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## Faculty Senate Newsletter, April 2013

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

# LSU FACULTY SENATE

Monthly Newsletter

April 8, 2013

## President's Welcome



One of the surest signs of error is unanimity. Unchallenged agreement among a very large number of people always suggests either a conspiracy of silence or a fear of seeming retrograde or a plain old suppression of dissent. Among the axioms that are nervously and not altogether freely endorsed by that large cadre of clever persons who comprise the academy and its administration is the assumption that privatization is the way of the future. This shibboleth sometimes takes a melancholy form, as in the lament that the big public dollars that built American academe are "never coming back"; sometimes this premise receives an optimistic

articulation, especially among those who seek high office and who like to chatter avidly about undefined "opportunities." These optimists applaud the successes of purportedly "state" institutions with low percentage state appropriations such as the University of Michigan—as if nearby Detroit were a monument to the successes of privatized education.

At an unknown point in higher education history, universities replaced their chief assignment—that of questioning, that of the adept use of skepticism to abrade errors and to polish truths—with the new, lesser goal of productivity. In its metric mania, academe forgot that error and chaos are far easier to produce than is knowledge. The fiasco of the LSU System presidential search, for example, has produced fierce criticism from the AAUP, a no-confidence vote from thoughtful faculty, public outcry, at least a pair of lawsuits, and the teaching of youngsters that the shortest route to advancement is through backroom dealing. The presidential search was a case-study in modern privatization, a private charity and a boutique search firm having been used as a shell in which to hide the appointment of a public official from public scrutiny. Development of a case against both privatization and against its inevitability is long overdue. Such a case can be built on many foundations in addition to the obvious example of the breach of public trust by LSU's management board.

A classic strategy for concealing costs is the dissipation of expenses across a range of phenomena wider than the item being priced. Those who linger outside the world of library science will never know whether the cost of maintaining thousands of computers, of subscribing year-in and year-out to databases, and of using services from units, such as IT, that hover outside of library budgets is really cheaper than buying long-lasting paper copies of publications. We have yet to receive the calculation of the cost of maintaining what are euphemistically called "development officers" (a far nicer term than "beggar") at every college and university in the land. Similarly, we will probably never know the full cost of the doubling of the administration now that most campuses require a Provost to run the campus while the President or Chancellor spends his or her days plucking the philanthropic purse. Also unknown is the cost of the bevy of professionals at charitable foundations who deal with campus-based petitioners (the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for example, is currently searching for at least three highly-paid campus philanthropy specialists). Then there is also the cost arising from the split attention from the intelligentsia as clever Deans and deft Chairs also give up program-building to engage in alms acquisition.

Extant examples of privatization give pause. Few would assert that entities such as the United States Postal Service or the German National Railway System have garnered unqualified praise for improvement since they exited the public sphere. The ballyhoo over the privatization of space exploration conceals the modesty of the ambition of private space ventures, in which tourism and commercial exploitation have eclipsed basic science and exploration as primary goals. We can expect a similar minimization of ambition when Louisiana's public hospitals pass into the hands of foundations that are thin disguises for business interests or into straightforward commercial hands.

Propelling the drive toward privatization is a loss of confidence in the very same public that has been educated by privatizing universities. Privatization is a symptom of a withdrawal from the sense of common or least worthwhile purpose that builds nations—that supports such values as the freedom of thought and expression. The strange blend of leftist materialism and 1990s neo-conservatism that fuels both the privatization and the workforce development drives is thus the favorite solvent of those who fear the judgment of an educated, debating public.

## Putting the Best Face on Facebook

A missive has arrived from an anonymous alumnus who reports that the administrator of the LSU Facebook page has removed his comments concerning the appointment of F. King Alexander and has accused both the Associated Press and the Faculty Senate of getting the story wrong. Documentation of the exchange has been received in the *Newsletter* office but has been kept offline to protect the privacy of the informant. Initially, the LSU Facebook administrator debated the King appointment with the alumnus, then, some hours later, wiped away the historic record. Who is operating the Facebook page is unknown; the correspondent is only identified as "LSU." Thus, we can conclude that "LSU" engages in censorship.

## Nichols Delivers Dimes Every Quarter

If there ever were a wise investment in the future of Louisiana higher education, it is surely new LSU Chief Information officer Brian Nichols, whose level of productivity is already turning, nay, spinning heads. In a tastefully produced annual report entitled *Momentum*, Nichols chronicles success after success, all extracted during difficult times and from hardware that is aging faster than Bobby Jindal can ask for a campaign contribution. Additionally, Nichols, at the instigation of the LSU Faculty Senate, has embarked on a host of statewide projects, including the prospect of statewide log-on protocols that would permit faculty members to access basic IT services when visiting other Louisiana campuses. Only one minor glitch: neither Google nor the in-house LSU search tools can find this wonderful report online. But, when it does appear in cyberspace, it is a must-read for anyone who admires dedicated as well as constructive and effective work.

## Van Heerden Litigation Costs Approach Seven Figures

From a reliable source, the *Newsletter* has learned that, over the course of nearly three years, LSU has paid nearly \$457,000.00 in legal fees to deal with the suit brought by controversial hurricane and drainage interpreter Ivor van Heerden, a suit that also attracted a censure from the American Association of University Professors. That \$457,000.00 brings the total cost of this shameful episode, including the \$435,000 settlement, to nearly one million dollars. What else could the expenditure of that sum have done? It could easily have paid Dr. Van Heerden's salary until his retirement, an action that would have put LSU's support for free inquiry and free speech beyond question. Alternatively, that sum would cover the cost of a ½% goodwill salary increment for the entire LSU faculty, a faculty which has received no raise for five years. One million dollars would cover more than one-quarter of the midyear budget cut that LSU received last year. It would have subsidized long subscriptions to up to five major library databases or fitted out the laboratories for two beginning scientists. Rather than pursue these worthy goals, LSU has chosen to hound a faculty member, to engage in secrecy and cover-up tactics, and to try to save face by engaging in a quixotic legal quest that it rightly lost. It has succeeded in alienating its New Orleans support base and in further corroding the credibility of a leadership that habitually pretends to know better than faculty members. Sadly, many of the administrative personnel who created the Van Heerden debacle continue unreformed in their pursuits, hiding information about the LSU presidential search from students exercising their citizenship rights by filing freedom-of-information requests—which leaves one wondering how many more millions will pass through the courtrooms before reaching the classroom.

# Higher Education Headliner

## Emma Bradford Perry, Dean of Libraries, Southern University

With all eyes focused on the LSU System and its recent leadership kerfuffles, it has been relatively easy for observers of Louisiana's higher education landscape to lose sight of the state's other bulwarks of academe. The University of Louisiana, Southern University, and Louisiana Community and Technical College Systems are also hard at work producing the educated minds that will lead us into the future. Just a short drive from the LSU A&M campus is another flagship university dedicated to enriching lives through information: Southern University.

Southern University's Baton Rouge campus is home to nearly 7,000 students pursuing interests that cover everything from physics to French. It takes a cadre of faculty and staff members armed with a personal approach to help make these educations possible. This effort is seen nowhere more than in the University's libraries, helmed by Dean Emma Bradford Perry.

As Dean of Libraries, Perry oversees and provides for the overall administration and management of the University's two library branches, the Architecture Library and the larger John B. Cade Library in the heart of campus.

Like most administrators, Perry is regularly occupied by budgeting, personnel management, and policy making tasks, but she prefers to have her presence go even further. "I am responsible for making sure that students receive services and resources that are exceptional in all aspects" and that they "leave with a good feeling," she says. Ensuring this level of quality means Dean Perry takes frequent walks throughout the building to engage with the students who have come to expect great things from the Southern Libraries. Part of that, she believes, comes down to staffing. "I think that all people who work in public service, particularly in a library, have to be customer friendly, outgoing, and have good interpersonal skills," all qualities that come naturally to Perry, who has a background in speech and drama.

After twenty years as Dean, Perry has toned down her role in day-to-day library processes, choosing instead to focus on student interaction and the opportunities it provides. Hearing what the students have to say is the key to providing what they need, and Perry has found a way to do just that. She maintains an open door policy in which students, faculty, and everyone in between are welcome to share their questions, comments, and concerns. "I will stop whatever I am doing and talk to them," she says. This focus on patron input and ease of use has led to a number of changes within the Southern University Libraries.

Students particularly love the new student snack lounge in the John B. Cade Library which provides them with a quiet and comfortable place to grab coffee or a snack. Other upgrades include updated reading rooms and study areas, centralized copy machines, and an information technology center outfitted with couches, cable television, high-tech computers, and smooth jazz. Perry's favorite change is the complete remodel of the first floor, which included the installation of an "Ask Here" desk in lieu of the traditional reference desk. "Students don't always know what reference, circulation, and other terms that librarians use mean," she explains. The new desk provides an open opportunity for students, faculty, and visitors to ask anything and get answers. "The response has been tremendous," she says. Perry has high hopes for the University's main branch in the future. "Ultimately, I want the entire library to look like the first floor, but we are limited by funds," she explains.

In spite of the budget cuts that have forced plenty of libraries state-wide to tighten their purse strings, Perry has remained committed to quality service no matter what. She has fought hard to maintain normal working hours and services, although the libraries' acquisitions budgets have been severely cut.

