this despair is warranted, in part because lawmakers lack the incipient and sometimes superstitious respect for learning that keeps universities in large states up-and-running during even the hardest times. There are, however, a variety of steps that campuses can take to solve problems on the home turf and with that lay the groundwork not only for a quick recovery but also for better, happier, and more efficient institutions.

The number-one on-campus problem in Louisiana is old-fashioned organizational charts that sluice too many reporting lines to too few people and that thereby tempt search firms or search committees to select power-brokers rather than academic professionals as leaders. At LSU, for example, the consolidation of power in a combined Provost and Executive Vice-Chancellor that has occurred over the course of the last four Provosts has produced little in the way of academic success and much in the way of obsessive caution and pervasive intimidation. Versions of this problem plague many if not all campuses in this state. In the short term, campuses need to devolve (rather than talk about devolving) power back to Deans, colleges, and faculties, but they also should open up more lines of reporting and subdivide portfolios so that frustrated or harassed leaders can get a fair hearing and so that loyalty cults are disrupted. The present, funnel-shaped organizational chart produces an environment somewhere between the Kremlin and a kindergarten classroom, where otherwise freethinking leaders in middle management are expected to sing happy songs about consenting to everything, as if the "Soviet Man" of cold-war legend had bought a ticket to PeeWee Herman's circus.

Nearly every campus now has its fundraising apparatus, foundation, or booster operation; many have multiple fundraising arms (foundations, athletic foundations, alumni foundations). In most institutions, privatized fundraising operations are receding from public scrutiny and becoming nearly paranoid with regard to authority over their resources. Given the low-profile approach of Louisiana's academic fundraisers, it is perhaps not surprising that no one has called for the use of on-campus rainy-day funds to aid with the bailout that state one-time money and "rainy day" resources could affect. Foundations, for example, could use some of their massive resources to buy out professor's contracts or otherwise sweeten retirement deals, thereby painlessly downsizing the universities until the available population warrants expansion. Some foundations might be able to deliver a direct bailout to help their institutions during what most recognize as a rare economic event.

While regaining control of their fundraisers, faculty might also begin insisting that institutions back away from the revenue-sharing arrangements in athletic leagues. Owing to an irrational aversion to risk, LSU, for example, participates in a system in which sports revenues are annually redistributed among SEC member schools. As a result, millions of dollars that arise from the good management of LSU's sports program end up funding not academics, but sports facilities at Starkville and even Nashville. Faculty members at smaller schools can keep on asking why it is that Louisiana spends nearly forty million dollars annually to sustain athletic programs—de facto, football teams—that produce little more than injuries.

The possessiveness that keeps foundation resources out of the current financing debate also expresses itself in an unwillingness to consider whether the idea of a "comprehensive university" continues to be viable. Perversely amusingly, almost every school in this state, no matter how small, makes some sort of claim to comprehensiveness, demonstrating the emptiness of that concept. If administrators are unwilling to do so, faculty members may start a debate about whether comprehensiveness, growth, and multitudinousness of offerings are really synonymous. One reason that we have so much competition and so much bad feeling even within systems is that campus leadership remains tribal and local, thinking in terms of what is offered at the home base rather than how students move through and around the curricula in the state. The call for comprehensiveness is, in any case, always very selective; few, for example, are mounting a push to teach naval architecture at every institution.

Administrations in Louisiana are very old-fashioned in their thinking. The various honors and designations that preoccupy the current ruling class—membership in the AAU, U S News and World Report rankings, Carnegie classifications—are largely inventions of the Raquel Welch and Sean Connery generation. More often than not, they serve only to humiliate good researchers rather than to advance anything at all. A Chancellor or President or Provost who would strike out in a new direction would attract widespread applause, for the tiring rush after these meaningless ratings suggests nothing so much as the senior Adam West making a leap into a forty-year-old Batmobile. Faculty members need to speak up in search committee meetings and fight back against efforts by executive search firms to promote excessively profiled candidates.

At the core of the problem is the declining academic credibility of administrations—the Philistinism of the bureau. An interesting exercise would be the nationwide review of administrator credentials with the goal of ascertaining the percentage of major executives who graduated from historic seats of learning or who have established significant publication and research records. The lack of cultural credibility is one reason that more than a few of Louisiana's educational leaders lack the easygoing wit and personal charm to represent the higher educational project to our citizenry. Accomplishing that clever and urbane representations is also something that faculty members can do.

## **Southern President Hosts Summit with Faculty Governance; Endorses Proposed Inter-Email System**

In a surprise move toward, if not openness, then at least input, Southern University System President Ronald Mason encouraged Southern University Faculty Senate President Sudhir Trivedi to assemble faculty leaders for a frank discussion of strategies to minimize both the size and the impact of possible budget cuts to Louisiana higher education. Doing what no other System chief has yet done, Mason attended a summit comprised of Trivedi, Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates President Jim Robinson, and LSU System Council of Faculty Advisors Chair Kevin Cope, also inviting faculty members to observe the discussion. Taking any and all comments and accompanied by his note-taking legislative liaison, Mason received an array of suggestions and processed a challenge from Kevin Cope regarding the creation of an inter-system email list of all Louisiana higher education faculty that would allow for quick mobilization of colleagues when pending legislation calls for input. Cope agreed to present a resolution calling for such a list to both LSU System interim President William Jenkins (pending approval by the LSU System Council of Faculty Advisors) and to Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell in the expectation that Southern System President Mason would endorse the effort. This project is now in-process. Commendations to President Mason for making the first move!

