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Faculty Senate Newsletter, September 2012

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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President's Welcome

T. S. Eliot brooded that the world might end not with a bang but with a whimper. The new academic year, far from commencing with the sense of optimism that often accompanies a new tour of scholarly duty, is opening with a whimper in fearful anticipation of a bang; with the accumulated burden of several disappointing years and the fear that some greater calamity might erupt at any moment. As the annual parade of welcome messages pours from the electronic inkwells of assorted campus and system

leaders, it might be time to look at those areas in which the administration could begin making at least minimal progress even despite the bad tone of the times. The following, admittedly small menu of options is somewhat short on optimism, yet some may find a complex comfort in the thought that something could be done if we can find a leader not so cautious or intimidated as to be willing to do it.

The greatest failure of the higher education leadership cadre in Louisiana has been its reluctance to serve as a public advocate for the life of the mind. Too busy avoiding perceived political risks, campus and system leaders around the state have looked the other way when it comes not only to academic freedom, but to explaining to a naive public the joy of inquiry and the pleasures of honest discovery. The bewildering silence of higher education leadership with regard to the teaching, in the public schools, of evolution or of scientific theories of the origins of the universe leaves the thoughtful public listening for a persuasive leader who would take public stands regarding controversial issues. Such a spokesperson for fearless learning would score high approval ratings not only with local faculty but also with the higher education community nationwide. A career could also be made by someone willing to affirm the integrity of public K-12 and public higher education. To date, leaders have not had the courage to point out that universities can never maintain high enrollment and graduation numbers only by cherry-picking the top students. The kind of volume that creates not only an LSU but an array of regional campuses cannot, in the long term, come only from elite or private schools. Promoting public K-12 education is the same as promoting public higher education. For an administrator who wants a job, it is also the same as ensuring his or her career success.

A second, related failure is the monkish reluctance of higher education leadership to meet the people where they live: not only the subsets of people who become college-goers or college donors, but all the people. Over the past few years, I have suggested several means of doing this, from television spots like those used by the Chancellor of the University of Arkansas to appearances in the same north-Louisiana church pulpits in which the governor occasionally prophesies. An adept Chancellor or President could address such topics as "the mission of science" without touching on such hot spots as the Garden of Eden or the Big Bang and with considerable attention to the reasons that basic research matters or to where engineering might go after the eras of industrialization and space exploration. Such a Chancellor or President could genially boast about what LSU Music and Dramatic Arts Dean Larry Kaptain calls "cultural capital" and could point out that "workforce development" is a peculiar mission for institutions dedicated to the very best that is learned, thought, or discovered—to the proverbial "cutting edge."

A third area in which Louisiana's academic leaders hesitate to speak is that of academic finance. The perennial debate over the TOPS program that subsidizes the college expenses of so many Louisiana students distracts from the more essential question of the financing of higher education largely on the basis of tuition and other self-generated revenues. Many if not most European universities receive state appropriations that cover the lion's share of their budgets and charge minimal tuition. This arrangement inhibits gigantic recruitment campaigns that result in oddities such as a billboard advertising UNO that is positioned only a few miles from McNeese State and that is designed to purloin the students that "The Cowboys" are spending money to attract. TOPS, in any case, is a state appropriation disguised as a merit competition for students. A grand and glorious reputation awaits a campus executive who is willing to explain to the people that huge dispersals of scholarship money have a sentimental appeal—who wouldn't want to "help our children"?—but are inefficient means of maintaining great universities. Administrators should be speaking similar truths about the entrenched system by which "F&A" and philanthropic money finances universities. Direct appropriations are far easier to manage and far more eligible for observation by those seeking "transparency" than is the elaborate and inefficient money recycling mechanism that now sustains most universities.

The foregoing are only three of the areas where a courageous administrator could do great exploits and with that create a reputation that would sustain a fine career. Although these paragraphs contain critical and melancholy observations, they also express hope: they are intended to remind us that, even in the worst of times, the best of actions remain possible.

AGB To Revamp Statement on External Principles

AGB, the Association of Governing Boards, the think tank and consulting consortium selected to advise the LSU Board of Supervisors on the future of the LSU System and the LSU System Presidency, is revising its 2001 statement on "external influences on colleges and universities" and is inviting comment. One would imagine that the AGB visits to Louisiana would provide the AGB panels with more than enough material to complete this and a thousand similar revisions.

AAUP Investigators Probe Southern

Louisiana higher education tops the charts when it comes to censures. Four institutions—Southeastern Louisiana University; The University of Louisiana at Lafayette; Northwestern State University; and Louisiana State University—that belong to two Louisiana higher education systems have joined the ranks of AAUP infamy. Perhaps to initiate a "no censurable institution left behind" movement, Southern University is now vying for a blast from notoriety's trumpet. Startled by a high level of politicization, a lack of faculty input, and capricious exigency policies, the American Association of Universities Professors ("AAUP") has dispatched a team of investigators to the Southern University campus. The probe began on September 6th with interviews with faculty and any administrators willing to talk. Results are awaited.

Administrative Raises Continue

Raise season is not yet over on the Baton Rouge campuses. Occupants nominally promoted from one similar position to another bagged an extra \$18,698.00 at the AgCenter and \$18,750.00 at the A&M campus. Recipients of these administration-only raises, which were funded by state money, averaged a 15% increase, according to the September 7th personnel actions of the [agenda background documents](#) issued by the LSU Board of Supervisors. Raises for administrative promotions on Baton Rouge campuses in July topped \$82,000.00, including a \$12K raise for the interim Dean of the College of Human Services and Education, a \$19K raise for the Director of the School of Education, and a \$17K raise for the Executive Director of Louisiana Sea Grant, who had held that office no more than three months.

Yale Presidential Versus Louisiana Executive Searches

One of the favorite topoi of Louisiana higher education management boards is that of impossibility: that searches for presidents or chancellors can be done no other way than that which is in progress or that there can be no other candidate than the one who is being selected from a single-candidate pool or that circumstances dictate one and only one search method. Connoisseurs of executive searches will profit from a glance at the search procedure in play for the appointment of the next President of Yale University. The Yale procedure provides for a committee of twelve, four of whom are faculty members (a 33% voting share) and eight of whom are trustees (three of which trustees hold terminal degrees). Additionally, formal liaisons to constituent groups, campus consultations and forums, and anonymous secure email input channels are built into this exemplary procedure. Full details of the procedure can be viewed [online](#).

HIGHER EDUCATION HEADLINER

Malcolm Richardson, Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Science

A few weeks ago, excitement reverberated within the LSU community as an announcement provided well-needed illumination among recent economic woes. This August, the A&M campus welcomed the biggest incoming freshman class in its history, proving that the university is more magnetizing than ever. While the arrival of 5,725 fresh faces to Mike the Tiger's domain has been lauded, little fanfare has been spared for the many men and women who make such feats possible: cool-headed academicians like Malcolm Richardson, Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Science.

