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Recommended Citation

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College. (2010). Faculty Senate Newsletter, March 2010. Retrieved from <https://repository.lsu.edu/senate-pubs/3>

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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

LSU FACULTY SENATE

Monthly Newsletter

March 31, 2010



President's Message

This third issue of the Faculty Senate Newsletter once again testifies to the vivacity of faculty engagement not only with teaching, research, and service but with the preservation and indeed upgrading of academic traditions both at LSU and worldwide. Colleagues have responded to the call for participation and for increased communication among the diverse subcultures within LSU and within academe. This diverse issue delivers a rich selection of news items: a story on Jane Chandler, of International programs; previews of coming faculty governance events; a guest opinion column by Faculty Senate Vice-President Pratul Ajmera; news stories on events up and down the sometimes creaky ladder of Louisiana higher education; a

practical tip for professionals; a humor section; and even a few exposés. A community production, this newsletter affirms the vitality of our intellectual community.

"Welcome" columns often include an op-ed comment or two. Claiming this privilege, I would like to suggest that now might be the time to help the administration apply the Chancellor's new "Change, Focus, Autonomy" program in a robust and literal way. "Change, Focus, Autonomy" is probably the most abstract and least memorable slogan to emerge from the University public relations machine, yet its unduly abstract content has some merit when re-linked to experience. For the administration, "autonomy" seems to mean financial independence from state-regulated budgets. That accountant's dream pales in comparison to what "autonomy" might mean in an institution animated by a clear sense of purpose and possessed of traditions that celebrate faculty achievement rather than chase an elusive, somewhat imaginary "ranking" or "excellence." "Focus" suggests that the administration should aim at particular goals (for example, choosing architects for new building projects who can devise creative solutions to the needs for physical space rather than puffing up overblown replicas of the central campus buildings) and that it should eschew undefined pursuits of "quality." The foregoing two adjustments would produce "change" in a University where the faculty are beleaguered by externally generated economic troubles and internally by outmoded administrative structures (such as the pyramidal management schemes that provide faculty with too few means of achieving daring, innovative projects). The administration has gotten the content right—change, focus, and autonomy are indeed important—but has inverted the sequence. It should seek autonomy (and all that it implies) by focusing and thereby inducing change. But, then we all get things upside down or backward now and then!

With all good wishes,

Kevin L. Cope, Faculty Senate President

"Double-Feature" Event to Enhance Chancellor-Senate Forum Tradition

Now in its second year, the "Faculty Senate-Chancellor Forum" series has provided members of the LSU community with an unprecedented opportunity to discuss both urgent and long-term concerns of all sorts, whether day-to-day services or long-term planning. Experimental, the series has been characterized by innovation. In line with this trend, the next Forum will break new ground. This Forum will feature not one, but two institutional leaders: our own Chancellor, Michael Martin, and Louisiana Tech President Dan Reneau. In this first-of-its-kind "executive encounter," Martin and Reneau will discuss and take questions and comments concerning the future of research universities in Louisiana, the status of higher education in an economically challenged state, inter-campus collaborative and cooperative opportunities, and a miscellany of similarly interesting issues. Never before in Louisiana have two campus leaders from two systems (the University of Louisiana System and the LSU System) squared off in so exquisite an arena as the new Claude Shaver Theatre, the venue for this Forum. This one is not to be missed! The event kicks off at 2 PM on April 15th. Refreshments will be provided beginning at 1:30.



LSU Chancellor Mike Martin



Louisiana Tech President Dan Reneau

Faculty Senate Meets with Board of Supervisors on Retirement Deficiencies

Many faculty members have been following the ups and more commonly downs of the LSU retirement programs (for more information see the continuously updated LSU Faculty Senate web site devoted to [benefits and retirement issues](#)).