Insufficient funding is one area of Louisiana higher education that needs to be improved, according to the Dean. "We need to make sure everyone in Louisiana is educated because an educated population makes for a better world and an economically sound state. We don't want to be at the bottom when we look at the nation," she says. A great place to start would be in early childhood education, creating a foundation that will allow people to make a decent living in adulthood. "We are at a crossroads in Louisiana higher education. We all have to be on board," she says.

Perry also believes in diversity, which is often absent in higher education administration. "When you're part of a diverse group you get a better product, a better reward, and you can make better decisions," she explains. Representation that includes people of all races, genders, and backgrounds has always been important, but it will become even more important in the future, according to Perry. "The nation will ultimately become more minority than majority. We need a diverse workforce period," she says. In the administrative world, this means ensuring that committees and boards accurately reflect the makeup of the groups they represent.

Perry's insight comes after years of experience in every kind of library imaginable. After stints in small Louisiana schools, large public libraries, and consulting work, she knows where her heart truly lies. "My very special love is academic libraries. You are always providing services to people," she says. Through positions in large libraries like the one at Texas A&M and more intimate settings like the Harvard Business School and Dillard University libraries, Perry has been able to experience budgets of all sizes, people from various backgrounds, and professional development opportunities that have enriched her career. She fondly recalls her time as an ETS (Educational Testing Service) Visiting Scholar and a UCLA Senior Fellow, two experiences that have made way for opportunities such as her role as a SACS Commissioner. She is also an active grant writer, journal contributor, and public speaker. Although her career as a librarian has been a great success thus far, she believes she also may have been happy as a fashion designer or financial manager if she had chosen a different path.

When looking to the future, Perry imagines that the Southern University Libraries will be bigger and better than ever. She envisions a brand new building with technologically sophisticated equipment that will meet the needs of the twenty-first century student. "We want the library be the center of the university and for students to have a wow experience," she says.



## Alleva Advances the Art of Giving

It has not been lost on the *Newsletter* staff that the LSU Athletic Department has been increasing its niceness allocations to faculty. Several free or low-cost ticket evenings have recently given faculty members the opportunity to enjoy marquee sports on the classic beer budget (and we don't mean the boutique-brew prices that would have been commanded by the Tiger lager that fizzled during the last LSU administration). Basketball has offered faculty members an economically easygoing evening, as have Baseball, Softball, and Gymnastics. We thank the folks in the big building by Death Valley for remembering staff and faculty.

## Social Security Shocker Rocks Ag Recruiting

From the agricultural extension world comes an anecdotal but devastating report. Long before the retirement plan problems came to light, a certain department head had been recruited into the "ag" operation, only to discover, upon arrival in Louisiana, that he had lost 50% of his projected Social Security benefit. Unchanged since the time of this sobering accidental discovery, Social Security law apparently imposes a significant penalty on those with accrued years of service who opt out of Social Security, even if they do so inadvertently, as when taking a job in Louisiana higher education. This sad story demonstrates the need to tone down recruitment rhetoric and to make truthful disclosures to recruited candidates concerning the limits of the Louisiana higher-education benefits package.

## Tip of the Month: Friendship Cottage Cheese

For years, the culinary bureau of the *Newsletter* has scanned the grocery world in search of the perfect cottage cheese. As the semi-adjectival word "cottage" suggests, the best rendering of this post-milk genre should suggest the freshness of the farmstead or the wind on the heath. Unfortunately, all too many commercial cottage cheeses suffer from adulteration. Guar and carrageenan gums exaggerate the stickiness or elasticity of the curds; ascorbic or other acids exaggerate the yogurt-like tartness of this subtle delicacy; excess processing exaggerates curd size; lust for creaminess leads to indefinite texture. At long last, that simulated village square, The Fresh Market, has offered up Friendship brand cottage cheese, which attains the perfect consistency, perfect curd size, and perfect acidity without the addition of artificial texture regulators or any non-dairy ingredients. Indeed, it could be argued that, in using "naturally sourced" carbon dioxide as a preservative and thereby fixing it in a non-gaseous form, Friendship cottage cheese is successfully battling global warming. Be sure to select the whole-milk "California style" (but made in New York) cottage cheese for the ultimate cottage cheese experience!



Friendship Cottage Cheese

# MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

**ZERO DARK THIRTY** (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012) By Carl Freedman

Every season sees a few new movies that are fairly controversial in one way or another, but the controversy that has swirled around Kathryn Bigelow's latest, *ZERO DARK THIRTY*, is extraordinary. How often does a bipartisan panel of United States Senators release a statement condemning a Hollywood flick? While professional film reviewers have generally credited Bigelow with a mastery of cinematic technique, many others—especially progressive political journalists—have raised moral and political issues that have made the controversy reminiscent of those that have long surrounded such films (sometimes expressly invoked in the discussion of *ZERO DARK THIRTY*) as D. W. Griffith's *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* (1915), in which the Ku Klux Klan are portrayed as pure, avenging Christian heroes, and Leni Riefenstahl's *TRIUMPH OF THE WILL* (1935), the documentary about the 1934 Nuremberg rally that represents Adolf Hitler as nothing less than a god in human form. Chris Hayes of MSNBC has maintained that Bigelow's film "colludes with evil," while Jane Mayer, of *The New Yorker*, titled an article about it, "Zero Conscience in 'Zero Dark Thirty.'" Being thought even remotely the equivalent of a Ku Kluxer or a Nazi is not good for one's reputation in present-day America and seems to have damaged Bigelow's previously golden standing in Hollywood. The humiliation of *ZERO DARK THIRTY* at the 2013 Oscar ceremony that it was once widely expected to dominate—in the event, it won nothing but half of the award for sound editing—is believed by most to be due to the wish of Academy voters not to be seen as accomplices to the glorification of mendacity and torture. Glenn Greenwald of *The Guardian* described the snubbing of Bigelow and her film on Oscar night as "a rare case of some justice being done."

I will address the politics of *ZERO DARK THIRTY*, but first I will consider its dramatic structure as unexceptionably, I hope, as possible—though such formal questions are by no means ultimately apolitical themselves. The story-line is actually quite simple. It begins with the al-Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001, and ends on May 2, 2011, with the killing of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, by a team of US Navy SEALs. In between, most of the attention is focused on a relatively junior CIA operative named Maya (Jessica Chastain). Early in the decade covered by the film, Maya becomes convinced that there is an al-Qaeda courier named Abu Ahmed (though this turns out to be a *nom de guerre*) who enjoys especially close access to bin Laden—and that locating him is thus the key to finding and killing the al-Qaeda chief. Her (nearly all male) colleagues and superiors in the CIA are indifferent to or openly skeptical of Maya's lead; but she pursues it with single-minded determination, and in the end is completely vindicated. In one scene, Maya identifies herself to the Director of Central Intelligence (nicely played by the great James Gandolfini) as the "motherfucker" who located the Abbottabad compound where bin Laden is to meet his end.

Though the film's advertising slogans (e.g., "the greatest manhunt in history") may seem to promise a high-volume action-adventure blockbuster, most of *ZERO DARK THIRTY* is in many ways quite low-key. Prior to the last half hour or so, in which the raid on bin Laden's compound is shown, there is not much violent action; Maya and her colleagues are portrayed more as bureaucrats doing a job than as swashbuckling warriors. There is a world less of guns and bombs than of files and meetings. Even the raid itself is quite unlike what one would expect in a more conventional action picture, where the big pay-off—the "money shot," to use the term derived from the hard-core pornography industry—would surely be a clear, lovingly detailed representation of the shooting of bin Laden, the ultimate Bad Guy, by the American Good Guys. But Bigelow not only eschews establishing shots, but also uses so much disorienting shaky-camera cinematography, so much hardly comprehensible dialogue, and so often presents us with a nearly black screen (the raid takes place at 12:30 a.m., or "zero dark thirty," in military jargon), that the viewer seldom knows exactly what is going on. It is not even clear that we ever actually see the killing of bin Laden. Significantly, reviewers have disagreed as to whether the death is visible on-screen, and I am by no means certain myself.

*ZERO DARK THIRTY* is also low-key in psychological terms, with very little in the way of character development. We slightly get to know one or two al-Qaeda prisoners and a couple of Maya's colleagues—Dan (Jason Clarke), a CIA torturer who mentors Maya and evidently has something of an unspoken crush on her, and Jessica (Jennifer Ehle), one of her few female associates—but in the main this is a one-woman picture, with Maya usually at the center of things. Yet even Maya is no more a conventionally drawn protagonist than the raid on bin Laden's compound is a conventional action sequence. She is emotionally almost inert, with no strong feelings about or connections to the people around her; Chastain plays her with a decided lack of effect. Maya's one real passion in life—virtually her only interest of any sort—is to find and kill bin Laden. When that is accomplished—in the final scene, with bin Laden dead and her own stature within the CIA definitively established—Maya does not exult, but instead breaks down in tears and emotional exhaustion: understandably, for she now seems to lack any further reason for living.