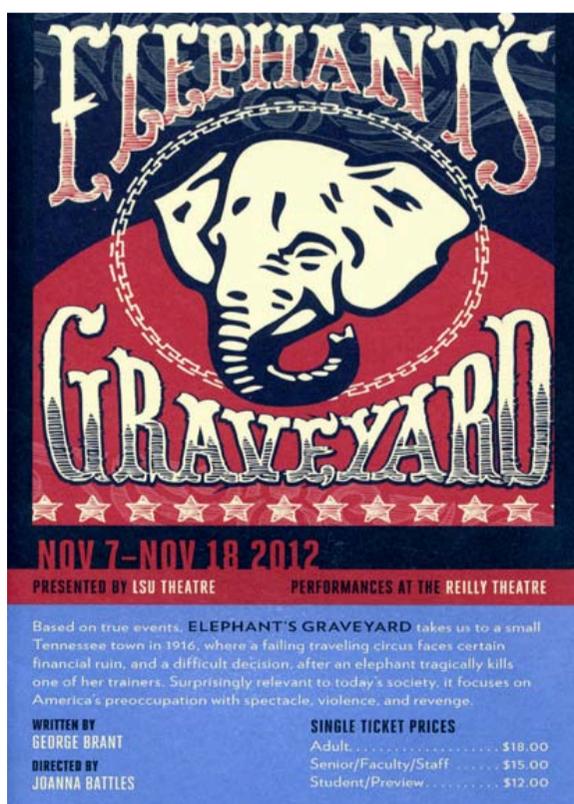
In his current position, Richardson tackles plenty of significant tasks, most importantly attracting developing minds to his college. Recruitment is priority number one, a sentiment Richardson has demonstrated through the establishment of the Advocates. The Associate Dean has helped organize this group of welcoming student ambassadors for the College of Humanities and Social Science over the past year. Working with the Advocates and new student recruits provides Richardson with a view of the university that he used to miss. When asked what his favorite part of the job is, he enthusiastically replies "the students!" This work, he says, "puts me in touch with students who are not my students. I get to find out a lot about students and student life that I don't find out about in a classroom setting because I don't have to give them a grade. That's always nice," he explains.

Richardson's other work includes arranging travel, scholarships, college events, and grade appeals, but he is not alone. Associate Dean duties are also shared by another talent in the College of Humanities and Social Science. A complement to Richardson's work on the student side, Dr. Janet McDonald focuses instead on faculty and personnel matters including promotion and tenure.

No stranger to administration, Richardson has previously served as the Chair of the English department and the Associate Dean of the Graduate School. His heart, however, remains with the subject that attracted him to higher education in the first place. English literature, ye olde Medieval in particular, continues to attract Richardson to the classroom. Though most of the opportunities to trade the office for the classroom have made way for administrative tasks, Richardson does make time to teach one class each semester. The golden moments in front of a class of sprightly undergraduates often prove to be highlights of his week. "While I'm walking [to class] . . . you can hear those gears changing and clanking to another mode, and coming back it's the same thing," he quips. "I come back feeling refreshed." Richardson has enjoyed seeing how students have changed since his arrival in the early 80s. "It was a different mix of students [then]. They were really fun to teach."

The student factor is just one of the many elements that attracted Richardson to Baton Rouge and LSU. When offered a job at the home of the Fighting Tigers, Richardson jumped at the chance. "There were a lot of things coming. . . It's a major research institution, and there were many more opportunities here." There are some things, though, that the Tennessee native had to adjust to. After twenty-five years, I don't get upset anymore when the leaves don't start turning. I'm used to it." Despite this deficiency and the hot climate, the city has solidified its place in his heart. "I think Baton Rouge is a good compromise between a big urban area like New Orleans and a small college town like Hammond. . . I love going to New Orleans but I love coming home as well."

When asked about the future of his academic home for the past twenty-five years, Richardson is optimistic. "We have a base of good students, we have a base of good faculty, and so these budget cuts that we've had these last four years have been much less damaging than the ones that happened in the 90s." A series of cuts in the early 90s had a significant impact on the campus, but the university maintained its resilience. "From the mid-90s to 2008," Richardson says, "LSU made astonishing progress in every way. I think if we can pick up that trajectory that we had from 1996 to 2008, we'll be back going the direction we ought to go."



Simple Simony: Selling Supervisor Seats

One good thing about large-scale unemployment is that there is always someone to do the hard work of data collection, and data collection with a vengeance. Those who have been wondering what it costs to become a player in Louisiana higher education management may now see a summary of contributions to Jindal campaigns between 2003 and 2012 by members of assorted education management boards. This grim tale of intellectual simony tops out with a \$52,850.00 array of contributions by Regent Bollinger, with others not far behind. The excruciatingly lengthy index of contributions comes to us from the [Louisiana Voice blog](#).

ACT College Readiness Report

The latest (2011) College Readiness Report from entrance examination combine ACT places Louisiana at the far left side of the college preparation curve. According to this devastating [report](#), less than 16% of Louisiana high school graduate evidence college readiness in the four standard areas of mathematics, English, reading, and science. Those numbers bring into question the common post-LAGRAD-Act practice of evaluating faculty for productivity in the education or at least retention of students, it being unlikely that persons never prepared for college will succeed or even stay in it even when offered the finest instruction.

TAF: Success Leads Nomenclature

Readers of the Newsletter know that we have a special fondness for the [Tiger Athletic Foundation](#) ("TAF"), which has recently scored another success by convincing a private donor to enhance the piazza aproning Mike the Tiger's habitat. We do hope that the nomenclature of TAF events can catch up with the times and the successes.

In particular, the idea of a "Capitol Area Tigers Coaches' Wives Dinner," an event transpiring on August 22nd at Drusilla Seafood, needs reconfiguring, the underlying notion of wives cheering on the sidelines while their husbands do the gridiron work being somewhat artifactual. And, after all, aren't there female as well as male coaches in the game?

Campus Federal Kicks It Up Several Notches

Statewide academic community financial services provider Campus Federal Credit Union ("CFCU") continues on a campaign of revisions and upgrades. Early in August, CFCU moved to divert expenses to users by assessing a one dollar fee on all "foreign" ATM transactions, a slightly cryptic utterance that, CFCU later explained, referred to ATMs not in the CFCU or the preferred partner networks. More cheerfully, CFCU added a host of online transfer features, including the option to transfer funds to accounts at other financial institutions and the option to transfer funds to another CFCU account holder.





Higher Education copies Loya Jirga.

LSU Supervisors Stage Loya Jirga

Responding to increasing public concerns regarding the operational independence of higher education management boards whose members have all been appointed by one governor, the LSU Supervisors borrowed a strategy from Afghan President Hamid Karzai and staged a loya jirga, a statewide open council of regionally-affiliated Supervisors for the purpose of debating major issues in public view (the meeting having been translated from the dark meeting rooms of the System Building into the open spaces of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center upon a cue from the LSU System General Council, whose vigilance regarding open meeting laws drew commendations from both the faculty and the press).

A laudable “first” for the reclusive Supervisors, the “informational retreat” was anything but the usual retreat from information. Group processes prevailed

as the Supervisors, enjoying a casual chat around a big table while surrounded by faculty, public, and media viewers, attempted to come to grips with the variety of opinion that characterizes a great university and began recognizing that the denizens of great universities resist rule by fiat. Several remarkable moments punctuated the event, which was led by a trio of AGB (*Association of Governing Boards*) consultants—clever chaps who are in such high demand that they had to leave the meeting with consulting fees in hand halfway through the agenda. During one exercise, the Supervisors were asked to name the major milestones in the history of LSU.