At the March 5th meeting of the Board of Supervisors, LSU Faculty Senate President Kevin L. Cope explained to Board members the inadequacies of the retirement options and the deleterious effects of those shortcomings on hiring, retention, and the long-term financial health of faculty members. Cope was joined in his presentation by Robert Turner of the University of New Orleans, Scott Rubin of the LSU Health Sciences Centers, and LSU Benefits Committee Chair Roger Laine. The goal of this unusual multi-campus presentation was the acquainting of the Supervisors, who exert considerable political influence and enjoy a high degree of connectedness with decision makers, with the gravity of the retirement and benefits problem and thereby to recruit their aid in achieving an amicable resolution. Several Supervisors as well as campus Chancellors (from the other LSU institutions) expressed astonishment at the revelations included in the presentation. Although this problem will not be solved instantly, considerable progress is being made. Updates will follow.

CIO Brian Voss Proposes New IT Governance Plan

Chief Information Officer Brian Voss continues his streak of innovation with the unveiling of a proposal for a new model of IT governance at LSU. Voss's plan takes advantage of a number of extant committees but suggests the consolidation of some functions into more tightly organized and aligned working groups. Additionally, Voss's proposal seeks to clarify the respective roles of faculty, students, staff, and administration in achieving IT abundance. Voss's proposal, which received a highly favorable reception at the March Faculty Senate meeting, is the topic of Resolution 10-08, which can be accessed [here](#).

Upcoming Event

The Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates will meet on the LSU campus, in the Cook Room of the Lod Cook Center, on Saturday, April 17th, beginning at 12:30 pm. Speakers will include LSU System Vice-President Michael Gargano and LSU Faculty Senate President Kevin Cope; faculty members and leaders from across Louisiana will attend. Refreshments will be served.

Corrigendum

The February newsletter reported incorrectly that the University had no records maintenance program. Such a program was, in fact, established by PS-74. Unfortunately, funding to support and develop that program has been insufficient, leading to the present crisis in the preservation of LSU's documentary history. Apologies to Library Dean Jennifer Cargill for overstating the degree of neglect. We are hopeful that the new initiative will develop a program that is sustainable even in the midst of recession.

ADMINISTRATOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jane Chandler, Assistant Director, Development and Outreach, International Programs

Jane Chandler had been employed in the Office of International Programs at LSU for about a year in the Fall of 2001, when she took on a new position focusing in her area of expertise, international exchanges. Her first day on the job was September 11, 2001. She remembers watching the twin towers come down, feeling “distressed and helpless,” and she couldn’t help but wonder what effect such a tragedy would have on international relations and travel. It occurred to her, “People may not ever go abroad again!”

She recalls the ads on television and radio, the messages that answered a question on so many people’s minds at that time: “What can you do for America?” The ads urged citizens to give blood and donate money. Concerned about how to approach her first study abroad recruiting session in the wake of the tragedy, she says she was suddenly struck with “part of the answer to that question. So I went to the session and I blatantly stole the ad.” Imagining students faced with the question, “What can you do for America?,” Chandler provided an answer: “Give Blood. Donate Money. And Study Abroad.”

This story is evidence of the creativity with which Jane Chandler approaches her work as the Assistant Director for Development and Outreach in International Programs. It also reflects a central belief that she and those in her field hold: that international education and outreach promote world peace.



Chandler has worked at LSU for a total of 17 years, first teaching in the French department in the 1970s before moving to France, where she stayed for 22 years and taught French as a foreign language. She returned to LSU in 2000 and joined the staff of International Programs.

As it exists today, International Programs has been shaped by the 2009 merger of the LSU AgCenter’s International Programs unit and the Office of International Programs on the main campus. While other aspects of their work changed relatively little upon the merger, the approach to development on the main campus changed significantly, Chandler says, as they work to replicate effective models of development and outreach that the AgCenter has been practicing for years. The AgCenter has long focused on

obtaining donor funds for international agriculture projects and has successfully translated the concept of their rural extension programs at the state level into an international context.

“Give Blood. Donate Money. And Study Abroad.”

As Assistant Director, Chandler negotiates and establishes all international agreements that involve student mobility, as well as handles faculty exchanges for teaching and research. Because of the new focus on development, she is now actively involved in researching and seeking extramural funding opportunities. She is also adapting the AgCenter’s practice of “capturing specific information on faculty expertise that can be funded and exported to respond to real world challenges.”