*ZERO DARK THIRTY* might also be described as politically low-key, in that the film does not loudly trumpet its viewpoint in anything like the way that *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* or *TRIUMPH OF THE WILL* do. Again, Maya and her colleagues are more dutiful bureaucrats than ideologically driven zealots. But Bigelow's movie does clearly, if sparingly and somewhat subtly, make known its own political point of view, which is located several degrees to the right of Dick Cheney. According to characters that we are clearly meant to trust, the world of *ZERO DARK THIRTY* is one where al-Qaeda agents operate, against all probability, in Iran—presumably because the film believes all Islamists to be much alike, never mind that the Shia Islam of the Iranian mullahs is nearly as much a "great Satan" to the Sunni bin Ladenites as are America or Israel. It is a world where, falsely, the victims of the September 11 attacks were all US citizens (they were actually citizens of over 90 countries, though of course Americans were the largest single national group). It is a world where, absurdly, US Senators are able to interfere with CIA tactics of the sort that, in the real world, very few electoral politicians even know about. Most preposterously of all, it is a world where the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay enjoy abundant access to lawyers who are in regular communication with Osama bin Laden himself—a bit of paranoid far-right fantasy that would probably embarrass Cheney and Rumsfeld themselves.

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## Teachers' Union Reaches Out to Higher Education

The Louisiana Association of Educators ("LAE") has mounted a new effort to break the silence regarding the high level of dissent regarding statewide education policy. Mounting a statewide series of public forums, the LAE has brought its "Louisiana Education Stakeholders Speak Out" panels to communities around the state, from Monroe to New Orleans. Better, the LAE has reached out to higher education, including representatives from colleges and universities in events that feature legislators, administrators, K-12 representatives, and community activists. The LAE succeeded in getting substantial media coverage at all its venues. Admittedly, the questioning was sometimes more hot than illuminating, but the re-entry into controverted media space is long overdue for the biggest and potentially best education lobbyist.



LAE Executive Director Michael Walker-Jones

## A Medical Question

If the Biomedical Research Foundation that is positioning to run the Shreveport and Monroe segment of the hospital system is truly a non-profit operation, why is the state Ethics Commission being asked to rule on its suitability for directing the charity medical operation?

## Where is the Lombardi Portrait?

Those who have read Horace Walpole's classic gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, are familiar with the fear that the ghosts of ancestors might walk out of their portraits on the castle wall. Anxiety about predecessors looking over the shoulder seems to have overwhelmed common courtesy at the LSU System office, where images of every System President, including the current one, festoon the walls but where the most recent occupant of that office remains in exile. Considering the speed with which the admirals in the would-be flagship dole out compliments (and cash) to eye-winking but inexperienced hometown consultants, this withholding of due respect to a System President that faculty held in high esteem underlines the pettiness and impoliteness of current management. Faculty governance will soon be initiating a fundraising drive by way of commissioning a student artist to deliver the honor that rude Supervisors continue to withhold.



Time to Complete the Lombardi Picture

## MOVIE REVIEW (continued)

The world of the film is also one—to address, now, the largest single point of controversy—where torture is both justified and effective. Some viewers, like the idiosyncratically conservative political commentator Andrew Sullivan, have argued that the scenes where Dan torments and abuses helpless, bound, unarmed prisoners are so repellent, so hard to watch, that a condemnation of torture must be implied. This is a serious point, but one outweighed, I think, by other elements in the film. The movie opens with a cacophony of disembodied voices—mostly of terrified, doomed victims of the September 11 attacks—and then immediately cuts to Dan at his hideous work: as if to make clear that the one necessarily leads to and requires the other. Then too, Dan himself, despite his professional occupation, is portrayed as perhaps the most human and sympathetic character in *ZERO DARK THIRTY*. His attraction to and concern for Maya, his fondness for animals, and his generally amiable manner all make it difficult to conclude that the film means to condemn him or his actions—especially since it is his torture of a prisoner that yields the name of Abu Ahmed. In the film's construction of events, torture directly and indispensably, if slowly, leads to the killing of bin Laden.

Yet it may be that the film's formal composition produces a quite different political tendency that operates athwart the more "official" ultra-Cheneyite politics of *ZERO DARK THIRTY*. This is, at least, the idea that I take from the most intricately intelligent and interesting commentary I have seen on the film, a blog entry by the distinguished film and cultural critic Steven Shaviro, a long-time admirer of Bigelow's oeuvre. Shaviro sets Bigelow's movie in the context of the procedural—a genre most familiar in its version of the police procedural but which, as Shaviro shrewdly points out, has also proved viable in such diverse forms as the terrorist procedural (Olivier Assayas's *CARLOS* [2010]) and the corporate procedural (David Fincher's *THE SOCIAL NETWORK* [2010]). In what I have described as the low-key aesthetic character of the film, Shaviro finds "the *ne plus ultra* of proceduralism, its ultimate expansion and *reductio ad absurdum*." In its absorption in mere process and bureaucratic routine to the general exclusion of emphatically proclaimed ideological goals or traditional military virtues like honor and glory, *ZERO DARK THIRTY* enacts the "the numbingly anonymous [environment] of Big Data, of the numbingly repetitious accumulation of 'information' (whether by torture, surveillance, physical search, or collation of records), and of instantaneity (the annihilation of duration) mediated through video screens and telecommunications technologies." Such enactment, one might argue (though Shaviro himself does not frame the matter in exactly this way), amounts to an implicit and potentially progressive critique of our society's increasing reduction of questions of positive social policy to mere technique, mere procedure.

Anyone seriously interested in *ZERO DARK THIRTY* should read Shaviro's short essay in its entirety. For me, perhaps its chief merit is to make intelligible the undeniable aesthetic power of the film, which sustains multiple viewings even as very little action of the conventional sort is taking place on screen, and even as one may be repelled by the film's more overt politics. Bigelow's latest film will, perhaps, continue to live when such names as those of Cheney and Rumsfeld and bin Laden have faded even further from public consciousness than they already have, and for reasons that have little to do with al-Qaeda or the US government's clandestine operations against it.

## Lifestyle Feature

### The Fountains of Baton Rouge

Few forms of outdoor delight mix the paradoxical with the pleasurable with so much proficiency as does that familiar indulgence in fantasy, the fountain. Fountains elevate the plumber's art both literally, by spraying water high into the air, and figuratively, by posing the most complex, even whimsical of challenges to the masters of the pipe and wrench. Unhesitatingly unnecessary, the fountain also scoffs at its presumed practical purpose, the delivery of fresh water into a central public space, a need that has slipped far into the past in the old world and that may never have arisen in decentralized, suburban America. Fountains suggest summertime frolics, yet few permit entry by bathers and most are at their best in the fresh zephyrs of spring rather than during the hot days of summer. A glance at the abundant water features ornamenting New Orleans homes stirs even a simpleminded viewer to wonder why people who tirelessly battle an excess of water choose to celebrate its dispersion in their yards. The majority of large-scale public fountains commemorate a person, place, or event, yet few materials could be less susceptible to the determinacy of form required to identify the specific item being remembered. Fountains are inherently distractible. Viewers either look at the structures that define the object being applauded but thereby overlook the action of the water or they notice the play of droplets at the expense of attention to the informative vessels.

Although it is no match for Rome, Florence, or other fountain-rich cities, Baton Rouge offers more than a few remarkable water spouts. Baton Rouge designers have enthusiastically explored the conundrums inherent in what landscape builders now call the "water feature." Sharing with the other members of the human species the ancient attraction of all creatures to clear, active, and refreshing water sources, the denizens of south Louisiana have deployed an array of publicly accessible fountains that delight visitors while exploring the potential of a genre whose study is never dry.



Houmas House Courtyard Fountain

Fundamental to the fountain is zealous geometry. Fountains affirm that water, which can assume every form that the space current of our universe can support and that can do so at temperature ranges tolerable to human observers, bears some important relation to basic forms, whether two-dimensional surfaces such as triangles, circles, and squares or three-dimensional solids such as pyramids, spheres, and cubes. Many of the most successful fountains avoid the specifically commemorative altogether, favoring instead an examination of the foundation of events in rudimentary topology.

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## Grambling Professor: Louisiana Tuition Tops Increase Charts

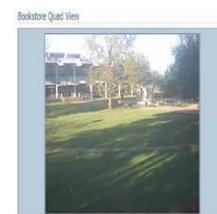
Exponents of self-generated and philanthropic revenues as the solution for economic distress in higher education sustained another setback with the release of a new chart showing that Louisiana has soared to near the top of the charts with respect to tuition increases over the last five years. At a whopping 38%, the tuition increase threatens to propel students not into an ever-burgeoning Louisiana education marketplace but, rather, into other states. At the low end, Maryland has hiked rates by 2.25%; at the top, Arizona, plagued as it is with expansion-induced obligations, cranked up costs 78.4%. According to *Common Dreams*, a progressive online journal, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities ("CBPP") reports that the rapid transfer of costs to education customers is pushing students from poor backgrounds away from college and thereby limiting income, taxation, and revenue opportunities for years to come. At press time, the CBPP web site displayed Louisiana among the top ten tuition-increasing states, in last place even among that dubious crowd. Thanks to Grambling Faculty Senate President Tsegai Emmanuel for discovering this information.