## **Louisiana Association of Educators Distributes Jindal Recall Information**

Those who wonder whether Bobby Jindal really will reach national office or obtain a Washington appointment have asked the Louisiana Association of Educators, the parent group of LSUUnited, to make available information concerning the budding if pyrrhic movement to recall the governor. The recall movement, we learn from the LAE, maintains a [web site](#) and also has appointed a communications director: Lee P. Barrios, Communications/Media, Recall Bobby Jindal Campaign Committee, P. O. Box 1456, Abita Springs, Louisiana, 70420, telephone 985-789-8304.

## **Regents Release Preliminary Budget Cut Table**

Perpetually stuck in not the "never never land" but rather "always never land" between future expectations and backward-looking politicians, the Board of Regents has released a table indicating the differences between funding for the current academic year and the distribution of funds that would likely occur if the present slate of budget cuts win legislative approval. A look at one campus from each System will stagger the imagination. In the LSU System, LSUA faces a 4.08 million-dollar loss; Delta Community College of the LCTCS would surrender 1.39 million dollars of its state appropriation; Nicholls State, in the University of Louisiana System, would drop 7.75 million; and Southern University, in the SUS, would sink nearly 10.95 million into the budgetary whirlpool. The responsibility of releasing such news is almost enough to make one feel compassion for the Regents.

## ADMINISTRATOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### Fred Cerise, Vice President, Health Affairs and Medical Education

For the past seven years, the citizens of Louisiana have faced myriad, daunting challenges. In that time the state has weathered two major storms in Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav. More recently, the people this side of the Gulf have had to contend with the devastating effects of the Deep Water Horizon oil spill, a disaster that continues to mar Louisiana's shores and waterways and to cripple her fishing industries.

The storm clouds that threaten the state's well being also swirl over academia. One person well positioned to diagnose higher education's health is Fred Cerise. The Vice President for Health Affairs and Medical Education, Cerise oversees the LSU System's health related entities, including the Pennington Biomedical Research Center and the two Health Sciences Centers in



New Orleans and Shreveport. Cerise also keeps a close eye on the System's partnerships with affiliated non profit entities, most notably Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge. Cerise has been in the very unenviable position of seeing 600 employees from around the state lose their jobs due to continued budget cuts. "It's frustrating," Cerise says, "we've got strong programs, good people."

This is not to say that Cerise's outlook is all doom and gloom. Cerise takes time to point out the many steps forward that LSU has taken in the field of medical science and administration during his watch. He notes, for instance, that the state has been developing a statewide electronic health record system for the past five years. "It's a big deal," Cerise comments, "most community

hospitals don't have this."

In addition, Cerise talks up the high degree of collaboration between faculty who supervise the state's medical programs and administrators working on the delivery of health care services, a relationship that Cerise argues positions Louisiana to be highly competitive under the health care reforms due to go into effect at the national level. Likewise, Cerise mentions that making purchases as a system for anything from hip replacement parts to cardiac devices has helped to reduce costs. Lastly but certainly not least, the LSU System has continued to add to the body of innovative medical research despite the enormous impact that Hurricane Katrina had on resources.

The successes Cerise has had in pushing the LSU System's medical programs and services forward may be a result of his experiences both as a highly skilled practitioner and able bodied administrator for the state of Louisiana. After completing his residency in his hometown of New Orleans, Cerise came to Baton Rouge to work on the Health Sciences Center training program. He also served as both the Medical Director of Our Lady of the Lake and then as Administrator of the hospital. In 2004, Cerise became Louisiana's Secretary of Health under then Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco. He returned to LSU the following year to head up Health Affairs and Medical Education.

With a staggering \$200 million in proposed cuts headed to the senate chamber, more trouble may be brewing for the LSU system and higher education throughout Louisiana. But at the end of the day, people like Cerise remain committed to state's future, its traditions, and its citizens. Underscoring the love affair folks have with all things Cajun, Cerise observes, "Louisiana is full of people who can't see themselves going anywhere else."

"we've got strong programs, good people."

## List of Search Committee Members for Museum Director Position Proves Troubling

Last month, the *Newsletter* offered a vacuum cleaner of a report in which details were sought concerning the seemingly invisible search that led to the appointment of the new Director of the LSU Museum of Art. Information concerning that search seemed scarce even by LSU standards; indeed, no one could be found who even knew that a search had taken place. The *Newsletter* requested information; partial discoveries followed. Although the hunt for the candidates' itineraries has not yielded any documents (the probable reason being that no public presentations were scheduled despite the Director's position being all about presentations), the *Newsletter* has obtained the list of search committee members. That committee is comprised of two interim Deans who answer to the current two-year semi-interim LSU Provost; three members of the appointed LSUMOA advisory board; the "co-director" of LSU's Reilly Center, a favorite haunt of journalism administrators; the administrator of a local philanthropic foundation; and a museum staff member whose employment is not guaranteed by tenure. Nowhere in this ensemble is anyone from any of Louisiana's universities, nor are there any faculty members with expertise in the arts, connoisseurship, curatorship, or humanities. Is it any wonder that LSU has trouble succeeding academically when its most important searches are shunted off into the Office of Non-Academic Affairs?