The Supervisors identified a series of events including the takeover of the health care system, a spate of hurricanes, a variety of sports achievements, and the BP oil spill. Journalism magnate and Board member Rolf McColister made a bold move and asked LSU Council of Faculty Advisors President Kevin L. Cope what his opinion of the list of milestone moments might be, whereupon Cope observed that not a single academic or research accomplishment had been mentioned. Following that game-changing comment, the Supervisors began enjoying the color, glamor, and attention of a public conversation—again, the loya jirga effect—and found themselves more at ease with disagreements, which began to abound. Cope and ALFS (*Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates*) President James Robinson were granted unlimited extensions of the three minutes allocated for public comment (which three minutes boils down to a meager four one-thousandths of a second for each of the 8,000 or so faculty members employed by Louisiana public institutions). It is to be hoped that the LSU Supervisors’ sudden discovery that open, frank, and diverse discussion can be fun and constructive becomes both a precedent for the LSU Board and an example for the other management boards in the state.

Keeping Score

The July 27th, 2012 edition of *The Advocate* includes a photograph of a worker from Lamar Advertising Company carrying out repairs on the north end zone scoreboard in Tiger Stadium. It appears that Lamar Outdoor Advertising, which has profited in the public relations game from its connection to the LSU Flagship Coalition, is not averse to benefitting from a bit of LSU-generated business. Meanwhile, Lamar stock received an upgrade from investment analysis firm Morgan Stanley owing to its intention to present itself as a REIT (real estate investment trust), apparently on the theory that the plots of land supporting billboards are managed real estate, a move that investors expect will reduce Lamar’s tax obligations (and, with that, its contribution to supporting public institutions). Lamar’s stock has jumped 37% in the last year owing to tax limitation maneuvers. It seems that someone in Louisiana higher education belongs to the notorious “one percent.”



Salary money flies in Louisiana’s Higher Education

Salary Money to Burn at LSU Supervisors

Frequent players of the long-running game Monopoly know well the iconic trademark of that game: a comical squat millionaire striding along in spats and lighting his premium cigar with a wad of paper money. Despite the rumored financial difficulties in Louisiana higher education, LSU System officialdom seems eager to chop if not burn salary money. Considerable attention has been paid to the political dependence of the LSU Board of Supervisors on the governor’s office, yet the economic consequences of the party purge among ranking LSU System officials has somehow escaped notice. Officially, the top-dogs who have faced the chopping block—John Lombardi, Fred Cerise, Roxanne Townsend,

and Ray Lamonica—have been transferred to other duties, although the public has yet to learn the details of those new assignments (one remembers the comment of former LSU women’s basketball coach Vann Chancellor, who, when likewise transferred to other duties, wondered aloud what they might be and expressed hope that they might include golf). The tasks performed by the four aforementioned individuals, all of whom were characterized by competence and a willingness to speak freely, have now been given over to new and highly paid implementers, meaning that there are now two paid jobs wherever once there was one. Using salary data from LouisianaSunshine.com, calculating the number of years remaining on contracts, adding a conservative 30% fringe benefit rate, and finally summing the whole, the *Newsletter* has calculated that the cost of the Reign of Terror in the LSU System office is at least \$3,612,526.00. That sum is adequate to fund for a year a two-and-one-quarter percent raise for the LSU A&M campus and could do proportionally greater good works at smaller institutions.

Southern University Wavers: Confidence or No?

Heads turned in late September when Southern University attempted a vote of no-confidence in Southern University System President Ronald Mason. The initial ballot produced a split decision in the negative, against the no-confidence resolution. Follow-on Parliamentary maneuvers by faculty activist Dialo Bagayoka yielded a second vote in which some Senators did not participate or were ruled ineligible. That vote yielded a favorable result with regard to the no-confidence resolution. At press time, details remained murky.

Alexandria Annexes Learning Center

One of the greatest and yet most overlooked as well as most novel education resources in Louisiana is surely the Learning Center for Rapides Parish (“LCRP”), which, to date, has been operated on a cooperative basis by a consortium of higher education entities. Seemingly dropped from the heavens on the perimeter of the former England Air Force Base (now Alexandria International Airport), the LCRP abides in a converted post-military building that abounds with meeting rooms of every size, layout, and furnishing. Well-appointed with high-tech devices ranging from compressed video systems to computer-driven instruction consoles, the LCRP delivers a vast number of courses and curricula to a community of learners that seeks something better and more interesting than online instruction. The visibility of this gem along the lower Kisatchie has been somewhat impaired by the dispersion of administrative functions. That problem should vanish now that management of the LCRP has been transferred to LSU in Alexandria, home of the quarterly “Alexandria Summit” meetings. Those seeking confidentiality should also know that the LCRP is the go-to spot for statewide meetings that require either a degree of secrecy (or at least being out of the prying public eye) or that benefit from occurring on neutral ground away from a campus that obviously belongs to one system or another. It is to be hoped that LSUA will also preserve the cloak-and-dagger character of the LCRP, which befits its venue, a former cold-war installation.

TRSL Viagra Bailout Blues

Despite its self-representation as a prudent steward of educators’ retirement resources, the Teachers’ Retirement System of Louisiana now and then gets overstimulated by stocks on the rise. TRSL lost a bundle and found itself with something worse than a joint ache when overlooked evidence for the adverse side-effects of anti-arthritis medications Celebrex and Bextra broke the bubble in Pfizer’s share price. John Milton’s devil in *Paradise Lost* observes that evil can become or yield good. Such is the case with TRSL, which the United States District Court of New York (Southern District) has designated as the lead plaintiff in the case against drug manufacturer Pfizer, nowadays best known for the production of Viagra.



Viagra to bail out teachers’ retirement.

Let us hope that this prominent position at the head of a megabucks lawsuit will help TRSL recover from the continual droop induced by the unfunded accrued liability.

LSU Foundation Chief Adds Dialogue to Dollars

For many a year, Louisiana's public institutions have cleverly responded to onerous accounting and "sunshine" laws by creating quasi-private foundations to buck up endowments, cover unusual expenses, support endowed professorships, and pay for niceties such as a glass of wine at what would otherwise be dry post-event receptions. The downside to the foundation solution on all campuses has been a sequestering of information and a lack of faculty input over the missions, mandates, and maneuvers of fundraisers. Recognizing the distress of the five-year-no-raise faculty, LSU Foundation President G. Lee Griffin has made a bold move to put the good old mouth where the better old money is and to enter into a dialogue with faculty governance officials. In a preliminary meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, Griffin invited a vigorous discussion of Louisiana philanthropy and of both the general direction and goals of the LSU Foundation. Griffin will hit the key points of this dialogue in a presentation for the LSU Faculty Senate on October 2nd. Although ExComm–Foundation discussions were initially private, it is no violation of confidentiality to mention one of Griffin's better acronyms: SWOT, pronounced in the same way as the term for the police teams that defuse bombs or counter hostage drama. SWOT is a project assessment tool—a checklist of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Let us hope that other foundations in Louisiana higher education run the SWOT assessment and follow Griffin's example of increasing transparency and robust dialogue relating to the private side of educational philanthropy.

Brother's Keeper or Brother's Replacement?