Recent projects by Development and Outreach have included their work in five former Soviet republics, where they assessed food safety systems and government policy. These efforts engendered new legislation and national standards for food safety. They also worked with Ukrainian partners to provide an educational outreach system to assist privatized farmers in Ukraine. Currently Development and Outreach is conducting a Private-Public-Partnership program to combat Avian Influenza in Togo and Zambia.

Outside of the office, gardening makes Chandler feel “most centered.” Lately she’s been embarking on home improvement projects with her son, and as always, trying to tame her Siamese cat FouFou (which means “crazy” in French).

EDUCATION OPINION

Shared Governance - A Key to University’s Long-Term Success

Isaac Newton and James Maxwell needed only a few lines to describe classical laws of nature that apply universally in their respective fields. However, such precision is rarely possible to describe many mundane situations as typified by the recent 2000 page Health Care Reform Bill in Washington. The subject of this topic also lends to lengthy discussions, but in the age of thirty-second sound bites, a short note should suffice here.

Though frequently used, Shared Governance is a nebulous term. It has been discussed in detail [elsewhere](#). Among various attributes, it defines a process whereby authority in selected areas is delegated by the Governing Board to the Chancellor and through successive layers of management to the faculty and staff, who are experts in those selected areas. This model must work flawlessly for academic tasks such as faculty appointments, courses and curricula development, and tenure and promotion decisions, for a university to prosper in its mission of generating and disseminating knowledge.

It is crucial that the mechanism for receiving critical faculty, staff and possibly student inputs be developed and retained in all pertinent areas that affect them. Implementation becomes difficult when final decisions are made at various administrative levels, and a level of trust must be developed that assures the stakeholders that their inputs have indeed been seriously considered. For this, continuous vigilant efforts must be made to form and maintain clear communication channels between the administration and the faculty, staff and students. This challenging task has become more difficult in recent years due to high turn-over rates in key administrative positions in universities. On occasions, shortcomings in the routine operation may arise from apparently benign actions from an administrative view point. However, if the communication channels are good, such shortcomings can be overcome in a reasonable time before they become serious issues. An institution operating under such a model will prosper in its mission in the long run. (continued page 3)

Board Of Regents Proposes Statewide Admissions Requirements

Under pressure to promote a general increase in college-level enrollment and graduation rates, the Board of Regents has circulated a proposal for new minimum statewide admissions requirements for higher education institutions. Many of the proposed adjustments may benefit public higher education generally, but there is reason to fear that the requirements may impose an undue burden on LSU. For example, the number of exemptions to minimum requirements may be disproportionately reduced at the Flagship campus despite LSU’s superior record of advancing students in special situations to receipt of the bachelor’s degree. Additionally, arbitrarily imposed statewide minima may contravene the longstanding, AAUP- and SACS-approved tradition of faculty control over admissions. The Faculty Senate Executive committee continues to work with both Vice-Provost Stacia Haynie and the Academic Standards and Honors Committee to ensure that faculty admissions prerogatives take precedence over untested improvement schemes.

New Appointments to Senate Committees

Two Faculty Senate committees will soon benefit from the experience of seasoned colleagues.

The Museum and Performance Action Plan Task Force will be joined by Gus Kosoulas, who brings considerable expertise with regard to facilities usage and with regard to the budgeting of outreach programs. That same committee will also welcome Laura Lindsay, whose activities in the museum and performance community are widely applauded and who has graciously offered to lend her expertise with regard to arts administration and program development.

Additionally, The Student Aid and Scholarship Appeals Committee has found a new Chair. After several years of service, David Kurpius is stepping down, to be succeeded by Hector Zapata. Special thanks go out to David Kurpius for rebuilding this committee on a new model that features a stable of judges managed by a cooperative faculty and administration team. The arrangement has proved unusually successful and has drawn the attention of many peer institutions. Many thanks likewise to Hector Zapata for offering to take the helm of a committee that many students regard as among the most important and powerful on the campus.