## AAUP to Investigate Dismissal of Faculty at Southern University

Gone are the days when the proprietors of Gulf-coast universities could take shelter under the obscurity of southern venues. Nowadays, everything that happens in academe is of interest to everyone who treasures education. So it is that the freewheeling approach to procedures that has characterized the dismissal of faculty members during the financial exigency at Southern University has drawn the attention of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which has launched an investigation of the school on the bluffs of the great river. In a letter to Southern University Chancellor James Llorens, AAUP Associate Secretary Jennifer Nichols advises the Southern University leadership that the recent dismissal actions "are of basic concern to the academic community" and that an investigative committee composed of noteworthy professionals is being assembled. Nichols's letter invites cooperation from Chancellor Llorens, which we hope will be forthcoming.

## LSU University Relations Credits Faculty Governance for Debut of New Regalia at May Commencement

The May 2012 commencement at LSU marked the first full-scale debut of the new purple-and-gold academic regalia that will henceforward intensify the visual signature of the A&M campus at public academic events. The gowns had been deployed at the December 2011 degree-conferral ceremonies, but the May graduation spectacle represented the first massing of the colorful robes. Admirably responsive, the LSU Office of Communications and University Relations rewrote the commencement program, updating the section on the history and meaning of academic costumes with a paragraph crediting the LSU Faculty Senate with the design and adoption of the new finery. It is hoped that the campuses will recognize that better gowns in school colors cost no more than the sober black drapery that is all too common in Louisiana's cut-rate commencements. The LSU Faculty Senate now has extensive experience in the selection and marketing of academic regalia and will be glad to advise any other faculty senate that seeks to improve the look of its graduation exercises.

## New Department Chair Investigating Underbelly of TRSL Policy

Behind the scenes of the statewide retirement fund drama are dozens of subplots that may not always attract audience attention but that continue to amalgamate toward whatever the denouement of this tragedy might be. Waiting in the wings with a cache of new information is incoming LSU Chemistry Department Chair Luigi Marzilli, whose experience includes service on the Emory University benefits committee and whose current avocational research project is the actuarial foundation of Louisiana's retirement plans. Although Marzilli has yet to finish his investigation, preliminary audits indicate that, contrary to common understanding, a plan participant is not fully vested in the TRSL defined-benefit plan until completing a staggering ten years of service and that the reduction to benefits imposed when the plan participant names a beneficiary has been improperly calculated. Marzilli has not yet finished his probe owing to what he regards as efforts by TRSL to keep this information secret. The probe continues; a follow-up report on Marzilli's efforts will appear in the September issue of the *Newsletter*.

## LSUA Faculty to be Evaluated on Office Cleanliness in Annual Reviews

The release of the new happy-face dustpan comes not a minute too soon for colleagues in the central part of the state. An anecdotal report from a faculty insider brings news that colleagues in selected departments at LSU in Alexandria have been asked to perform cleaning chores as part of their routine academic duties. Further reports indicate that failure to clean cheerfully can lead to consequences with respect to faculty annual performance reviews. Perhaps bin-level workforce readiness and a practicum in hotel science may be required elements in the CVs of future professorial job applicants.



Happy-face Dustpan Arrives Just in Time for LSUA

## Louisiana Community and Technical College System, an Insider's Perspective

By James Mendez, Physics Instructor and Faculty Senate President at Sowela Technical Community College in Lake Charles.



James Mendez, SOWELA

It seems that faculty across the state are being bombarded from all sides. In times like these, it is important to remember that while large universities like LSU have been forced to make drastic cuts, the smaller colleges and systems have been decimated as well. The LCTCS is a system made up of 16 community and technical colleges across the state. We have traditional community colleges preparing students to continue on to four year degrees, as well as many technical campuses across the state. All of our campuses are also open admission, meaning policies like the GRAD Act provision tying funding to completion rates is extremely disturbing for many in the LCTCS.

The yearly budget cuts, along with the attack on the TRSL in the legislature, have made many of the faculty at two-year colleges very nervous. The equity raise that some of our colleges chose to bestow earlier this year was the first raise many have seen in four years. Though this attempt to recognize the fact that many of our faculty started with salaries too embarrassingly low to mention is appreciated, some faculty that I have talked to state that they would still make significantly more at secondary schools!

Despite the low compensation, the retirement system has traditionally been a significant draw for the faculty. Some colleges in our system do not even have the option to enroll in the ORP. Many of my colleagues did not even know that other institutions have this option. Compared to the bigger universities in Louisiana, more of our faculty at Sowela, and presumably other LCTCS institutions, are local. Only one person in my division is from outside of southwest Louisiana, but he has been here 20 years. For these faculty, a retirement system that required one to work in the state for 25 years to get a good return was not a problem. However, we are now seeing faculty leave in droves, and those that remain have become more and more wary.

The growing hostility towards higher education coming from all levels of government in Louisiana is daunting, but it is important to remember that all faculty in the state are in this together.