## Loyola, Southeastern Beat LSU in Roth Derby

Despite its pretension to lead Louisiana higher education, LSU and the LSU System schools have fallen behind Southeastern and Loyola in the quest to provide faculty with retirement options. Both of those fine institutions provide colleagues with a Roth 403(b) option. Although many faculty members at other campuses have encouraged the offering of Roth 403(b) accounts, mainstream Louisiana higher education continues to show little interest in this prospect. In response to Faculty Senate queries, ThirtyNorth retirement expert Marcel Dupré has written to recommend pushing for an "open-architecture," "self-directed brokerage" system for retirement accounts, noting that Pace University, where such a system was recently installed, offers an excellent, online-accessible summary of this "architecture" for those who would like to learn more.

## Alexandria Campus Now Visible 24/7

Those who regularly attend the "Alexandria Summit Meetings" of higher education faculty leaders have a special and warm place in their hearts for the LSUA campus. Now, the ever-inventive Chancellor David Manuel—and, presumably, his successor, Paul Coreil—have made, and with luck will continue to make, the beautiful, airy, and award-winning LSUA quadrangle visible 24/7. Manuel et al. have installed a new web cam showing the LSUA Quad as it appears from the windows of the Student Center. Additional web cams allow visitors to view the baseball and the



LSUA web cam brings viewers 24/7 view of the Quad

golf complexes. Owing to IT resource limitations, each view is limited to two minutes, but a quick click will refresh the view, allowing another 120-second experience of central Louisiana's most beautiful campus. Enjoy the view [online!](#)

## LIFESTYLE (continued)

A fine example of this kind of formal austerity might be the mysterious moving ball in the Town Center shopping center in which Whole Foods is located. At the intersection between the fashion (frivolity) and food (necessity) segments of this affluence-soaked village of vendors, a large, roseate granite ball rests on an urn from which water inexplicably wells up and spills asymmetrically outward, driving what seems otherwise to be a frictionless sphere. Standing atop a robust ground mosaic of multi-colored stone slabs, the fountain emanates a sense of infinite smoothness that eases the hubbub of what Wordsworth called getting-and-spending, that creates a tiny island of peaceful simplicity in the midst of vanity fair. Although positioned at the vertex of the two great wings of Town Center, the fountain nevertheless seems somehow out-of-the-way and even dwarfed or misplaced amidst the parapet-strewn castle of America's least alternative counter-cultural food source and alongside the blaring windows of dress shops aimed at differing levels of overall prosperity. Town Center, after all, is not in a true town nor is it at the center of anything. Its decentered, anti-semantic fountain both explains the venue in which it resides while it inadvertently symbolizes escape from those impostor centers of attention that keep the cell-phone generation overly engaged.



Mall of LA Fountain

Fundamental, geometric fountains can be favorites of enterprises trying to modernize.

Secular insofar as they proclaim no specific ideology yet religious insofar as they applaud the fundamental forms that identify an orderly universe, geometrically preoccupied fountains allow everyone to feel wanted or connected. They provide a clean tablet on which to project the hopes of any creed or community. It is not surprising that the Mall of Louisiana, when it expanded its "Boulevard" in an attempt to recapture market share from Town Center, should also deploy a spherical fountain. Simpler and rather less successful than the Town Center counterpart, this aqueous spheroid pops water into the air and allows it to lap down into an urn-like pool that faintly suggests Louisiana sugar cauldrons. The little water ball near the back door of the Mall of Louisiana seems almost as if it were a backup piece to those who are not quite prepared to handle its more aggressive counterpart, a giant, towering, rectilinear obelisk surmounted by what looks somewhat like a hibachi grill. From this Benihana bin, water spills a prodigious distance into highly regulated, linear streams. Somewhat futurist in tone, the fountain recalls the early modernist (or, some might say, fascist) look of the new state capitol building or of some quarters at LSU. Nevertheless, architects have so successfully modulated this hard edge with soft and wistfully sonic water that this fountain seems more to evoke the good part of the bad old times and to look forward to a new day than to bog down in undeserved nostalgia.



Mall of LA Ball Fountain

Nostalgia to the point of kitsch is endemic to some fountains. Admittedly, designers often have few choices. As was noted in the recent February issue of the *Newsletter*, the clumsy rendering of Christopher Columbus that seems to be running from the casino and heading for the ticket window at the River Center (while balancing a sextant more in the manner of a trained seal than of an accomplished mariner) recalls a vast worldwide inventory of monuments that celebrate the wrong person in the wrong way in the wrong place. Funded by the Italian American society in an attempt to claim the Spain-funded sailor for their own, the Columbus memorial is, in fact, a fountain, and a fountain that raises questions. Two of those questions include, "why is Columbus, who could sail a perfectly watertight boat, wading in a little pool of minimally moving water?" and "why is Columbus, who made his name exploring Poseidon's realms, walking away from, rather than toward, a navigable river?"



Manship Center Fountain

Far more successful among the traditional, representative fountains is the two-installation array at perpetually bankrupt Perkins Rowe. There, in a piazza that is probably the only successful evocation of a city square in this otherwise excruciatingly cramped development, rises a jovial ensemble of sea sprites, fish, wading birds, and water bearers, all of them whimsically spraying in this or that direction but without overcrowding the scene with too many misdirected jets. The iconography of this fountain is a bit confused,—the identity of the female figure atop the fountain is vague and her water-dispenser looks somewhat like the oil can of the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*—yet the



Perkins Rowe Fountain

fountain, overall, celebrates fun and indulgence, an effect amplified by its juxtaposition against the pleasingly bulbous and screen-enlivened façade of the Cinemark theater. The designers have also cheerfully diminished the pomposity of what could have proved disproportionately ambitious by juxtaposing this grand fountain against a far more humorous vessel just around the corner, where a pair of genuine Louisiana alligators stand athwart a kind of overflowing gumbo bowl, spraying water jets at tangents to the vat and thereby setting up a swirl beneath a hemispherical sheath of water drapery. The thoughtful designers have made a clear break with generic neoclassicism by playing with reptilian forms as folks nowadays actually see them, with a tiny touch of cartoon-like mirth in their eyes. Farewell cranky crying crocodiles!

As the Perkins Rowe alligators demonstrate, fountains discuss ideas through indirection, whether through the perfectly askew but also perfectly aimed spray that we might expect from a waterworks-adept alligator or whether through simplification. An attempt at celebration through simplification seems to have been made in the rambling array of pools that weave through the city government and River Center buildings and that seem to pop up on the levee alongside the seldom-used paddlewheel dock and near the aisle of flags that have flown over the Louisiana territory. Perhaps these pools were meant to reverence the early canoe-traveling settlers as they made their way to a new life through eddy and puddle; perhaps they were a statement in Disney-style recreational minimalism like that found in the decaying San Antonio River Walk. One way or another, the way has been lost.



Perkins Rowe Alligator Detail

(continued on page 7)

## Arts Alliance Incubates in Engineering, CMDA

In the upside-down world of modern academe, in which preparation for service as a night manager at a fertilizer plant draws more applause from the government than does the search for gravitational waves, production seldom counts as productivity. Engineering and the arts, which produce objects, events, and experiences, lack the prestige enjoyed by higher education leadership, which rather measures than engages in production. Under such circumstances it is all the more remarkable that ever-able Engineering Dean Richard Koubek and entertainingly erudite arts administrator Larry Kaptain are attempting a dramatic righting of academic priorities by engaging their schools as charter members of A2RU, or Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities, a coalition that numbers among its members such institutions as MIT, Stanford, Florida, Johns Hopkins, and now little old LSU. A2RU affirms the centrality of the arts to the creative process. It creates contexts within big-ticket research institutions in which STEM and fine arts idea mavens may connect, collaborate, and, above all, conquer the empires of the imagination. This bold undertaking addresses the practical—the necessity of training problem-solvers through high-intensity exchanges between doers, thinkers, and innovators—while it centralizes the basic research and exploratory functions of the best academies. Declaring LSU to be "at a crossroads of self-examination," Koubek and Kaptain have proposed to LSU's Transition Advisory Team a "unique LSU campus initiative," "enOvation," that would promote collaboration among students in engineering and the performing arts. The *Newsletter* offers its own ovation to these pioneers of profundity, colleagues who are going the extra mile in a time of shortage to maintain LSU's dignity as an oasis of ingenuity.



Patrick F. Taylor Hall, home of LSU Engineering

Music and Dramatic Arts Building



## Northwestern State at Six Furlongs

Over the last several months, the *Newsletter* staff has followed the curious process by which regional institutions place expensive recruitment billboards in prominent locations, often in each other's territory, the most recent example being the outdoor marquee advertising the ULM lifestyle that has popped up near the two adult bookstores along Interstate 10 in Egan. Yet another billboard has now sprung up near Vinton, Louisiana. Strategically positioned only a few miles south of Delta Downs race track, a surefire spot to find entrants who can go the distance and thereby help with LAGRAD act targets, the new magenta-and-cornflower banner announces the wonders of Northwestern State University while also boasting about online education opportunities. The suggestion seems to be that one can qualify for a career while enjoying the Natchitoches meat-pie lifestyle yet while also never veering far from the \$2 win-place-show window.