Eighteenth-century novelist Henry Fielding argued that the two great pillars of comedy were vanity and hypocrisy. Were it not for the gravity of the topic—the dismantling of health care for the poor—the events surrounding the change of leadership in the LSU System hospitals would surely qualify as examples of high hilarity, at least by Fielding's standards. Back in February, surgeon Frank Opelka combined the easygoing medical philanthropy of a Marcus Welby with the prophetic outrage of a St. John in the wilderness by crying out against the diminution of indigent health care. The "Opinion" page of *The Advocate* burned with philanthropic indignation as Opelka warned that "the actions of this governor" were devastating "the children, the less fortunate, the needy, and the handicapped" and even veering from "the Christian way" at the cost of losing "your soul". Only a few months later, when the governor's office commanded the removal of hospitals chief Fred Cerise, Opelka emerged as the new boss man in the hospitals operation, charged with implementing the governor's policies and "taking new directions" that began with the firing of other hospital officials and assorted budget-slashing plans. So much for "the Christian way"—but, then, even the Scripture notes that not everyone is his brother's keeper.

Online Pressure Building

Anecdotal reports (and complaints) from around the state suggest that pressure to implement online programs with or without faculty consent and with or without planning continues to build. Colleagues from selected regional campuses have reported that economic survival of the university during troubled times is the most common justification for the online push, a push that usually involves outsourcing of the implementation to private firms operating outside the usual academic supervision and accreditation processes (the most egregious recent example being the attempted outsourcing of online education at Southern University). At the LSU A&M campus, Supervisors recently heard from *Chronicle of Higher Education* reporter Jeff Selingo, who, predictably, opined that, in a short while, online study will account for 60% or more of the student credit hours delivered. The LSU Council of Faculty Advisors is now forming an ad hoc committee to bring out the truth concerning online education, truth that will include a consideration of the real cost of such programs (including hardware, software, consulting, implementation, maintenance, and curriculum design); faculty welfare (for example, working conditions for those "chained to their laptops"); faculty compensation for work and intellectual property delivered to large audiences; the significance of real-life learning and social processes in the production of educated citizens; the standards for the content of online courses; and the question of recruitment and seniority (for example, whether promising young persons will want to labor in the online mills and whether online students receive instruction from the full range of faculty, including senior colleagues).

Nightlife Returns to LSU

Surfing at the very crest of a tsunami of innovation, Auxiliary Services Chieftain Jason Tolliver has succeeded in his faculty-supported quest to update the LSU Faculty Club and to begin resuscitation of the more-than-football nightlife on the A&M campus. Tolliver has spearheaded the re-flagging of the Faculty Club into "The Club at Union Square," a comprehensive gustatory experience that offers upscale but economical luncheon fare and that also presents fine-dining opportunities in the evening hours on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Tolliver and his brigade de cuisine began the festive renomination of "The Club" with a debut buffet mid-summer, when culinary creator and head "Club" chef Jon Jackson unveiled the complete evening menu, much to the enjoyment of campus dignitaries. There it was revealed that Tolliver and Jackson had recruited former Juban's chef and John Folse alumnus Terry McDonner as a part-time Chef de Cuisine, surely a major coup for the Baton Rouge dining scene and a major new entry in LSU's annals of edible excellence. Tolliver, Jackson, et al. brought home the bacon for real at a "soft opening" on August 16th, a full service for the benefit of LSU officialdom (baseball brainstormer Paul Manieri was seen in munchie mode). The emergence of a cultivated nighttime experience on the LSU A&M campus is a huge step forward, for which we owe Tolliver and his team an avalanche—nay, a veritable baked Alaska!—of thanks.



Chef John Jackson unveils evening menus.

Shreveport: Work but Skip Pay

A paradox of Louisiana higher education is the simultaneous desire to rise in national rankings and the belief, or at least hope, that no one from the feared "outside" is watching what happens on campuses. Thanks go to the national press—the AP—for discovering that LSU in Shreveport has slipped back into bad old ways by getting work done, in this case staffing classes, through unpaid servitude. Grabbing an opportunity to look respectful of older Americans while also pinching a penny, LSU in Shreveport, the national media report, is filling teaching slots in important, general-education-eligible courses such as "Shakespeare" with unpaid retirees. The Shreveport administration has apparently forgotten that a recourse to unpaid labor, in addition to demeaning the unpaid faculty, sends multiple bad messages, ranging from the affirmation of the ability of universities to maintain curricula without adequate funding to the suggesting to young or new faculty members that they can be replaced with those on retirement stipends to the insinuation that faculty who participate in governance can be overlooked while unaccountable volunteers deliver education and on to the suggestion that the labor market is so oversupplied that minimal demand has pushed wage prices down to zero.

Rouse Rises

Congratulations to Larry Rouse on his appointment as Chair of LSU A&M's Moodle Development Advisory Committee ("MDAC"). Under the stewardship of Brian Nichols, the interfaces and implementation of Moodle have made huge advances. We anticipate continued improvement under the sagacious supervision of Larry Rouse, whose vast experience in both curricular-pedagogical and science matters render him a natural nominee for this post.



Larry Rouse

Employee Share of Retirement Crashes to New Low

The scandalous abuse of Louisiana's academic workforce continues as the sums transferred to employee retirement accounts hit a new low over the summer. For the 2012–2013 academic year, higher education participants in the Optional Retirement Program ("ORP") will receive only 5.685% of the walloping 24.5% contributed by employers. The pass-through to employees is the lowest ever in ORP history while the employer contribution is the highest. Counting member contributions, the total amount paid into the retirement program is 32.4%, of which only 13.635% reaches employee accounts, the rest being diverted into an unfunded accrued liability that was never incurred by program participants. Dividing 13.635 by 32.4 yields an efficiency rate of less than 41%, suggesting that one might be better off to put one's cash on the odd or even betting fields on a roulette table. While LASERS, the non-professional employees retirement program, has fielded representatives to argue against such abuses, TRSL top brass remain silent and compliant. Full historical accounts of TRSL and ORP money management is available [online](#).

MOVIE REVIEW: THE DICTATOR (Larry Charles, 2012)

By Carl Freedman

In 1940, Charlie Chaplin released *THE GREAT DICTATOR*, his first all-talking movie and a film that would go on to be almost universally recognized as a cinematic classic. It is the story of one Adenoid Hynkel, the violently anti-Semitic dictator of the Central European nation of Tomainia; and it is also the story of a humble Jewish barber in Tomainia who happens to look exactly like the dictator (Chaplin plays both parts). Hynkel is very obviously based on Adolf Hitler, and the genius of the film is to combine, almost seamlessly, one hilarious comic turn after another with totally serious anti-Nazi propaganda. Hynkel manages to be funny yet also irredeemably evil (though Chaplin later said that he could not have made the film had he known the full degree of Hitler's evil). In 1940 the United States had not yet entered the Second World War, and Hitler was by no means without vocal admirers among the American right; Chaplin's film should be remembered not only as an aesthetic masterpiece but also as an effective and admirable work of cultural warfare (a point conveyed in Richard Attenborough's excellent 1992 biopic, *CHAPLIN*). The epitome of the "total filmmaker," as Jerry Lewis called him, Chaplin not only directed and starred in *THE GREAT DICTATOR* but also wrote and produced it and even helped to compose the film's original music.