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## Regents Skirt Four-Year Faculty Input in Latest Common Course Numbering Scheme

The latest turn around the racing oval for the statewide common course numbering initiative has once again left faculty gasping in the exhaust plume. Despite an understanding among members of the Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council that an assortment of concerns would be resolved before pushing the common course numbering program, the Regents office has created an ensemble of committees allegedly composed of faculty members but has never managed to identify the members of those committees or to present their credentials. Inside contacts have indicated that these dubious panels include an admixture of two-year college faculty despite most of the transfer credit resulting from the common course initiative being destined for four-year campuses. Resisting suggestions that the old-fashioned articulation matrix should be replaced by a clear statement of intended course content and course outcomes, the Regents have attempted to fuse the two in a "Louisiana Statewide Course Catalogue" that seems to blend course descriptions with course outcomes in a blur of tautologies. For example, the description and outcome of the course "Major British Writers" is "a survey of significant British writers; includes literary analysis and writing about literature"—a summary which is exceeded in profundity only by "Introduction to Zoology: classification, structure, and function of animals." Recommendation for the next course to be included: "Regents Studies: study of the Regents featuring Regents studying."

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## Deans Kaptain and Koubek Bring Artists and Engineers Together in Inaugural "Arts Engine" Colloquium



Larry Kaptain

Fans of the "K Lady" at Alex Box Stadium associate the letter (or initial) "K" with a strikeout, but, California's "three strikes you're out" penal obsession aside, a few "K"s put together can sum up to a winning combination. Precisely that happened when two innovative deans of the "K" tribe, Larry Kaptain and Rick Koubek, bucked the norm and devised one of the most innovative programs that LSU has ever seen. Opening with a pilot multi-part workshop beginning May 14th, the K & K team's new "Arts Engine" colloquium proposes to find commonalities and opportunities joining engineering and the performing arts. Keynoting the "need for experimentation" and "interrogating assumptions," the colloquium sought to cut through intellectual, psychological, and administrative barriers to the promotion of creativity and invention. Sprinkled among a treasure-trove of stimulating workshops were plenary presentations by New York thespian Eric Booth, who enlivened the crowd with diverting exercises (including the search for common attributes in a mouse and a refrigerator, with Dean Kaptain noting the capacity to contain cheese), and creativity expert Elizabeth Longo. Koubek and Kaptain deserve the highest accolades for opening up an interdisciplinary, inter-college, and above all intellectually energizing program the likes of which Louisiana universities have never seen—and managing to do that on a shoestring budget. The promise of this program is immense; indeed, the program might be adapted for campuses around the state.

## Campus Federal Credit Union Upgrades International Wire Transfer Process

Account holders at Campus Federal Credit Union, which serves an extensive clientele of higher education employees, have long experienced frustration when attempting to transfer money earned or acquired overseas into their CFCU accounts. To date, those seeking to import money were required to transmit the sum to a transfer service in Texas, which would subsequently remit the sum to CFCU. Deviating from most international banking systems, in which BIC, SWIFT, and IBAN codes facilitate quick transfer of funds, this idiosyncratic approach to international banking led to worldwide confusion as baffled bankers in economic centers grappled with local novelty. Now CFCU has solved this problem by creating a truly international banking channel managed by JPMorgan Chase. CFCU now has its own SWIFT address from which funds can, as the acronym suggests, be swiftly sent and swiftly received. CFCU teleservice branch manager Kathy S. Mason ([KathyM@campusfederal.org](mailto:KathyM@campusfederal.org)) is the person to contact for complete information.

## SU Chancellor Calls for Action Interval; Criteria for Including Faculty Members a Mystery

The great schism by which the extant colleges at Southern University in Baton Rouge are being broken up and rearranged is already well underway, but the attendant enabling mechanism remains in the perpetual repair shop. In an attempt to conjure up the ghost of faculty participation in what Lucretius might have called "the dance of atoms" amidst those academic molecules known as colleges, Southern University Chancellor Llorens has declared an action-interval on May 29, 30, and 31 during which panels comprised of Southern University stakeholders will discuss reorganization plans. Trouble is, those stakeholders seem to be about as visible as a vampire in a mirror. Southern University faculty governance officials have not been asked to nominate faculty members to serve on the discussion panels. Given that Southern has yet to articulate criteria for the dismissing of faculty members and given that the mysteriously selected faculty members will serve on the panels under scrutiny by Southern administrators, questions concerning the legitimacy of the outcome of this workshop period are bound to arise.

## Like Button, Comments at Chronicle Show Support for Former System President Lombardi

Higher education policies aficionados look to the comments or "blog" section beneath online *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles in order to measure the real temperature of the profession and to gauge what people will say or applaud when sheltered by anonymity. Unlike most comment-blog threads, which quickly unravel into ungrammatical and illogical tirades, the *Chronicle* comments come from the best folks under the big tent of higher education. Given the critical skills of *Chronicle* readers, a large number of "likes" is a rarity. When a certain highly visible faculty activist entered the *Chronicle* blog to analyze the last moments of the Lombardi administration, the tally of "likes" hit 73, something of a record for a publication perused mostly by seasoned cynics. Catch the action at the online *Chronicle*, scrolling down to the blog entry from "philonous" to discover that the LSU Supervisors had it wrong when they opined that the ejected president lacked support among the people.