## LIFESTYLE (continued)



Our Lady of Mercy sculptures

Somewhat more successful, in the way of ad hoc abstract iconography, is the little pool and alcove in the LSU quadrangle, which, over the years, has hosted an assortment of water-venting figures. A welcome break from the symmetry of the quadrangle, this fountain makes the simplest of nods to the peculiar, slightly bumbling mixture of Baroque and Greek Revival idioms that has created the architectural hodgepodge of Louisiana. A soaring success in this genre, on the other hand, is the beautiful reflecting “pool of prayer” lovingly situated between the church and the adoration chapel at Our Lady of Mercy. There, unexpected recapitulations of the holy trinity arise from three strong but discrete vertical jets that image hope and heavenward aspirations. A grouping of the Virgin Mary with the Fatima apparition children reinterprets the triune thinking of Christianity in ways that are simultaneously traditional and gender- and role-redefining. The

elegant form of the pool and the dark, deep color produced by the stone basin convey a refreshing sense of permanence and immensity within friendly human measure.

Fountains can make similar statements through opposing means. The essence of a fountain is a contrariety: water coming down as a result of water going up. Three great fountains in the greater Red Stick area examine the essential features of a fountain—wetness, gravity, frivolousness, fundamentality—in contrasting ways. Way out on the edge of Ascension Parish, lavish Houmas House Plantation, with its pair of top-flight restaurants and its magnificent gardens, features a complex of waterworks that includes a cascade, an artificial pond, an assortment of spigots, and a showpiece fountain, all apparently interconnected yet all diverse and discrete. The gigantic Houmas House installation, in its relentless artificiality, ends up passing as authentic insofar as it is honestly unrepentant in its unabashedness and wholeheartedly committed to its applause for the adaptability of water. Visitors can enjoy water as the centerpiece for restaurants worthy of attention from The Food Network (Chef Jeremy Langlois was a runner-up on Chopped and Emeril Lagasse has produced a cookery special in the Houmas gardens); they can imagine the artificial, sculptural frogs cavorting in their vegetally vivid pond and can even fancy that they are living through *The Wind in the Willows*; and they experience a waterfall that is occasionally dyed some seasonally appropriate color (such as pink for Valentine’s Day). At the other end of the aesthetic spectrum is the hyper-modern animated water sculpture that continually reinvents the façade of the Shaw Center in downtown Baton Rouge. There, a straightforward and yet ever-varying rank of powerful but also potentially subtle nozzles maintain a continual play of form, light, temperature, and, at night, color. The front elevation of the Shaw Center, unfortunately, is all but invisible, having failed in the intended project of redefining the waterfront, yet the few who linger on the last bit of ground before the river will be rewarded by an ever-evolving symphony of watery wonders.



Houmas House Cascade



Albasha Fountain

The Good Book tells us that the last shall be first, and so it is that, in its own quiet way, the most laudable fountain of all is the easily neglected spray within the atrium of the first Albasha Lebanese restaurant at Bluebonnet and Interstate 10. There is no telling how many university people have passed by this simulated well, tossing, if not their three coins, then at least their three falafel fees into the support of Mediterranean cuisine. The Albasha fountain evokes the full spectrum of cultural memories, from Aegean courtyards to Parisian cafés. Nothing fancy and yet perfectly adapted for its central and centralizing position, the great fountain of Albasha earns floor space that might be dedicated to revenue-producing diners precisely because it is, in its understated way, the “moussaka magnet” that drew and continues to hold Albasha’s loyal clientele.

The summer in Louisiana is wet. Why not enjoy nature’s most translucent element at its best? This summer, take a look at, and maybe a dip in, the fountains that refresh our village.

## LSU Foundation Predicts Massive Success

No one was ever hurt by setting bold goals. Proceeding without evidence sometimes works; neither Galileo nor Kepler ever visited any of the planets whose orbits they predicted. Joining these forward-looking stargazers is the LSU Foundation, which has unveiled a boldly spare [strategic plan](#) comprised of four principles—“invest in people”; “redesign organization and operations”; “strengthen cross-campus collaboration”; and “execute large-scale fundraising efforts”—and including a fundraising target double the present rate. No details have been provided as to how this will happen, but, then, no one was asking for the fine points when St. Joseph Cupertino levitated in the cloister!



St. Cupertino Demonstrates FundRAISing

## Nationwide Senate Pressure Mellows Mellen

Efforts by Faculty Senates occasionally verge on the quixotic. Tilting at windmills, they work in the open spaces between wind and power. Skeptics doubted that faculty shrieks could dissuade publisher [Edwin Mellen](#) from its lawsuit against Canadian librarians who, in blog comments, questioned the level of peer review activities at that publishing firm. Now, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports, Mellen has caved under the pressure of faculty outrage. Louisiana faculty governance played a prominent part with a [resolution](#) calling for an end to the persecution.

## BRCC-LSU Partnership Raises Rural Eyebrows

One odious consequence of the current centralization of educational policy is that regional campuses not only lack, but *must* lack leadership. Campus presidents and chancellors can only survive in their positions by complying with edicts from Baton Rouge. Nevertheless, now and then, outside observers notice that there are reasons for unstated chagrin on high-performing “feeder” campuses. Up and down the LSU System, for example, learned heads are wondering why LSU A&M should enter into a partnership with Baton Rouge Community College while downplaying the rural campuses that bring the beneficiaries of the land-grant mission to the Baton Rouge behemoth. True, urban two-year schools provide many a fine student, but the marvelous marriage of furrow and folio that characterizes a statewide institution requires something more than telling the land-loving campuses not only not to speak now but also to forever hold their peace.

## Strumming with the Stars



Time to Remember Rural Campuses

Longing for the good old days of *Hollywood Talent Scouts* and *The Amateur Hour*, the *Newsletter* staff is always looking for new talent. A new star has erupted into the firmament over western Louisiana: LSUE Chancellor William “Bill” Nunez has debuted both live and online with a

banjo-enhanced vocal rendering of that old standard, *The Midnight Special*. The amazingly tuneful Nunez captured ovations from the Rotary Club of Eunice as he plucked and strummed his way into music history and local stardom. The Nunez debut video may be viewed [online](#). Congratulations to Bill Nunez for reviving the banjo as an avenue to celebrity!

## Parking Garage: Ribbon Ready

LSU’s perpetually delayed parking garage—compare its construction to the hypersonic speed at which a similar structure at McNeese State University is coming together—finally opened on March 1st, welcoming transient parkers to a multi-deck parking extravaganza at bargain-basement rates of \$1.50 per hour. Rumors of a ribbon cutting abounded in the weeks following the unveiling, culminating in an official opening ceremony April 5th.



New Parking Garage, Raphael Semmes Road Entrance

## CFCU: The Calculation

Banks everywhere favor pastel colors. Their pamphlets abound with images of summer vacations, often by grandchild-toting retirees, in semi-anonymous, generic lands abounding in pristine beaches and fields of flowers. So it is that Campus Federal Credit Union, banker to a very large number of academic personnel in all higher education systems, has unveiled an assortment of service fee hikes in Capri-color-scheme pamphlets featuring windblown scarves and smiling faces. Most of the reconfigured accounts will be re-denominated “Classic,” which, of course, is a witty way of recognizing that there is little that is more “classic” than the increase of prices. Readers of the *Newsletter* know that CFCU is a great favorite of the academic set owing to its congenial administration and its tireless commitment to faculty economic empowerment. For that reason, we greet the new service fee schedule with a friendly calculation. Under the new scheme, a depositor may escape charges either by maintaining a \$5,000.00 average balance in all accounts or by completing fifteen transactions with the CFCU debit card. At the present rate of expansion in the stock market, the \$5K balance is clearly not worth the \$8.00 exemption. The fifteen transactions is a different matter. A person who has a 1% cash-back credit card would only save money if the total value of all fifteen transactions remained below \$800.00, or below roughly \$54.00 average per transaction. Serial bubble-gum purchasers will profit from this arrangement; customers with expensive tastes may lose. We suspect that most CFCU depositors average more than that sum with each use of the palm-size plastic. For those who intend to stay on with CFCU, therefore, the wisest course is to invest the \$5K minimum deposit, pay the eight smackers monthly fee, and use a cash-rebate credit card for all transactions.

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## Financial Education Seminar for All Faculty

A remarkable contradiction of Louisiana academic life is the contrast between the assumption by governing oligarchies that rank-and-file faculty members know nothing about running a university and the assumption that those same faculty members are fully prepared for administering the large portfolios and complex investments that comprise their retirement portfolios and other assets. The quasi-private state agency that regulates retirement funds, TRSL, excludes financial education from its roster of responsibilities. The current vendors—TIAA/CREF, ING, and VALIC, plus a few legacy providers—inundate investors with flyers rich in pictures and slogans but low in technical advice. Online or print publications explaining the various funds and strategies available to academic employees or helping those professionals plan their trajectories through their financial lives are not only scarce, but non-existent. Vendor “reps” often turn out to be part-timers or amateurs. To remedy this problem, the LSU Faculty Senate has partnered with Campus Federal Credit Union and investment firm ThirtyNorth to provide a “Financial Education Presentation for Faculty” in which highly qualified financial advisors, experts, and investors will help colleagues to increase their financial literacy and to deal with both the challenges and the opportunities that present themselves to Louisiana’s most educated wage earners. The presentation is open to all faculty members at higher education institutions in Louisiana. It will be offered at two times—9:00 and 11:30—on April 23rd in the Capital Chamber of the LSU Union. Those attending the first seminar will enjoy a continental breakfast; those enrolled in the second will relish lunch, all courtesy of Campus Federal Credit Union. If you are interested in attending, please drop a note to Kevin Cope at [encope@lsu.edu](mailto:encope@lsu.edu). An advertisement for this event appears elsewhere in the *Newsletter*.