Litigation: Big Money In, Big Money Out

Tiger fans bleed purple and gold, but occasionally LSU bleeds green, albeit with occasional recourse to transfusions. Two legal matters came before the LSU Board of Supervisors at the March meeting. On the “plus” side of the ledger is a new agreement between LSU and the Baton Rouge Department of Public Works that will require the Parish government to re-route and repair some crumbling portions of the sewer system that serves LSU. Estimated saving are roughly \$4,500,000.00 over the course of twenty years. On the “minus” side of the ledger is a settlement with Bernhard Mechanical Contractors related to a co-generation plant that a former LSU regime predicted would save vast sums of money and energy. That settlement: a payout of \$9,600,000.00 over the course of four years. The math exercise of the day: compare the rate of depletion implied by nine-and-one-half million over four years with the inflow rate of four-and-one-half million over twenty years and then think about the wisdom of top-down decision-making.

EDUCATION OPINION (continued)

An institution is not immune from external societal constraints and forces. These ubiquitous external political, financial and cultural forces sometimes tend to strengthen and sometimes tend to weaken the fabric of an institution. How does an institution retain its identity in difficult times when it is being pulled apart by different forces? How should it operate when the times are difficult? There is no quick or unique answer. Each situation will call for a different approach. What will be the role of shared governance in such cases?

Whatever actions an institution undertakes to chart its path through troubled water; it must make an all-out effort to retain the core mission of the institution, which is to generate and to disseminate knowledge. The institution must retain its shared governance principles during all times by developing and maintaining procedures that involve critical inputs from the affected stakeholders e.g. the faculty in academic matters. These include extreme financial situations such as furloughs, termination of academic programs and exigency. A well-developed process will do the least amount of damage to the institution during troubled times and will help it recover faster and stronger. There are forces that now increasingly want to apply a “business model” to institutions of higher learning. In this model, the CEO makes decisions based on limited input that need not necessarily follow a shared governance process.

The “business model” approach is attractive to various community business and political leaders and also to some within academia. Businesses rapidly respond to changes in the economic conditions. They are disproportionately focused on the next quarterly financial report. A business must make a profit in face of competition or otherwise face closure. These are not easy conditions in which they operate, survive or thrive.

However, higher education is NOT a business. Its primary goal is not to make a profit but to provide a crucial service to the society by which it can improve people’s lives not in the next calendar quarter but in the long run. Its main function is not to create jobs per se but to impart its citizens with knowledge and critical thinking skills so they can enter society with new tools and ideas and discover cures for diseases, create wonderful new products, reach new heights in arts and literature and build awe inspiring structures. This is not a utopian dream but what universities have actually done for society in past centuries. The track record is strong and universal.

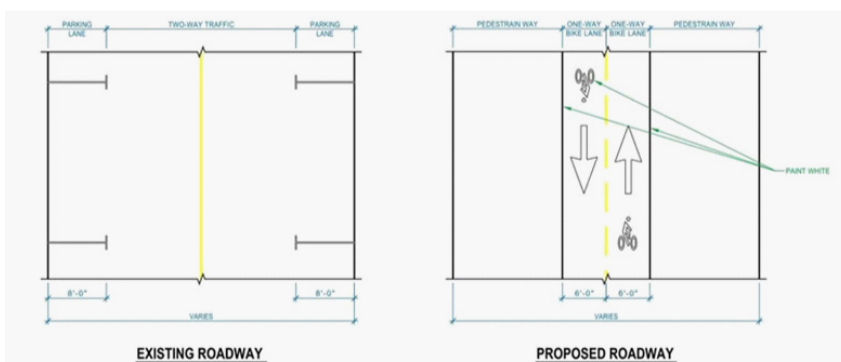
Discoveries and creative thoughts that provide deep insight into a subject matter occur in inexplicable ways. They do not follow a business plan. A business approach that tries to change the mission of an institution every time there is a perturbation in the local ambient has a potential to not only harm the institution in the long run but the very society it serves.

Should the university then insulate itself from the external forces? The answer is unequivocally no. But, it must seek changes that are optimal for its mission and not necessarily follow dictates from outside to satisfy some short term political or financial expediency. A university is akin to a large ship – a flagship that changes its course slowly and deliberately. A successful course correction requires shared governance.