## MOVIE REVIEW: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (David Fincher, 2011)

By Carl Freedman

I should confess that, though I've been meaning to read Stieg Larsson's wildly popular novel, *THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO* (2004), and to watch the acclaimed Swedish-language film version that Niels Arden Oplev brought out in 2009, I have not yet got around to doing either. In one way, though, this omission may actually be an advantage when it comes to reviewing David Fincher's more recent English-language film. Since this version of the story is the only one I know, it should be easier for me to judge it strictly on its own merits, without worrying about how faithful it is to the book or how it compares with Oplev's movie.

I judge it to be a fine piece of work indeed; and I am surprised to say so, since Fincher is far from my favorite filmmaker. *THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON* (2008) seems to me so bad as to be almost unwatchable—even leaving aside the dubious initial decision to make a film from the worst thing that F. Scott Fitzgerald ever wrote—and *FIGHT CLUB* (1999) is not much better. As to *THE SOCIAL NETWORK* (2010), Fincher's most widely discussed movie, it is slickly competent and reasonably entertaining but (except for one or two of the performances, notably Jesse Eisenberg's as Mark Zuckerberg) nothing more than that. So I was happily astonished to find myself engrossed by Fincher's latest effort, my attention never flagging for even one of its 158 minutes.

The superiority of the film to Fincher's earlier work may derive, in part, from its generic precision. This is a solid and essentially old-fashioned mystery/thriller done as well as any I can recall in recent years. Fincher and his screenwriter Steven Zaillian make no innovations in the basic narrative structure of their chosen genre—indeed, the film is at bottom yet another version of the classic locked-room murder mystery—but the details, the surroundings, and the dramatis personae all make the genre seem fresh again. Here the “locked room” is actually a freezing-cold private island located four hours north of Stockholm. It serves as the estate of the Vangers, one of Sweden's wealthiest families. The family patriarch Henrik Vanger (Christopher Plummer, in the kind of performance that comes only after a lifetime of first-rate acting) doesn't much admire most of his relatives: “thieves, misers, bullies—the most detestable collection of people that you will ever meet, my family,” as he neatly puts it. But he did have a special fondness for his grand-niece Harriet, who disappeared without a trace forty years ago. Henrik is convinced that she was murdered. She was last seen at a family gathering on the island, and Henrik feels certain that neither she nor her corpse has ever left the island. But the puzzle has never been solved, either by a rigorous police investigation or by his own obsessive personal efforts.

So Henrik hires one Mikael Blomkvist (Daniel Craig, in a restrained yet passionate performance) to try his hand at the mystery. Mikael is a left-wing investigative journalist who has just suffered a bad setback. Exposing the misdeeds of a billionaire businessman, he was incautious enough to print one detail that he couldn't prove in court; and the resulting libel judgment has wiped out his life savings. It seems like a good time, then, for him to get out of town (i.e., Stockholm), hunker down in the seclusion of the Vangers' island, and rebuild his finances with the help of Henrik's very generous job offer.

I won't describe exactly how the plot unfolds, but you will probably guess much of the resolution before it arrives. Indeed, the fact that Harriet's body has never been found is, for any connoisseur of mysteries, a hint about as subtle as screaming sirens and flashing red lights. But no matter: as with any good whodunit, the real fun lies not in the mere facts of the puzzle's solution but in the elegance and wit with which the solution arrives. The setting is one of the film's principal elegant achievements. The icy precincts of northern Sweden are depicted so compellingly that, even if (like me) you've never been there, you feel sure that this is just what the territory must be like. I can't remember a movie since the Coen brothers' masterpiece *FARGO* (1996) that more vividly conveys what it's like to live in a very cold place; you might want to put on a sweater to watch the film. Then too, the Vanger clan make for a most entertaining group of suspects. Not only thieves and bullies but also, in some cases, Nazi sympathizers, the Vangers are just as bad as Henrik says they are; a few turn out, amazingly, to be even worse. But they happily conform to the fictional and cinematic convention—observed from Milton's Satan and Goethe's Mephistopheles to the James Bond villains and Hannibal Lecter—that truly evil characters often have a creepy aesthetic appeal (though in real life, I suspect, the worst villains are unutterably boring except insofar as they are dangerous). Still another of the film's attractions is Craig's Mikael. Though he of course solves the mystery (with some help), he displays, along the way, a winningly vulnerable quality that nicely contrasts with the air of invincibility that surrounds so many hypermasculine detectives in stories, novels, and films.