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## LSU Catches Up with Faculty Senate, Launches Online Catalog

Only a few months after the LSU Faculty Senate released its updated and highly illustrated version of the LSU Faculty Handbook, LSU itself got in the e-access game with the early unveiling of its slick new online general catalog, billed by Media Relations as “The Next Chapter” (*Newsletter* editors were unaware that previous catalogues had featured chapters, but, then, what is accuracy in an institution that declared Curley Hallman’s “system” the answer to everyone’s problems?). Although still in the process of reaching its potential with regard to the use of illustrations and campus-derived imagery, the new catalogue functions with speed and efficiency. Searches are easy; clickable marginal guides aid navigation; information is organized thematically, in the way that online users have come to expect. The developers of the catalogue seem a little bit preoccupied with the smart phone at the expense of the more congenial full-size monitor, but hopes are high that the catalogue will eventually give a good look to all platforms (starting, perhaps, with a higher-contrast, less austere font that is currently dizzying readers’ eyes).

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## Amorous Economy Energizes Union Square

The spring season—the season of fresh love—is notorious for compounding mediocrity with gouging. Come Valentine’s day, plain-Jane restaurants feel emboldened to charge Zsa Zsa Gabor prices while jewelers target that flush young beau who is ready to spring for a big sparkly rock for his inamorata’s acquisitive finger. Reversing the trend toward low vernal value, The Club at Union Square (formerly the LSU Faculty Club) has continued its race toward culinary prominence through a Valentine promotion: free appetizers to any diner purchasing an entree. Long overdue, such promotions are sure to make The Club at Union Square a genuine dining destination. Only one raindrop in this puffy spring cloud: Jason Tolliver, conceiving genius behind the Union Square development, is en route to Arizona. Never chickening out when it comes to making good offers to catering experts, Barry Goldwater’s home state has plucked off yet another promising young member of the LSU administrative community.



Chef Jon Jackson’s Scrumptuous Appetizers Tempt Any Lover

## New Retirement Plan Graphics Available

The most ingenious zoologists shake their heads when it comes to classifying the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana, which, with respect to tackling the problems of the retirement plan, behaves like the swift ostrich when sticking its head in the sand and like the slow snail when growing faculty assets (and when munching incrementally but destructively at management fees). Faculty, however, continue to fight for fairness. Benefits expert Professor Roger Laine and HRM guru A. G. Monaco have recently prepared a suite of charts that illustrates the inadequacies of Louisiana higher education retirement plans with an elegant, easy simplicity. The new charts compare Louisiana plans to the offerings at other schools and highlight the dangers in the new “cash balance” plan. See [Roger’s charts](#), view [A. G.’s graphs](#), and read [A. G.’s flyer](#) online.

## Twelve O’clock High or Tea at 4:00?

It looks as if LSU was once again jilted at the altar by another of its less-than-grateful favorite sons. After having been demoted from live action to Skype by terminal-degree-free consultant Jeff Selingo, LSU officialdom held great hope that job-jumping president Gordon Gee might zoom in on his private jet to enjoy an afternoon of banter with SSA Consultants about the LSU reorganization. Gee, whose *Chronicle*-reported habit of keeping himself going with blueberry breakfast drinks is only outdone by his taste for the even more refined repast of applause, followed Selingo in staging a no-show followed by a semi-functional Skype appearance, citing the great midwestern blizzard as the excuse for his absence. Trouble is, a check of the federal NOTAMS—the “notices to airmen” that report unusual conditions in and around airports—shows no indication of any closures, on the appointed day, at the three airports near Columbus, Ohio. Perhaps the celebrity president simply had something better to do at 4:00 pm that day—say, a blueberry-infused tea?

## Mason Media Moves Multiply

Although faculty members have often disagreed with the Southern University System President Ronald Mason, there is no denying that the guy has a knack for media, a knack which is lacking among many of the other, clumsier education chiefs. When tempers again flared over the contract with EOServe, the online service provider for the Southern campuses, Mason got down and dirty in the debate arena, mixing it up with faculty members and showing a level of spark seldom seen in the age-encrusted oligarchy ruling Louisiana higher education. Mason’s latest—or at least most recently detected—move is the creation of a splendidly designed scrolling news bulletin. After clicking for the latest *issue*, the web visitor is taken to a long but wonderfully visually balanced scroll of Southern-related events or accomplishments. Each item is carefully counterpointed by a miniature illustration that serves as a visual caption to the report. Free of clutter, the online bulletin could qualify for an award from the most minimalist of modern designers at the same time that it expresses a degree of festivity much needed in the somber spaces of Southern. Congratulations to President Mason for putting another brick in the road to success.

## CLCU Goes Orbital

For many years, "CLCU," the Conference of Louisiana Colleges and Universities, has barely managed to get its meeting off the ground. Which is a shame, for that annual gathering of faculty and administrators from both public and private institutions in every Carnegie category has long provided the only avenue for cross-platform discussion concerning the future of Louisiana higher education as a whole. Continuing an upward trajectory begun last year, the 2013 springtime CLCU meeting, under the direction of Chancellor Thomas Warner of highly successful Nunez Community College, drew a capacity crowd to the Lod Cook Center in Baton Rouge. Following welcoming remarks by Chancellor Nunez, ALFS (Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates) President James Robinson and LSU Faculty Senate President Kevin L. Cope delivered keynote comments that raised questions about the nature of the "workforce" in "workforce development"; about the education of students headed for non-profit occupations; about the data concerning the economic efficiency of privatized institutions; about the relative merit of online and live education; about cultural stewardship in the universities; about regional education and regional identity; and about the working conditions for faculty, including options for faculty to move among campuses and the promotion of a culture of criticism among intimidated colleagues. Rex Nelson, President of the Arkansas Independent Colleges and Universities [Association], provided a witty plenary address in which he distinguished between the "bigger is better" and the "better is [really] better" slogans. The big hit of the day was a gigantic panel including representatives from government, community colleges, public universities, and private colleges as well as no less than three legislators. Delgado President Monty Sullivan reached toward a new definition of "relevance" in curricula; controversial representative John Bel Edwards opened new vistas for higher education after the Jndal period; Peter Fos, President of UNO, re-intoned Robinson's and Cope's comments regarding regional, urban universities; and, in a surprise unveiling, new Holy Cross College President Ronald Ambrosetti offered up powerful but witty suggestions regarding the links between the traditional liberal arts fields and contemporary workforce training needs. An organization that was formerly grounded has suddenly lifted off into orbit and beyond! Congratulations to CLCU and to all the educated folks who support it.



Ronald Ambrosetti, New President of Our Lady of the Holy Cross College

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## For-Profit Transfer Credit and the Governor's Brother

Those ready to climb the craggy and twisted Matterhorn that is Louisiana higher education policy often encounter unexpected avalanches of upsetting information. So it is that the *Newsletter* recently received a packet from a Texas lawman containing an explanation of the seemingly inexplicable rush away from standards by Louisiana's metrically-obsessed Governor when it comes to transfer credit for courses taken at private, for-profit schools. The Governor, it seems, is pushing a court case that would require the Louisiana Department of Education to recognize credits from for-profit schools without the usual array of assessments that we have come to expect from the geniuses on "the fourth floor." It would only be a matter of time before students progressing through the grades would present their privately acquired credits to the registrars of Louisiana higher education institutions in the expectation of their currency at ULM, SELU, McNeese, or LSU. Investigation reveals that the lead attorney for the for-profit schools is none other than Nikesh Jindal and the law firm of Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher for which the junior Jindal works. For a full analysis of the skullduggery, visit the Texas lawman's analysis [online](#).



For-Profit Credit--Not the First Time Transfers have Cost Monarchs National Office

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## New Tech Transfer Metrics Explode Funding Myths

In its endless but not altogether futile quest for inside information, the *Newsletter* occasionally discovers—usually through roundabout routes—the truth beneath propaganda, especially propaganda disguised as indubitable axioms. The latest treasure-trove of information to be uncovered is a colorful, graphics-rich report entitled *LSU System Activity Metrics: Research and Technology Transfer*, a review of the economic impact, during the last several years, of high-tech research at the self-styled flagship campus. Although the data in the report is specific to LSU, they surely epitomize similar states of affairs at other Louisiana campuses. What do the data reveal? First, that it is not possible, as Louisiana's Governor alleges, to do more with less. Economically productive research hit a peak in late 2010, the point at which the leftover economic momentum from previous, less tax-averse administrations began to peter out. Second, research productivity surged briefly in 2006, amidst post-Katrina chaos and during an interval of admittedly involuntary government spending. Third, we learn that the cult of privatization cannot deliver promised salvation: that the majority of universities earn only a fraction of a percent of their budgets from business-relevant research. Fourth, readers of this report quickly figure out that universities really are non-profit entities rather than businesses. This quietly powerful study of the limits of the business model is well worth a view.