THE DICTATOR, the latest vehicle for the brilliant British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, is, as the title suggests, in many ways a remake of and tribute to Chaplin's film; and the omission of "great" from the new title is a gesture of humility on several different levels. For one thing, Baron Cohen's character, General Admiral Hafez Aladeen of the North African country of Wadiya, is not a world-historical figure like Hitler but just a petty tyrant capable of causing suffering only within a fairly limited compass. He seems to be a composite of such secular-nationalist Arab dictators as Saddam Hussein, Hafez al-Assad, Muammar Gaddafi, and Ben Ali. Then too, Baron Cohen is not quite a "total" filmmaker like Chaplin. Though he is clearly the primary creative force behind the film, he has delegated the directing to his friend Larry Charles (best known for a great deal of work in American television comedy), and has recruited numerous collaborators to help with the writing and producing. Finally, *THE DICTATOR* is very unlikely to wind up on standard lists of the greatest films of all time, as *THE GREAT DICTATOR* has done. But it is one of the funniest movies of 2012.

The narrative of *THE DICTATOR* is loose-jointed and significant mainly for the comic turns and situations—and funny lines—that it makes possible. The chief event of the movie is Aladeen's trip to America—a country "built by the blacks and owned by the Chinese," as the dictator semi-accurately comments—in order to address the United Nations. Once there, he must dodge an assassination plot concocted by his uncle and second-in-command Tamir (Ben Kingsley), who wants to be rid of his nephew so that he can make billions for himself by selling Wadiya's oil-drilling rights to a collection of multinational corporations. Crucial to Tamir's scheme is an Aladeen look-alike named Efawadh, played, of course, by Baron Cohen. Efawadh is not a figure of dignity (and occasional pathos) like Chaplin's Jewish barber, but a comically moronic peasant with not the slightest understanding of the political crosses and double-crosses that swirl around him—or of much of anything else either. In one scene, several of Aladeen's gorgeous female guards (the allusion is to Gaddafi) disrobe and attempt to pleasure the man they wrongly take to be their master; Efawadh, whose main life experience seems to have been with goats, screams with terror that they are trying to "milk" him.

Meanwhile, the real Aladeen—or the "Beloved Oppressor," as he is officially known in Wadiya—is left adrift on the streets of New York City, where he improbably takes up with one Zoey (Anna Faris), manager of the Free Earth Collective in Brooklyn, a feminist-vegan food co-op "for people of all or no genders." At first, the dictator and the crushingly earnest Zoey (she knows that humor exists only because she once took a workshop in feminist clowning) seem to face all but insuperable barriers to mutual understanding. When Zoey condemns several local cops as "fascists," Aladeen adds, "And not in a good way." At one point Zoey somehow infers that Aladeen must have been the victim of sexual abuse, and she suggests that he could profit by a visit to the nearest rape center. The dictator likes the suggestion, because he—naturally—assumes that a rape center must be a place where rape can be freely committed. Eventually, though, Zoey comes to see that Aladeen's talents for thuggishness and torture can be quite useful in running her business efficiently (for example, when a health inspector creates problems, the dictator just kidnaps the inspector's wife and child and holds them hostage until the matter is resolved). The odd couple fall in love, and at film's end Zoey (who, on top of everything else, turns out to be Jewish) is the First Lady of Wadiya. When she tells her husband that she is pregnant, the overjoyed father-to-be asks, "Are you having a boy or an abortion?"

At the end of *THE GREAT DICTATOR*, Chaplin famously steps out of character—actually, out of both characters—and delivers a speech against dictatorship and in favor of democracy, freedom, and social co-operation. Most (though not all) film critics agree that, however laudable the sentiments, the unrelievedly solemn (and arguably overlong) speech detracts from the film's otherwise pitch-perfect serio-comic tone (an objection that left Chaplin himself quite unmoved). Baron Cohen, by contrast, gives his corresponding speech at the end of *THE DICTATOR* some humor and satiric bite. Aladeen offers to defend tyranny and invites Americans to imagine how wonderful their own country could be if only it were a dictatorship like Wadiya: "You could let 1% of the people have all the nation's wealth. You could help your rich friends get richer by cutting their taxes and bailing them out when they gamble and lose. You could ignore the needs of the poor for health care and education. . . . You could wiretap phones, you could torture foreign prisoners. . . . You could lie about why you go to war. . . . You could use the media to scare the people into supporting policies that are against their interest. I know this is hard for you Americans to imagine, but please try." Democracy, by contrast, entails all sorts of problems, not the least of which is, as Aladeen explains, that everybody's vote counts, "no matter how crippled or black or female they are."

I am pretty sure that, at that speech, Charlie Chaplin among the shades is smiling.



Elisabeth Elder

Elder Evidences Youth

Anyone interested in Louisiana faculty governance knows Elisabeth Elder, the perdurable local-arrangements hostess of the "Alexandria Summit

Meetings" and a long-serving member of the LSU System Council of Faculty Advisors. Elder's activities verge beyond the laboratory and the carrel and into the outdoorsy world of competitive sports. *The Town Talk*, the news organ for Central Louisiana, has featured Elder's athletic enterprises in a recent report, detailing her participation (and success) in "triathlons, marathons, bike riding, kayaking, bialthlons, and scuba" and reporting that she participates in fifteen events per year. In a recent excursion in Georgia, Elder covered 104 miles rolling over six mountains atop the saddle of her bicycle. Congratulations to Elder to drawing the attention of the press to the good old sound body and sound mind combo!

What's in a Name

One of the first lessons in freshman composition concerns the subtleties inherent in the choice of active or passive voice. Recent announcements concerning executive appointments at LSU A&M—Executive Director of Sea Grant; Interim Dean of the College of Human Sciences and Education; Director of the LSU Museum of Art—have all made recourse to the passive formulation, "was named." Barring that the naming process is too sublime for human imagination (per the fiery carving of God's laws in the old Biblical movie, *The Ten Commandments*), it can be assumed that someone doesn't want to say who is doing the naming.

It Pays to be an Interim

The details of the cost of an interim Chancellor-President are now available. On an annualized basis, LSU interim Chancellor and LSU System interim President William L. Jenkins will draw \$425,000.00 in base salary and \$175,000.00 from "affiliated foundations" (adios to one endowed professorship). In a state that limits faculty reimbursement for vehicle use to \$0.52 per mile for no more than ninety-nine miles, Jenkins will receive a monthly vehicle allowance of "up to \$760.00 per month;" a housing allocation of "up to \$2,670.00 per month;" travel allocations of "up to \$600.00 per month;" and miscellaneous allowances of "up to \$300.00 per month." Those dollops amount to another \$51,900.00 per annum. Time to quit and come back on an interim basis!

University College Advisor Selected for NACADA Outstanding Advising Award

Annette Yancy, academic counselor and Summer Scholars coordinator at LSU University's Center for Advising and Counseling, has been chosen as a National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Outstanding Advising Award Winner for 2012. The distinguished recipients of this award have been recognized by NACADA for their demonstrated excellence in academic advising of students or in academic advising administration. The honor will be bestowed at the association's annual conference in Nashville this October.



Annette Yancy

Tip of the Month: Düsseldorf Mustard from Fredericksburg Farms

Explorers of the Texas Hill Country have long relished the condiments created by its multicultural chefs, chefs adept at blending Tex-Mex and German influences to create definitive American regional treats. Now the never-indigenous people of Texas's Teutonic triangle have delivered their laudable adaptation of Düsseldorfer Senf, the piquant mustard that graces sausages and sandwiches in the great economic capital of the German Ruhrgebiet. Biting and fiercely hot in its original German incarnation, true Düsseldorf mustard ranks among acquired tastes. The American version from Fredericksburg Farms softens the bite and somewhat quiets the fire, leaving just enough piquancy to bring out the array of adjacent flavors provided by horseradish, celery seed, garlic, and a touch of sweetness. The resulting taste treat not only peps up almost any Wurst or pretzel but also blends wonderfully into a variety of decoctions, including balsamic vinaigrette dressings. Fredericksburg Farms Düsseldorf mustard is occasionally available on the shelves of Whole Foods Market or by direct [online order](#).