But by far the best thing in *THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO* is simply the girl with the dragon tattoo. This is one Lisbeth Salander, played by the hitherto little-known actress Rooney Mara. She did play Mark Zuckerberg's girlfriend in *THE SOCIAL NETWORK* (a fairly small role), but here she delivers a star-making performance if ever there was one. Lisbeth is a troubled young woman with a tangled history both of being abused and of striking back against the abusers. She works, occasionally, as a private investigator, checking out Mikael when Henrik is considering whether to hire him and later joining Mikael as his research assistant; and she is unlike any other character in film or fiction known to me. Though she owes something to the world-weary detectives of classic film noir—and though she shares the high-tech savvy of many more recent sleuths, like the BBC's brilliant postmodern version of Sherlock Holmes played by Benedict Cumberbatch—Lisbeth is really in a class by herself. On one level, she is nearly a superheroine: a genius detective with powers of total recall and with the ability to hack into any computer system, to pore through corporate records with the insight of a world-class forensic accountant, and to mix easily in the highest reaches of global finance. She is also a first-class fighter, whether armed or unarmed. On a different level, she is an icon of fashion and sex appeal. With her almost unnaturally slender body (at one point she explains that she has a high metabolism and can't put on weight), and with her tattoos, piercings, spiked hair, and black leather, she has constructed a look that, though partly compounded of elements of punk, goth, and S/M, is distinctively her own; and she arouses—and sometimes returns—sexual desire in both men and women. On yet another level, she is a deeply wounded human being struggling, with only partial success, to heal herself. During the fight scenes she seems as vulnerable as a buzz saw and as tender as a pile driver. Yet, in the surprisingly poignant final scene, we leave her in much the same emotional place as the shy, studious high-school girl who formed a friendship with the class president and hoped he might ask her to the prom—only to learn that he has instead decided to go with his regular girlfriend, the class secretary. I suspect we will be seeing Ms. Salander again, and that Rooney Mara's agent will be banking quite a large commission when we do.

## Dayne Sherman Delivers Keynote on Retirement Battle at ALFS Summit in Alexandria

Four times per academic year, faculty leaders, whether currently in or out of Senate office, converge on Alexandria for the statewide summit meetings sponsored by the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates (ALFS) and the Louisiana Statewide Colleagues Collaborative (LSCC). The May 12th meeting of this burgeoning statewide syndicate featured eight presentations by colleagues from campuses belonging to all four management boards. Keynoting the event was blogger Dayne Sherman, whose [Talk About the South](#) blog has stirred colleagues from every institution and whose service in the battle over fair retirement programs has given faith, courage, and hope to hundreds. Sherman laid out a dozen courses of action that even the most disenfranchised colleague can take in an effort to overcome the terrors presently besetting professionals in our state. Far-reaching presentations also emerged from Anna Hill and Paul Sylvester of the University of Louisiana at Monroe, who tackled the puzzling question of what a “regional” university might be or whether such a designation might be completely arbitrary, and from agriculturalist Ken McMillin, who helped colleagues from the ivy tower understand the role of the agricultural project in Louisiana (despite the fact that ivy seldom grows well in our state). This rich and rewarding meeting included a resolution to continue the “Alexandria Summits” into another successful year. Open to all who have a serious interest in the guiding of higher education, the next Alexandria summit will take place in late September (watch this publication for details).



Dayne Sherman

## Fulbright Officials Talk Up Merits of International Exchange Program at LSU

Rightly worried about the slow pace of internationalization at LSU, outgoing LSU Chancellor Mike Martin sponsored an long afternoon program on the possibilities presented by the Fulbright Program, which sends American scholars to assorted venues overseas, which sponsors foreign scholars seeking to teach or research for a period in American universities, and which sponsors an array of programs encouraging international exchange and research. An abundant audience heard testimonials from an assortment of alumni Fulbrighters and received revelations from Fulbright Program personnel. The visiting officials stressed the breadth and variety of the Fulbright offering, noting that persons from all stations and levels within academe were invited to apply, owing to the program's commitment to represent the full spectrum of American academic endeavor. Although the event took place under the sometimes tattered canopy of LSU A&M, the advice and invitations proffered would be salutary and welcome at any of Louisiana's all-too-parochial colleges and universities. Fulbright maintains a substantial [web presence](#) with an abundance of information, as does its contract program manager, the [Institute of International Education](#).

## Lombardi Publishes Mandeville-esque Critique of System Administration on Inside Higher Ed Blog

Students of the history of government and political theory always enjoy Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, an early eighteenth-century work in which the aforementioned puckish poet-commentator recounts the imaginary story of social insects who discover that the elimination of vice and the creation of a good society lead to the atrophy of the economy, which operates through the metamorphosis of private vices into public benefits. Mandeville wryly notes that the elimination of such vices as chemical dependence would deprive a range of professionals, from judges to social service providers, of employment. Those who thought that the use of wry but transparent fables in the Mandeville school had concluded with the expiration of the lamp of Enlightenment will rejoice in the emergence of the witty former LSU System President, John Lombardi, as the next talented fabulist in a long line of allegory experts. Never one to wait for the break of day, Lombardi's latest posting to [insidehighered.com](http://insidehighered.com) explains with fiendishly good humor yet also with a style characterized by an appealingly modern surgical sterility the steps by which cartels of mediocre businessmen connive with an assortment of administrators who have been promoted beyond their ability levels to drive out the clever class of elite migrants whom they themselves recruited to elevate the standing of their "nation" but whose talents and capacities ultimately pose a threat to the vacuous Vatican of influential incompetents.