## King-Spielberg Shocker Hits Stands

The presidential search at LSU is a record-setting venture: more Attorney General opinions than any previous hiring spree; less diversity than any similar project in America; a faculty vote of no-confidence only days after the announcement of the selection; and, now, the release of an online novel, written by a prominent Cal State Long Beach faculty dissident, that is based on the exploits of the incoming President. Dramatically entitled *Thug*, Brian Alan Lane's document-rich historical thriller-exposé sends readers spinning through a maelstrom of schemes, adventures, and skullduggery that lands the reader at the midpoint between Al Capone, Gordon Gee, and flying-saucer pilot ET. Celebrity names, including that of *Jaws* producer Steven Spielberg (an expert on short lives on long beaches, one might say), pop up and fade out with a delicacy that would draw envy from an Umberto Eco. The novel *Thug* is available free, [online](#).



First LSU President to Attract an Online Novel

## Newsletter Continues to Welcome Anonymous Input

The *Newsletter* staff understands that many persons in the academic community lack adequate job or other security to risk speaking too loudly. Therefore, the *Newsletter* welcomes anonymous input. We extend our thanks, for example, to the correspondent who signs himself only as "Knowledgeable." "Knowledgeable," please feel free to write at any time! The *Newsletter* also thanks the anonymous correspondent who provided a long list of persons appointed to high positions without proper searches or interviews and who chronicled the fashion in which assorted interim favored persons slipped into permanent posts during what might be called "The Great Age of Student Body Presidents" in the higher education financial world. That era, and its dubious works, will soon be the subject of a *Newsletter* feature. If readers would like to send anonymous information to the *Newsletter*, mail that input to The LSU Faculty Senate, 3194 Pleasant Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70803.

## One Runner-Up in the LSU President Derby Revealed

The *Newsletter* applauds the efforts of both *The Baton Rouge Advocate* and *The LSU Reveille* to obtain the names of candidates for the LSU System Presidency. The *Advocate* has already filed, and the *Reveille* may soon join, the legal crusade. Meanwhile, we can take at least some solace in the fact that a search involving so many persons is unlikely to remain fully secret for long. So it is that the *Newsletter* has learned from faraway sources that Kansas University Provost Jeffrey S. Vitter made it as far as the semi-final round of the LSU Presidential Search. Vitter, who was a runner-up to Astrid Merget in the 2007 LSU Provost race, is the brother of Republican Louisiana David Vitter, who, despite his conservative stance regarding family values, has occasionally shown off his reservations about the completeness of the institution of marriage. But, then, perhaps the Vitters belong to the extended gubernatorial family. Does the foregoing support the thesis that the LSU presidential search was free from political influence?



"A G Answers" is your premier source of human resources management advice. LSU HRM Chief A. G. Monaco addresses *Newsletter* readers' questions about HRM and "employees' lives" in general. Have a pressing HRM issue for A G to address? Please send your queries to [encope@LSU.edu](mailto:encope@LSU.edu).



A G Monaco

A reader named Marvin in the New Orleans area writes:

Dear A G,

*I'm stumped by the paper and online statements the accompany all my benefits accounts. These documents are clumsy, hard to read, and impossible to interpret. The "LSU First" statement that comes after every doctor visit offers a gigantic number of figures and numbers for what seems like a simple transaction. There are countless entries that are lined up in thin columns, all in small type and with minimal explanation. The information provided is not the same on every statement (sometimes I see my "HRA" balance, sometimes I don't). My retirement account is even worse. I've worked in Louisiana higher education for nearly thirty years and have had the investment vehicles within my account changed several times, with the result that I have over eight fractional accounts within my supposed "account" and with the result that I can't track performance on much of anything. My quarterly statement from my retirement vendor is impossible to understand. It runs on for ten to twelve pages and follows a plan that looks like the master strategy for Louisiana road repair. How did we end up with so many crazy forms of documentation? Is there no state supervision? Where can a person turn to get help interpreting these materials? Thank you, A G, for your advice. — Marvin*

Dear Marvin,

I consider frustration proof that one is still alive and so nothing should make you feel more alive than those confusing forms designed by corporate entities.

The confusion caused by forms generated by health insurance entities is legendary and not just limited to LSU-First. My favorite is the form they send to you that looks like a bill, frightens you into thinking that you owe someone a lot of money, and then in the very last line announces that it is not a bill and you should not send any money.

When faced with a health insurance form that you do not understand the people to contact on campus are Karla Chelette, Belinda Doyle, and Carlos Malbrew in the Benefits Office. (Amy Amoroso, the other Benefits Team member, is out on a maternity leave of absence. So she is presently too busy reading her own numerous forms to help us interpret yours.) Telephone calls to any of them, or when possible an email with a scanned copy of the form attached, will help get you a translation.

Often insurance companies will delay payment or ask the health care provider to present them with more information. When that occurs the providers have been known to send a bill directly to you in hopes that you will pay them money the insurance company has not. This will also sometimes occur after the insurance company has paid the provider but has invoked their contract clause that only pays "usual and customary" amounts. Eventually when you realize that you were not required to pay the amount sent to you on the invoice you have to expend some real effort to get a refund. When confronted with an invoice that you believe the insurance company should have paid please check with the Benefits Office or with the insurance plan representative before considering paying the provider.

Regarding your ORP or 403(b) accounts, we have been pressuring the vendors to spend more time on campus and it is starting to garner results. In addition to increased marketing activities, the vendor reps have been scheduling appointments with clients far more often than they have in the past and, as a result, they are more available for explanations and consultations. If for any reason you do not get a response when seeking information or an appointment from your vendor's rep, alert me so that I can contact their regional or national office. I think it is important for you to meet with your representative at least once per year to discuss your account.

I would suggest that you never let pride get in the way of getting an explanation. If the form is confusing or inadequate in regard to your information needs contact HRM and we will try and get you a full explanation.

As to why these forms are so "crazy" and uninformative? The answer is that most are now designed to do one thing—never provide information the customer can later use in litigation. Unfortunately for all of us the emphasis on an informed customer was destroyed by the emphasis on litigation avoidance.

The state does not provide any oversight that we know of in regard to such forms and laws passed over the years to make the language used in the financial and banking arenas more understandable do not seem to be all that effective. I would hesitate to suggest that the state get involved in regulating such matters since most likely the work would fall to attorneys who view such matters in terms of risk avoidance rather than the distribution of knowledge.

Good luck

— AGM

## Regents Speaker Goes E-Missing

The Board of Regents office—the Commissioner of Higher Education—faces the formidable task of instructing the various "trustees" or supervisors of the four higher education systems in the art of higher education institutional stewardship. Given that trustees often come to the table with qualifications in such academic specialties as the bulk preparation of spicy chicken wings, the Commissioner can only content himself with a large-scale proportional increase in the proficiency rate (remembering that an increase from 1% to 2% increase is a 100% improvement). One of the well-intentioned projects of the Commissioner's office is the Regents Trustee Conference, in which members of the management boards brush up against visiting experts. Unfortunately, the highly politicized management cadre, almost all of which were appointed by one Governor, makes it impossible for the Commissioner to provide the kind of diverse expert opinion that the trustees need to hear. The result this year was a visit from the faculty-unfriendly Rick Staisloff, leader of RPK Group, a consulting firm that specializes in streamlining educational finance through consolidation, i.e., by putting trained professionals on the dole. A visit to Staisloff's page on the AGB (Association of Governing Boards) web site fails to turn up evidence of a terminal degree (admittedly giving him something in common with most Louisiana trustees) but records a long sequence of political and finance-related appointments. Staisloff, whose signature maxim is his tendentious allegation that "higher education's mission is not to create jobs for people in higher education," appears to have dumped one too many helpers in his own office. Despite an apostolic-level faith in system-level management and in modern office technology, a visit to Staisloff's web address draws only a "web site coming soon" page. Given that any adolescent can build a free web site with free services from a fistful of online services, it is hard to see how advice from a group that fails to develop even a single web page will solve Louisiana's technical education problems.



The Future of High Tech Education as Imagined by Louisiana Trustees

## Regional Unplugged

Readers of the agenda of the LSU Board of Supervisors may have noticed an obscure item on the March 18th docket, a "recommendation to reallocate remaining funds from the LSUE Classroom Community Education Building project for the replacement of science laboratory fume hoods." The wise use of surplus funds is laudable, but we have it on good authority that the savings may result from certain omissions in the aforementioned structure,

including a severe shortage of electrical outlets at student desks and work stations. Well, at least students won't be spending classroom time reading the online, electrically dependent *Newsletter!*



LSUE--Extra Money but Inadequate Juice



Professor J. Robinson

## Academic Boards without Meaningful Faculty Oversight

By James Robinson, LSU in Eunice ; President of the Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates

Academicians often assume that citing seminal studies and eloquently stating a premise will convert the public. A more open data driven approach. This may work for fellow academicians and students who are examined on those concepts. Board of Supervisor members as business and political leaders in contrast understand that their success in business and politics depends upon their ability to convince the general public through persuasion that their ideas are best. This disparity can produce a divide with Board members and academics that sometimes neither understands.