SECAFL Delegates Converge on Louisiana

Two juggernauts routinely flatten faculty governance initiatives: lack of unified, cooperative action mobilizing academics from multiple campuses and high turnover in faculty governance officers. One on-again-off-again attempt to counteract the isolation and ephemerality of faculty governance cadres is the Southeastern Conference Association of Faculty Leaders, or SECAFL, which has been struggling to maintain momentum since its inception in 2009. SECAFL suffered a hard blow when the Southeastern Conference (SEC), which had funded its modest operations, redirected its resources to Provosts—a decision which has yet to produce significant benefit for faculty members. Despite these challenges, SECAFL has reunited again. This past June, faculty leaders from six of the SEC campuses along with representatives from Southern University and the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates converged on Baton Rouge for a meeting that included a vast range of discussions and workshops on topics ranging from faculty workload and compensation to HRM issues to budget management and on to relations with foundations and fundraising entities. Conferees heard from local experts such as LSU System Vice-President Carolyn Hargrave and LSU HRM Chief A. G. Monaco while also finding time to sample local culinary delicacies. The meeting issued in a resolve by Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate President David Weintraub and University of South Carolina Faculty Senate President Sandra Kelley to host a meeting at another SEC school by January of 2013.



ALFS President James Robinson, Vanderbilt, FS President David Weintraub, and South Carolina FS President Sandra Kelly

McNair Research Scholars Receives \$1.35 Million As It Approaches 20 Years of Service

The Ronald E. McNair Research Scholars Program has recently been honored with a \$1.35 million, five-year grant from the US Department of Education. The initiative is aimed at promoting doctoral studies among first-generation students, students with significant financial need, and students from underrepresented groups.

The award was granted to LSU University College, which administers the Center for Freshman Year, Center for Advising and Counseling, Allied Health and Pre-nursing, and Student Support Services in addition to the McNair Research Scholars Program. The grant will provide an additional five years of funding for McNair Research Scholars in particular, a program which has been providing support to LSU students for over 20 years. Participants will continue to benefit from an emphasis on research, graduate school preparation, writing, academic advising, and professional development.

Stetson Hat Accelerates Mortarboard

"Mysterious" and "uncanny" are words that the tourist industry routinely associates with Louisiana, but they equally well apply to the bizarre doings in town-grown interactions. One of the strangest events in mid-level administration to date occurred when the projected date of the Bayou Superfest, an orgy of country crooning that sells out a good two-thirds of Tiger Stadium, forced the sudden calendrical realignment of the spring 2013 semester at LSU so as not to interfere with the exhalations of Travis Tritt, Diamond Rio, and Carrie Underwood. Presented as if it came about by the same necessity (and invisible agency) by which Saturn orbits the sun, the new schedule accelerates commencement and puts mortarboards atop student heads before the Stetsons stuff the stadium.



Stetson Hat--with Honor Cords

Religion in the Academic Low-Rent District

As part of its laudable growth and improvement plan, LSU in Alexandria has updated the lease agreement by which members of the Baptist faith maintain a religious center on the LSUA campus. Formulated in 1971, the original lease specifies a rent of \$10.00 per year for ninety-nine years for the ground underlying the worship venue. The new lease reiterates the terms of the old but incorporates an array of legal, maintenance, and design requirements while recognizing changes in the administrative bodies who are party to the agreement. The main reason for the recasting of the contract, however, is the intended erection of a \$150,000.00 addition to the Baptist center. While LSUA deserves praise for promoting the exchange of religious ideas on campus, numbers like those leave one wondering whether Louisiana higher education ought to reconsider its rental policies or establish a sliding scale for the extraction of tribute from prosperous faiths, if only to subsidize campus access for groups with less clout than north-Louisiana Protestants.

Dollars in the net

Full details are now available concerning the basketball coaching contract for Johnnie Jones. Jones will draw \$350K base salary plus a \$750K supplement. If his team meets academic performance minima, he will receive another \$100K (American collegiate athletics holds the strange theory that coaches should be rewarded for students' work). Perquisites with cash value include a telephone, a \$1,000.00 per month vehicle allowance, and the right to hold and profit from sports camps. Incentives for special achievements include \$50K for an SEC regular season championship; \$50K for an SEC tournament championship; \$100K for an NCAA tournament appearance; \$50K for an appearance in the NCAA Sweet 16; \$50K for an appearance in the Final Four; \$100K for an NCAA championship; \$50K for SEC coach of the year; and \$100K for national coach of the year.

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E-mail start@lsu.edu with your training request. Training workshops on the Moodle Learning Management system may be found at <http://training.lsu.edu>.

Lifestyle Feature:

The Forgotten Urban Outback

Critics of Baton Rouge's dysfunctional city planning tend to divide the city-parish conglomerate into two asymmetrical and counterpointed halves: troubled and decaying north Baton Rouge and prosperously growing southeast Baton Rouge. This odd and incomplete social geography inadvertently acknowledges the power of the great vortex of Baton Rouge, the whirling and nearly impassible intersection of Airline Highway and Florida Boulevard, while also paying unhappy kudos to the dividing power of Interstate 10 and a few other clogged traffic arteries. What is forgotten in this gerrymandering of the



Vision 4 Less

Red Stick city is what might be called the urban outback of Baton Rouge: the neglected lands that are neither thriving city nor deteriorating ghetto that lie on the northeast flank of Airline-Florida exchange and that look to the cursory eye rather like an extended series of empty parking lots for failing businesses or perhaps used car dealers. Although not the kind of venue in which academic folk generally do their shopping or run their errands, this would-be Baton Rouge badlands offers more than a few monuments to the cultural and culinary history of the capitol region as well as a few worthwhile tour stops. Let us look at seven sites just beyond the Charybdis of the Airline exchange.

The Scriptures tell us that where there is no vision the people perish. Good vision also enables good sightseeing. The first stop on the urban outback investigation is thus one of Baton Rouge's finest optical outlets, "Vision 4 Less," situated in an unexpectedly bright but unimaginative brick and glass bunker slightly southeast of the Cortana Mall. Although it looks for all the world like a Shoe Station or Old Navy for eyewear, Vision 4 Less, which seems to be an non-allied, non-chain enterprise, offers one of the most extensive selections of eyeglass and sunglass frames and a surprising number of upper-end vision accessories. Spacious and comfortable, the shopping and clinic areas permit comfortable perusal of the options and enjoyable anticipation of repairs. Vision 4 Less will dazzle customers who tire of the short business hours of boutique opticians. In its precincts, frame repairs occur at all convenient moments, even in the afternoon of Christmas Eve!