Fable of Bees Revives

### LIFESTYLE FEATURE

#### Saving the Sloppy Seven

The "President's Welcome" in this issue of the *Newsletter* addressed an assortment of ways in which colleagues as well as citizens can take steps either to better the condition of Louisiana institutions or to lay the groundwork for improved institutions after an economic recovery. Taking those steps is emotionally challenging owing to the widespread demoralization, yet acting is probably preferable to surrendering. Some institutions, however, do show signs of surrender. A few of Baton Rouge's most venerable shops and services have begun to evidence the sloppiness that is the precursor of decline. Anyone who has lived in Baton Rouge for more than a short time recognizes that the city and the parish contain more than a few treasured offerings that merit preservation and that should not slip away in the economic landslide. This para-university environment—this array of venues and services that cultivated people use—is the topic of this column, which aims not to criticize overburdened merchants but to give specific indications as to what needs doing to save Baton Rouge's best offerings and as to how academic customers, including colleagues from around the state, may help with that curatorial project.

Probably the most endangered service in Baton Rouge is Home 360, formerly Homecare, the omnibus repair service that fields reliable tradesmen in disciplines ranging from plumbing to roofing. Home 360 (Homecare) has always been the go-to repair resource for clever if not affluent people owing to its punctuality and precision: its ability to deliver helpers on-time and to do the kind of work that arises from good training and sound experience. Lately, however, Home 360 seems to have outgrown its resources and to have trouble maintaining the same level of courtesy, aptitude, and resourcefulness that established its reputation. Workers show up late or call with excuses; occasionally, multiple workers must visit when a problem stymies an inexperienced hand. The solution for Home 360 is like that for Louisiana's universities: stop trying to be comprehensive to the point of universality and draw up a list of those specific skills in which performance may be maintained. Customers might help Home 360 by asking the service agent to identify the number of years that a selected craftsman has been in the field and working for the company so as to show that long-term employment—what universities call "retention"—is a customer priority.

Home 360 is an itinerant service that runs on gasoline, which is the specialty of the second of the "Sloppy Seven," the Race Trac gasoline stations around town. When the Race Trac generic-brand petrol parks began opening around fifteen years ago, discerning academic people realized that brand names meant little with regard to an ordinary commodity such as gasoline and flocked to the discount fuel fiefdoms, with their magnificent arrays of 24/7 lighting and their modern and efficient fuel pumps. Nowadays, however, a significant portion of the hoses are shuttered and out of order; clients are allowed to park in lanes while shopping in the store, thereby delaying other customers; and receipt slots lack paper, resulting in the "clerk has receipt inside" message. Admittedly, dealing with a gigantic company such as Race Trac is challenging, but shoppers may still exercise the option to enter the shop, ask for receipts, and perhaps request a hand wipe for the dirty pumps so that marketing experts may note that lack of service leads to delays and thereby lost revenue.

One of the more curious and probably sadder declines is that of Militello's shoe repair, which operates two locations, one across the street from Whole Foods and the other near the corner of Sherwood and Coursey. Militello's, a family business, has always set a high standard in cobbling as well as in luggage repair. It could be relied upon to provide a full range of shoe products, including offbeat colors of shoe polish. Inexplicably and recently, the location on Sherwood contracted from an immense shoe repair emporium to a tiny hole-in-the-wall in which, of all things, one first sees a frightening bank vault door that seems about to close in on the customer. It has been a good while since a deep clean occurred in this location. In both locations, the selection of shoe polish and shoe apparatus has diminished, perhaps owing to the throw-away mentality that is probably also reducing the market for quality cobbling. Waits are inexcusably long, sometimes reaching nearly a month for repair service. Helpful solution: ask the Militello's staff to order a unique color of shoe polish or to secure a deluxe shoe tree or otherwise to exercise its atrophying shoemaking arts. Your shoes will look better with appropriately hued shoe polish and you will help an old-world trade survive. (to be continued on page 5)

## Probe of Suspicious Board Contributions to Jindal's Election Campaigns Underway

From way up in north Louisiana comes a report that a panel of sub-Arkansan scholars is assembling a database showing the contributions made by members of education management boards to the various and multiple campaigns of Bobby Jindal, architect of more than a few budget cuts for universities. Early reports indicate multiple contributions by assorted board members under multiple versions of their or their family members' names. The *Newsletter* is hoping to obtain a copy of the spreadsheet as well as a list of board members, state-wide, who have served as officers of Jindal campaigns or their related or surrogate organizations.

## State to Implement More Stringent Password Policy

From IT guru Brian Nichols's cyber-shop comes word that the state is gearing up to enforce new password requirements for access to computer (including email) accounts. With its usual enthusiasm for the efficient use of time, the "do more with less" state is requiring that passwords be extended to ten characters and include characters from at least three of four categories. Additionally, users will be forbidden to switch back and forth between two passwords. Every replacement password must be new. We anticipate that poor Brian and his colleagues statewide will be allocating plenty of resources to the reminding of colleagues of their ever-transforming access formulations.