The [LSU Faculty Senate] vote of "no confidence" came as little surprise considering the structure of the LSU System Board of Supervisors. The Board is comprised of various components in society. Additionally, there is a rotating student member derived from the Student Government Associations in the LSU system who has a vote on the Board. However, there is not a member on the board which represents the faculty.

It is understandable that the Board needs to insure presidential candidates that their names would not be made public. Without this assurance, their tenure at the institutions that potential candidates currently occupy would be severely impacted. Therefore, to enable competent and recognized individuals to consider such a move, confidentiality is of the utmost necessity.

Assuming the necessity of confidentiality, any individual applying for the position must also view it as a positive career step. This step however is diminished by both financial and political concerns abounding within Louisiana's higher education system.

I was amused to see members of the Board of Supervisors were surprised that the faculty did not appear elated at their choice for president. After all, they assured faculty representatives that this was the best candidate and faculty would be well pleased.

The LSU faculty responded with a vote of "no confidence" for the System Board of Supervisors based on the perception of a lack of qualifications of the candidate and the secrecy in choosing the individual.

In his speech to faculty and students, Dr. Alexander made a point of noting that there were three faculty members on the selection committee. As these were not individuals selected by faculty, but rather appointed individuals, this was a moot issue. Anyone in academia long enough knows the possibility that any particular outcome can be attained with a judicial selection of appropriate members placed on a committee.

An obvious solution is to allow the LSU System Council of Faculty Advisors to select an individual who represents faculty on the LSU System Board of Supervisors as a non-voting member, thus averting constitutional issues. This would provide faculty input and oversight from a faculty member in whom the faculty has confidence both at the institution and system levels.

The Faculty Representative's ability to keep proceedings confidential may be a concern of administration. As this would be the responsibility of a single faculty member to maintain this trust for both him and the position, the faculty representative would be motivated to maintain confidentiality even more than the Board members.

There are great minds in business, politics and academia. I would hope these individuals recognize the importance of including a non-voting Faculty representative on the Board. The resultant outcome of doing so would strengthen the decision making process within this higher education Board and would dispel faculty concerns and issues.

## A True Story about an Elaborate Cover-up to Protect Bobby and Friends?

By Stephen Rushing, Southeastern Louisiana University

In 1998 a Southeastern professor filed a grievance with the SLU Grievance Committee against several offices, individuals and the SLU Research and Grants Committee for numerous alleged flaws in the funding process. Allegations included unfair treatment of faculty in the performing arts as well as practices that were improper (e.g. lack of a quorum and doctoring of minutes).

The Grievance Committee required a list of the policies that had been violated. When the professor told them what the violations were, the grievance committee determined that the SLU grievance procedure did not allow official actions of committees to be questioned (including the grievance committee itself?). The procedures specifically allowed for any allegation of unfair treatment and improper practices. The committee declared the professor's grievances "abandoned" for not following procedures while in fact, the committee abandoned them.

He then levied a complaint regarding the actions of the SLU Grievance Committee with then Provost Randy Moffett and President Sally Clausen. They both claimed not to have the authority to render a decision against that committee because their offices did not participate in the development of University grievance policies. This of course was absurd, as the policies had to be approved by their offices and the Board.

Faced with these circumstances he filed a petition with the Louisiana 19th Judicial Court. In 2003, the court did not find any genuine issues of material fact despite the fact it wrote "rationale was disputed as to, you know, how certain things happened or why with the grievances and the suspension."

(continued on page 11)

## Financial Education Presentation

For University Faculty

Brought to you by:



Topics Include:

- How to handle changes in your 403B
- Best practices to optimize your investment
- How to protect your investment in troubled economic times
- Economic outlook for 2013 and beyond

Two Sessions will be offered:

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

9:00 am - 10:30 am

LSU Union Capital Chamber

Continental Breakfast will be provided.

11:30 pm - 1:00 pm

LSU Union Capital Chamber

Lunch will be provided.

(Please note that both sessions will cover the same topics.)

RSVP: Contact Dr. Kevin Cope  
encope@lsu.edu | 225.578.2864

# JOIN LSUNITED TODAY

## WHO WE ARE:

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
- **SHARED GOVERNANCE** – Engage in collective advocacy and exercise our historical right of self-determination



A Vital LSU! A Vital Community!

Need more info? Contact us at  
[LSUNITED@LIVE.COM](mailto:LSUNITED@LIVE.COM)  
OR VISIT [LAE.ORG](http://LAE.ORG)



## GUEST COLUMN (continued)

The tenured faculty member was placed on leave, first with, then without pay. The professor was denied access to the grievance process, while at the same time a grievance was processed against him based upon allegations the court thought were not true. Did the court's decision present on-the-face contradictions?

Then, on to the Louisiana First Circuit Court of Appeal who ignored the contradictions and found that the professor did not have a First Amendment claim since his grievances were related to personal matters. The court failed to notice its own description of his grievances. "Numerous flaws in the university's professional funding process" and that the professor's first grievance was filed because funding had been denied him "and other members of the faculty." Were his grievances related to more than personal matters; did he have a First Amendment claim?

Upon the restoration of his access to the grievance process, the professor then appeared before the UL System Board of Supervisors Grievance Committee to complain about Moffett's and Clausen's abdication of authority. The committee refused to hear the substance of his complaint. They had changed their grievance policies limiting employee's speech. The full Board met to consider this complaint against Moffett and Clausen without giving the faculty member proper notice or an opportunity to speak.

The final stop was an Eastern District US Federal Court judge who while reviewing this Kafkaesque history, ordered the professor not to file a motion for reconsideration until after a certain ruling was made by the court. In that ruling, the court stated "No motion for reconsideration was filed by the plaintiff." Talk about a "bait and switch." The court then proceeded to declare his claims "abandoned" for allegedly failing to follow the court's orders. He had clearly followed them to a tee. Not only did the judge deny him access to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, she violated her own rules. Did the judge's actions prevent the judicial machinery from performing in the usual manner, its impartial task of adjudging cases?

So why go through so much trouble to deny this professor due process and freedom of speech? Could it be that evidence exists to prove that in January 2000 then UL System President Bobby Jindal rejected grievances and requests for investigations sent by the professor; that Jindal returned the professor's certified mail marked "refused"; and that the grievances and investigations involved Sally Clausen? Grievances must be processed through the System President by the way. Could it be that evidence exists to prove the System office had developed a short-lived policy ("just a few months") to refuse certified mail as an excuse? Could it be that politics was involved? Is this proof that Louisiana is still the northernmost banana republic in the Americas? What do you think?



### Spanish Town History Walking Tour Saturday, May 4, 9:15 a.m.

Learn about the Spanish Town neighborhood, its historic significance and the colorful architecture.

Tours begin at 9:15 a.m. at the Capitol Park Museum. Patrons are advised to dress comfortably. Walks may be cancelled for inclement weather. Tours generally last 60 to 90 minutes. All walking tours are free and open to the public and leave from the Museum lobby.

### The Science Cafe presents:

## Dr. Ed Overton

### Tuesday, April 30, 5:00 p.m.



A professor in the Department of Oceanography & Coastal Studies in the School of the Coast & Environment, Dr. Overton is an internationally respected oil spill expert who has testified before the federal government several times about the impact of the oil on the environment.

He appeared as a guest on the "Late Show with David Letterman."  
(a full story can be found here: <http://www.lsu.edu/departments/gold/2011/01/overton.shtml>).

*The doors will open for food, networking and giveaways at 5 p.m. and the talk starts at 6 p.m.*

EDITOR'S

## Note

Publication schedule for the remainder of AY2012-2013:

The final issue of the Faculty Senate Monthly Newsletter for this academic year is scheduled for May 14, 2013.

Publication will then resume in the fall, as usual!

Thank you for your readership.



Happy "Keep America Beautiful" Month, readers!



### LSU RETIREMENT PLANS:

THEIR CURRENT STATUS

A PRESENTATION BY TRSL ADMINISTRATORS  
FOLLOWED BY FACULTY AND STAFF QUESTIONS

- What will the "Cash Balance Plan" (CBP) mean for new hires?
- What changes have been made to the ORP for new hires?
- What is the status of pending litigation regarding the CBP?
- What bills have been filed in the legislature that might impact existing retirement plans?

Presenters:

*Dr. Lisa Honore, Public Information Director*  
*Jim Buras, Retirement Benefits Administrator*  
*Katerine Whitney, TRSL Deputy General Counsel*

April 9 (T), 3:30-5:00 pm

LSU Union Capitol Chamber

All LSU Faculty and Staff welcome

Sponsored by the LSU Faculty Senate and LSUnited



Published by [The LSU Faculty Senate](#)

Questions? Comments? Email: [lharmo3@lsu.edu](mailto:lharmo3@lsu.edu) or [cbro157@lsu.edu](mailto:cbro157@lsu.edu)

LOVE PURPLE  
LIVE GOLD