Pratul Ajmera, Professor
Electrical & Computer Engineering

Movin’ On Up to Easy Streets II

For the last several months, indeed years, campus traffic-and-parking czar Gary Graham has supervised a gradual yet increasingly salutary reconfiguration of the campus, the first installment of which was Easy Streets I, which limited vehicle access to the campus and creates an assortment of pedestrian and traffic-minimized quiet zones. Vehicle maven Graham has now “gone the extra mile” with the release of “Easy Streets II,” a visionary plan for the further refining, calming, beautification, and reform of Tigerland. “Easy Streets II” includes proposals for additional pedestrian zones, reconfigured (angle rather than parallel) parking, one-way traffic circulation, bicycle lanes, and roadway realignment. The plan will be introduced in at least two stages, depending upon University finances, with the “common elements” of three possible scenarios emerging first, to be followed by more dramatic adjustments such as the curving and greening of some roads to create a gentler look and more sedate traffic flow. The Campus Multi-Modal Transportation Management Team, which authored the report, included Faculty Senate representation. Our Senate envoy gave enthusiastic approval to the proposal and hopes that funding can be found to support it.



Tower Drive, Before and After Easy Streets II

LSU, UNO Faculty Involved in 120-Hour Initiative

Last month, the Senate newsletter reported that the 120-hour degree mandate, which would limit BA and BS programs to 120 credit hours, was rolling over the horizon. That initiative is gaining steam with new directives emerging from the Board of Regents. Fortunately, the Faculty Senate is helping to make sure that this accelerating curricular locomotive is driven by genuine colleagues as well as engineers. As part of a pilot program and in an effort to keep LSU in the driver’s seat, LSU Faculty Senate President Kevin Cope met with LSU System Vice-President Michael Gargano, LSU Engineering Dean Richard Koubek, and University of New Orleans Engineering Dean Russell Trahan to explore the challenges presented to “accredited programs” (degree programs that must meet criteria imposed by professional, non-university accrediting associations) and to work up an innovative model for compliance with the possible 120-hour mandate. In another first, Koubek and Trahan will collaborate with fellow Engineering Deans around Louisiana to develop a forward-looking proposal.

Plan for South Campus Yet to Be Developed

Public news media have recently reported the possibility of a cooperative arrangement in which an assortment of industries, civic leaders, and academic institutions work together to advance the development of South Campus, the large tract of land between Nicholson Boulevard and GRSI Road. Although the faculty leadership welcomes the solicitation of support from industry, it continues to be concerned about the lack of an academic stamp, trademark, imprimatur, or character on the South Campus, for which an extant plan developed by a faculty-enriched committee has gone into cold storage. The Faculty Senate leadership believes that the South Campus will only thrive if it is at the very least a mixed-purpose academic environment influenced by the liberal arts, the arts, and the basic sciences as well as by industry. The Senate continues to monitor this situation and to work to preserve the academic integrity of the South Campus, integrity that has not been stressed in previous LSU administrations.

Visitor Parking Initiative

It has come to the attention of the Faculty Senate that legitimate visitors to the campus, including persons interested in funded research initiatives, have encountered obstacles in entering the campus owing to the “Easy Street” restrictions. Colleagues have voiced concern that research and funding opportunities have been lost owing to difficulties in arranging spontaneous lunch, coffee, or office meetings. Parking manager Gary Graham met with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to find a way to ease access to the campus for important visitors while preserving the limited-access program that has so successfully improved the campus environment. One proposed solution involves the prepayment by departments, professors, or grantees of temporary parking passes that could be activated online and reported to the traffic control booths. Graham is expected to report back to the Faculty Senate within the next few weeks.

SACS Interim Five-Year Report and Quality Enhancement Plan

Congratulations to Vice-Provost Stacia Haynie and the Institutional Effectiveness Review Board, which included Faculty Senate representation, for completing the five-year interim report and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for SACS (the body that accredits LSU and that de facto certifies that LSU may receive federal funds). These documents, now on their way to SACS, represent a new level of organization as well as achievement in that they demonstrate that LSU now has a continuing, stable, and dependable program of self-evaluation. A few awkward facts have been discovered—a handful of departments are forced to rely a bit too heavily on sub-Ph.D. instructional staff—but many of these deficiencies fall beneath the non-compliance threshold and are found at many institutions in our economically troubled times.