Exiting the amenable Vision 4 Less, the wanderer may look across the street to a nondescript bomb-shelter of a building, the main house of Our Daily Bread, one of Baton Rouge's health food providers and a distant, aging cousin of Whole Foods and Fresh Market. Unless the specialty mega-grocers whose shops criss-cross—or, rather, julienne—America, Our Daily Bread specializes in modesty. It celebrates the discipline rather than the indulgence of healthy living. Its visually impermeable walls and its acquired aroma of ancient organic produce mixed with the vapors of vitamin pills leaves no doubt that personal improvement is underway, like it or not. Although the breadstuffs offered by Our Daily Bread tend to be a bit plain, mealy, and old-fashioned, this tireless advocate for healthy eating nevertheless offers a few hard-to-get products that never attain the sales volume required for placement on supermarket shelves. It also serves as a monument to an early idea of health—a nature foods cult with roots in central and northern European reformist thinking—that is easily forgotten (or erased) amidst the soaring shelves of modern specialty food vendors.

A short distance to the east of Our Daily Brad stands (or falls) another monument to the mixed American pass, the decaying Art Deco hulk of the Broadmoor Theater. Probably the closest that Baton Rouge ever came to an alternative or art theater, the Broadmoor was, for years, a favorite haunt of university personnel. Its simplified evocation of Hollywood architecture and its placement out in the open, undeveloped areas of Baton Rouge made it, for a time, an icon both of aesthetic ambition and the good life of the American middle class, combining the Bubba ideology with the glitz of MGM and with an abundance of directionless ambition. Today it sits dirty and unoccupied, epitomizing what has been good about America and also emblemizing the waste of talent during a recession. Poignant and strange, resting in a vast empty parking lot like Ozymandias's statue in the desert, the Broadmoor Theater stimulates reflection.



El Rancho

The northeastern urban outback abounds in offbeat juxtapositions, and so it is that the next stop on the forgetfulness tour is the Baton Rouge satellite location of Napoleonville's D&D Statuary, one of the largest repositories of decorative and iconic molded concrete on the planet. Offering concrete statues of everything from rhinoceroses to saints, D&D concrete can provide buyers with a multicultural menagerie that includes Mike the Tiger, the Buddha, a wise and cock-eyed owl or two, and a veritable battalion of saints. Figures come in dull white concrete and can remain in their pure, would-be Grecian form (the author of this column has one such figure, a bear cub) or can be painted in lavish polychrome, either by professionals allied with the shop or with all-weather pigments available at this outlet. What is most dazzling about D&D statuary is the neglect or perhaps universality of scale, with everything available in every size. A diminutive St. Francis can seem to parlay with a giant squirrel; a miniature Mike the Tiger poses no threat to a giant Bambi deer. If you've ever wanted that flag-waving gorilla in your front yard, D&D Statuary is the place to effect the adoption.

Working with concrete kicks up a bit of dust. The fifth stop on the urban outback excursion is thus one of the finest vacuum cleaner shops in America, A-1 Vacuum Cleaner, between Sherwood Forest and Little John on Florida Boulevard. A-1 can provide a perfect cleaning apparatus for any need and is especially strong in floor cleaning equipment for wood or tile floors. It carries a wide range of deluxe vacuum cleaners, including Miele and Oreck, and offers parts, bags, and repairs for all makes and models of vacuum. What is most delightful about this shop that looks somewhat like an upgraded, glassed-in Louisiana crab shack is its proprietor, Gus, who combines the devil-may-care style of a guerilla poet with the old-fashioned hawking techniques of a carnival barker, keeping his customers ever entertained. Spry, nimble, and ingenious, Gus's infectious humor seems to clean house and complete repairs through sheer dazzle.

Concrete work and vacuuming are both heavy-lifting chores, leaving the exhausted traveler-decorator-cleaner to seek refecation. Despite its reputation as a culinary wasteland, the northeast corner of Baton Rouge presents at least two highly desirable options (stops six and seven on our tour).

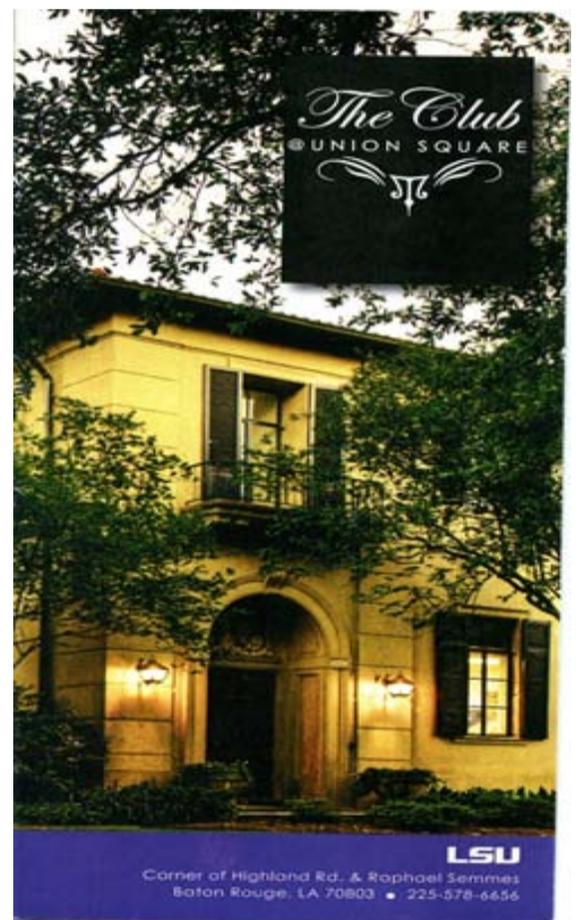
Directly across the street from the voluble Gus at A-1 is the recently re-flagged Viet Garden, long esteemed as the best Vietnamese restaurant in a town woefully short of quality Asian cuisine outlets. (to be continued on page 8)



Viet Garden

Football Multi-Year Raise Spree

Although appointed by the governor who urges that we all do more with less, the LSU Board of Supervisors, at its June 2012 meeting, laid out a plan for paying more to sustain the leadership of a team that, having won all its regular-season games, will sooner or later end up doing less. The new fashion in contracts for assistant coaches includes pre-planned multi-year raises without explicit performance expectations. In the new model, a new compensation is set for calendar years 2012, 2013, and 2014 without any reference to the "assessment" and "evaluation" that occupies so much academic time. The Supervisors have approved the following three-year automatic raises over the course of three years: for John Chavis, from \$700K to \$900K, \$1.1M, and \$1.3M; for Greg Studrawa, from \$300K to \$500K; for Frank Wilson, from \$325K to \$550K, \$600K, and \$650K; for Steve Ensminger, from \$210K to \$230K, \$250K, and \$300K; for Andrea Haley, from \$380K to \$400K, \$420K, and \$440k; and for Thomas McGaughey, from \$275K to \$290K, \$300K, and \$310K.



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LSUnited is the higher education organizing committee of the Louisiana State University faculty and is affiliated with the Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE), the largest and most influential association of professional educators in the state, with more than 20,000 members.

OUR GOALS:
The Louisiana higher education community is at a crossroads, and LSUnited is organizing to become a powerful voice for educators at Louisiana State University. We strive for a shared vision and collaborative governance for all faculty members.