## Tip of the Month: [germandeli.com](http://germandeli.com)

Those who frequently travel to northern and central Europe develop hankerings for tastes found only in the German-speaking or Austrian-influenced nations. Unfortunately, the gradual distortion of old-world cooking traditions, whether the high-end search for a paradoxically new old-fashioned regional cuisine or the low-end gusto for festival food or caricature-intensive "German" restaurants, has joined with the dispersion of ethnic groups and the loss of cultural memory to reduce the availability of genuine German products. Now that problem has been solved with the advent of [germandeli.com](http://germandeli.com), an online marketer of German groceries that has mastered the art of importing and shipping both packaged and fresh foods. At [germandeli.com](http://germandeli.com), shoppers will find a full range of meat products, including not only generic Bratwurst but even its specific and exquisitely tasty Nürnberger variety; of fresh noodle and pasta products, including Spätzle, Maultaschen, and Dampfnudeln; of healthful and hearty fresh breads such as Ur-Roggenbrot; of German teas, including the delicate Ostfriesen blend; and of German baking supplies, including the Mohn (poppy seed paste) that makes those delicious snack cakes available in every German bakery window. Enthusiasts for sanitation will find a full range of German cleaning products; those out to stock a dining room will find kitchen wares galore; and those eager to stimulate the mind will find current German magazines. A recent order arrived at the *Newsletter* editor's house in perfect condition. The fresh Bratwurst were at refrigerator temperature in a magnificent styrofoam carton while the Hungarian paprika-seasoned potato chips were protected in their own form-fitting carton. This web site and service is a must for anyone with discriminating taste!



## LIFESTYLE (continued)

In the world of top-level cookery, Williams-Sonoma has always set and continues to define the standards of excellence on a national scale, but the Baton Rouge location is, in a phrase, "losing it." A visit to the Baton Rouge Williams-Sonoma location has the feel of a visit to some secret boys or girls club of which one is not a member or perhaps an entry into a fraternity where there is more hazing than acknowledged. Clerks seem to have favorite customers, inventory is declining, and wait times for gift wrapping or even delivery of a boxed item from the shelves can reach forty-five minutes. In one recent visit, a *Newsletter* shopper was informed that the delay resulted from the requirement to watch a gift-wrapping instructional DVD before fancying up the package. Solution: for a time, buy from Williams-Sonoma online and submit comments indicating that the on-site service in Baton Rouge needs to improve. And take a look at Sur la Table, which is poised to surpass Williams-Sonoma with respect to useful kitchen supplies.

Academic people need fresh air and exercise. The fifth and sixth entries in the "Sloppy Seven" emerge from the outdoor activity zone. One of the two is the Celebration Station, which now monopolizes the miniature golf market in Baton Rouge. Miniature golf remains one of the most amenable casual recreations—a great option for a late-evening sojourn into fresh air. Unfortunately, Celebration Station has allowed its courses to degenerate. A substantial number of course lights are burnt out; holes riddle carpets everywhere; and pipes within the actions of the golfing holes can be clogged. Celebration Station is also losing its wholesome atmosphere, especially on weekends, when a rough teen ambience prevails. The helpful solution is to address one's thoughts to the local Celebration Station management and to consider an adult outing to the miniature golf course so that these merchants may see that a nicer offering will expand their recreational market share. The sixth of the "Sloppy Seven" is the YMCA operation in southeast Baton Rouge. There, a number of YMCA locations, which remain popular exercise options for academic people, fail to provide adequate numbers of machines, allocate too many of their resources to youth enrichment programs at the cost of service to paying members, and close at the drop of a hat on any old holiday, taking away purchased exercise opportunities on the very days when most could use them. One solution is to report one's thoughts to the desk attendant, who is usually at least somewhat attentive and who seems to report customer observations to the higher ups.

The last of the "Sloppy Seven" is, regrettably, the legendary Highland Coffees. Although Highland Coffees remains the number-one coffee venue in Baton Rouge, and although its charm is undeniable, two trends give rise to concern. One is the pervasiveness of single-occupant tables commandeered for long periods of time by laptop users who apparently regard the coffee house as an online study hall. The second is a significant reduction in the range, variety, and occasionally quality of baked goods. Classic cakes such as the Linzer Torte have been eliminated from the menu, taking away the European feel of the venue; other surviving offerings, such as the German chocolate cake, seem to have been sweetened up to suit American tastes. With regard to helpful suggestions, it is to be hoped that the proprietor of Highland Coffees, who is a great supporter of LSU, will read this column and recognize the danger of distancing his academic clientele.

Oh, yes, there is lagniappe: the Chimes has recently cut its fried mozzarella balls (with marinara sauce) from its menu. These were the best fried cheese hors d'oeuvres in Baton Rouge. Let us hope that is not a sign of things to come!

The *Newsletter* wishes everyone a good summer and encourages its readers to patronize treasured business but also to perform noble service as cultural curators by helping, through courteous comments, our local merchants to maintain quality

## LSU Faculty Football Raffle

There is still time for LSU faculty members to enter the raffle for the right to purchase at face value (without the Tradition Fund assessment) up to two 2012-2013 football season tickets. If you are a faculty member on the LSU A&M campus, please send an email by May 31st to [facultyfootball@lsu.edu](mailto:facultyfootball@lsu.edu). In the email, please include your name, contact information, your rank (whether you are a professor or instructor), and whether you are bidding for one or two tickets. Please be advised that the cost for each ticket will be approximately \$410.00 and please do not enter the raffle unless you intend to purchase the tickets in the event that your name is drawn.



## Newsletter Publication Schedule

This is the final *Newsletter* issues for the 2011–2012 academic year. The *Newsletter* will resume publication in September. Have a great summer!

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