Revisions Made to Interim Appointment Policy

Followers of Faculty Senate minutiae may have observed that, for several weeks, Senate Vice-President Pratul Ajmera has been working sedulously with Vice-Provost Chuck Wilson on a revision of PS-1. The early “PS” (“policy statement”) documents tended to cover large swaths of administrative territory. Ajmera and Wilson have focused on the most important section of PS-1: the language relating to interim appointments, especially at the level of Chair and Dean. Through admirable cooperation, Ajmera and Wilson have hammered out a revision of PS-1 that regulates interim appointments and that provides for checks, balances, and evaluations in this administrative process. Congratulations and thanks to Ajmera and Wilson for their keen legal reasoning.

On the Lighter Side: The New Administrative Lexicon

The editor of the newsletter, being much enamored of lexicography and of proper usage, desires to give proper definitions and analyses of the words and phrases currently comprising the discourse of academic administration. It has been observed that at least one of the following four words or phrases appears in almost every document or speech by an administrative official, making their proper understanding essential. Those words or phrases:

“Conversation.” Despite its association with communication, this paradoxical word sends a signal that discussion has ended. “We can have that conversation [about issue X, Y, or Z]” means “I don’t want to talk about that item now or probably at any time” and sometimes also “this is a command situation, with conversation being forbidden.”

“Strategic.” A word (also used as an adverb, “strategically”) that means nothing at all but that is deployed in order to make any other word, phrase, or sentence sound important. A typical statement: “We need to plan strategically to complete our sampling of the Chimes beer menu if we are to be positioned to compete on a national level with strategic programs in ale selection.”

“Metric.” This word means exactly what “measure” means (e.g., “we can assess that phenomenon using the following metric/measure”). Unlike “measure,” however, “metric” will procure the user an academic consultancy and a free lunch while on an accreditation junket at a small, trembling institution.

“Going forward.” A phrase used as freely as Parmesan cheese on lasagna, “going forward” suggests that administrative personnel have the option to do what Einstein never dared, namely reverse the direction of time’s arrow and go backward.

Composite example: “Going forward, we may want to have a conversation about strategic metrics.” Use of that sentence will secure a vice-chancellorship in any reputable institution.

Streamlining the Search Process

Two important searches have taken place on our campus in recent weeks: one for a Dean of the Graduate School, and the other for a Vice-Chancellor for Research and Economic Development. The Office of Academic Affairs is to be congratulated for improving the level of communication for these searches and for ensuring that they receive top billing on the LSU web site. These searches have also fallen afoul of a few well-known glitches and an occasional communication breakdown. Perfection has not yet been attained and problems have arisen, but the overall motion seems to be in the direction of improvement.

How “Statewide” an Institution is LSU?

University leaders are taking the correct approach in stressing that LSU is more than a local institution, that it is not only “statewide” but national and international in its scope and influence. But how statewide is it, really? New figures from the LSU System office show that the new Vice-Chancellor for Student life and Enrollment Services is going to have a big job ahead of him in drawing larger numbers of students from beyond the three or four parishes that routinely sustain LSU. Ditto for the recruitment of international students. See the numbers and get the facts [here](#).

Tip of the Month

Many faculty members wear ties or scarves during business-related lunches at the Faculty Club, Chimes, or Juban’s. Sometimes one of Louisiana’s fine condiments makes its way onto a treasured bow or ascot. Silk cleaning, at least for fine accessories, seems to remain beyond the capacities of our local dry cleaners. At last a mail-order firm has been discovered that does astounding work and that can rescue costly ties from that brutal bit of Bearnaise sauce. Take it from Senate President Kevin Cope, who has dumped more than a few dollops on innocent cravats: the only hope of recovering one’s fashion investment is “Tiecrafters” of New York, which will carry out mail-order cleaning assignments. Interested? Try www.tiecrafters.com.