- **JOB SECURITY** – Address concerns and issues with the administration and oversight boards
- **FAIR PAY** – Develop a clear means of negotiating pay systems that are equitable, justly applied, and transparent
- **BENEFIT PROTECTIONS** – Protect and improve benefits in health insurance, retirement, employer contribution rates, and faculty options
- **A VOICE ON THE JOB** – Establish policies, procedures, and protocols for better decision making in the work environment
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LIFESTYLE (continued)

Looking like almost anything other than a garden and offering al fresco dining on bright aluminum chairs fronting Florida Boulevard (as well as indoor seating—not to worry!), the Viet Garden presents delicious familiar Vietnamese dishes as well as some unorthodox and intensely Asian taste novelties. Staff members are friendly and the lightness of the dining space compensates for its placement in what appears to have been a 1960s franchise restaurant building. Those seeking something a little more occidental will enjoy a stop at the El Rancho Mexican Grill, whose colorful facade, funky neon trim, and crazy-cantina interior offset food that is as tasty as one can find among the Tex-Mex outlets in Baton Rouge. Especially pleasing is the cheerfully plated chicken chimichanga, which features a zippy and bright cheese sauce and a garnish of peppery, bright, cilantro-rich pico de gallo. The tables at El Rancho are a hoot: oversized Mexican prayer cards and also Mexican mythology trading cards have been laminated to the table surfaces. Dining atop Montezuma and his bride or seeing your enchiladas placed in the hand of one of the holy saints adds a certain intercultural piquancy and complex feeling to the dining experience (as do the relentlessly decorated, polychrome saloon-style chairs).



D&D Statuary

The northeast urban outback of Baton Rouge is not an everyday experience. It combines tragedy, comedy, novelty, horror, hope, anxiety, chaos, and affirmation all in one slightly strange package. It is an underestimated area that asks for occasional exploration and that, as Baton Rouge expands, might become the gentrified Hell's Kitchen of urban Louisiana.

Carrying Water for Jindal

By Dayne Sherman, Southeastern Louisiana University (www.daynesherman.com)

The Louisiana Legislature passed a host of new education laws this year. But Governor Jindal's wholesale attack on teachers, higher education institutions, public school students, and charity hospitals would not be complete without his signature retirement reform legislation. Thankfully, Jindal began to lose interest in the session after winning his big education "reform" battles. One significant state retirement bill, HB 61, did pass. I usually refer to this law as the "Cat Food" Retirement Plan because many future state employees, including higher education faculty and staff, will be lucky to afford cat food for dinner in their retirement years. Fans of the program call it the "Cash Balance Plan." The plan helps Jindal begin to move all state pension funds closer to privatization like the state health insurance programs, and it enables him to have a concrete accomplishment to tout for national office. Though his 2012 ambitions have folded like a cheap accordion, there's always 2016. Without Social Security benefits, which state employees are not allowed to contribute into nor earn, Jindal has made Louisiana public employment the worst place to work of any state or federal agency in America. The "Cat Food" Retirement Plan begins on July 1, 2013, for new hires.

There are serious questions about whether the plan will cause massive IRS tax penalties on employee investments and whether some of the state workforce could be required to begin paying into Social Security, which is not part of the "Cat Food" Retirement Plan and will cost taxpayers even more money. Rather than waiting for a determination by the feds, Jindal is pressing on with the plan. The Retired State Employees Association of Louisiana filed suit over HB 61 (Act 483). Why? Not because the "Cat Food" bill is in and of itself unconstitutional, but because the bill costs the state tax money. Such bills require a 2/3s supermajority vote, and Jindal's most faithful water boy, House Speaker Chuck Kleckley (R-Lake Charles), allowed the bill to "pass" without the 70 votes required by law. Indeed, the actuarial report on HB 61 is clear. The new plan will create an unfunded accrued liability, and it will cost the state more than the current Defined Benefit Plan. Why was the retirement legislation needed? To protect the state retirement systems and save money, the backers said. However, the very opposite occurred. I am a Louisiana native, and I understand that this sounds contradictory, perhaps insane to non-natives, but somehow there's a cruel logic at play here that is almost beautiful in a corrupt Louisiana way. It should be noted that the Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System was recently named a top 10 performing state pension in the country based on 10-year investment returns. But who cares about such trivial facts?

What is ahead for retirement reform? In the immediate future, an attempt to complete the sale of Office of Group Benefits, the state health insurance management arm. As a result, OGB's 177 employees will be terminated and its 500 million dollar surplus raided. However, there are two somewhat hopeful signs on the horizon. First, there appears to be 130 million extra dollars available from last year's revenue. Second, Rep. Jerome "Dee" Richard (I-Thibodaux) has called for a special session to deal with financial issues in the state, the Medicaid meltdown, and the shuttering of hospitals. Perhaps higher education would get a few bones, too. Richard's session looks very unlikely. Only Marie Laveau could decipher what will become of the 130 million dollars. When will our legislators stand up and tell our absentee governor that they're done carrying water for his national political agenda? I hope sooner rather than later. But I'm realistic enough to know that it may not occur before his second term ends.

--Dayne Sherman is an associate professor at Southeastern Louisiana University. He blogs and tweets at daynesherman.com. His opinions are his own and do not reflect his employer's position on any topic, known or unknown.

Places to learn more about Louisiana state retirement issues:

[Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana \(TRSL\)](#)
[Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System \(LASERS\)](#)
[Louisiana Budget Project](#)
[Louisiana Association of Educators](#)
[Louisiana Federation of Teachers](#)
[Louisiana Voice](#)
[Louisiana Progress](#)

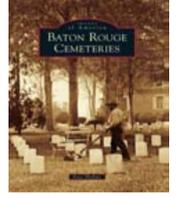
Lunchtime Lagniappe Series Explores Louisiana History and Tradition

Five Louisiana authors will explore themes from Louisiana history during Lunchtime Lagniappe. The popular weekly lecture series resumes October 3, 2012 at the Capitol Park Museum in downtown Baton Rouge.

The following programs are scheduled:

Oct. 3: Baton Rouge Cemeteries

Faye Phillips explains the history of Baton Rouge cemeteries. From immigrants who used the burial grounds at military forts to family-created places of rest to the beginning of burial as a business.



Oct. 10: New Roads and Old Rivers: Louisiana's

Historic Pointe Coupee Parish

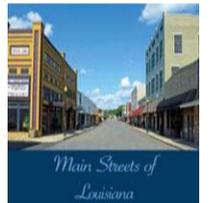
New Roads and Old Rivers



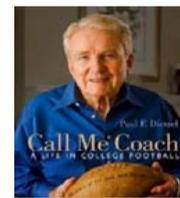
Randy Harelson presents photographs of more than 70 antebellum structures still standing in Pointe Coupee Parish and 32 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Oct. 17: Main Streets of Louisiana

In this, Louisiana's Bicentennial year, UL Press released a new book celebrating some of the state's most historic and picturesque downtown areas. Author Anne Butler speaks about these streets and her passion for preserving Louisiana's vanishing landscapes.



Oct. 24: Call Me Coach: A Life in College Football



Coach Paul Dietzel talks about his experience as head football coach of LSU, from leading LSU to its first national championship in 1958 to a career in athletics that carried him to numerous posts throughout the country.

Oct. 31: The New Louisiana State Flag

Glen Duncan, co-designer of Louisiana's new state flag, discusses the history and meaning behind his design.



All programs begin at noon and are free and open to public. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own lunch and may come and go as their schedules require.

The Louisiana State Museum Friends will have refreshments available for a small donation.

The Capitol Park Museum is located at 660 N. Fourth St., Baton Rouge.

The museum is wheelchair accessible.

For more information, visit www.crt.state.la.us/museum.

Published by [The LSU Faculty Senate](#)

Questions? Comments? Email: lharmo3@lsu.edu or cbro157@lsu.edu

