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### Faculty Senate Newsletter, May 2013

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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May 14, 2013



### President's Welcome

Words are less the antonym than the diluted form of action. Nowhere do we see more action in the form of words than in the swirl of seeming inaction surrounding online education. Pundit-educators talk relentlessly about the tsunami of online offerings to come. Knowing the American love of things apocalyptic, they predict the inevitable closure of huge numbers of institutions. Yet, to date, no college or university seems to have shut down owing to online competition. Shares in companies holding online providers seem to fall; only near-bankrupt institutions such as Arizona State University seem to offer more than a handful of online

curricula. Many institutions, such as Southern University, hope to cash in on online derivatives: they use an initial online exposure to draw students back into the traditional classroom.

In a state and indeed a nation where a good many advanced education technologies—instructional television; videotape; satellite; old-fashioned correspondence school—have already flopped, wise educators will want to look before leaping: to consider some of the contradictions in the thinking about online education and to reflect on some of its ideological underpinnings. A university, after all, does more than deliver information. It delivers an educated life that, one would hope, is richer than that provided by a cubicle, a chair, a socket, and a screen. University folk are also good counters. They can look at the census data and realize that the Malthusian fantasy of 3,000 degree-granting institutions all teaching tens of thousands of online learners may not fit “the numbers.”

The semi-delirious drive to consolidation and mass markets as practiced by educational combines such as edX shows that online education is only a thinly disguised version of the privatization of universities. Privatization tends to de-educate the public by reducing the likelihood of public scrutiny. Although lauded by neo-conservatives for its reliance on user fees, online education transfers the costs of education to individual students rather than drawing that support from society as a whole. It thereby diminishes the sense of membership in a culture of participation in a common purpose. And it thereby imposes a highly selective tax on those least-educated persons who are often the least able to pay. Online education condenses an overlooked form of generational strife in which older persons who profited from the free education of the boom years refuse to provide the same opportunity to their successors. Cloaked in the noble robes of democracy and equality—in the suggestion that thousands or millions will be empowered—online education introduces the not-so-new, neo-Puritan notion that youngsters should work and pay for the education that their parents received for free, as a consequence of a long postwar economic bubble.

Presumably the university is a place where people not only think but debate. Disagreement remains somewhat incongruous with the highly packaged, programmed-learning environment of online education. The linkage of online education with workforce development suggests its association with training rather than educating. The antithesis of what used to be called the “slow-food revolution,” online education emulates the fast-food mentality, with many of its customers coming to believe that “everything is online” and readily available when, in fact, only a fraction of the world’s knowledge has reached digital form. On the positive side, the emergence of MOOCs (massively open online courses) has blown apart the unproved theory, embraced by accrediting agencies and rating services, that small classes are better than large-audience instructional formats. That audience must be big, if only because online education, with its emphasis on basic skills, represents the attempt of public universities to cash in, in a big way, on the shortcoming of K–12 education (and thereby run up the cost of all education by moving kindergarten into the high-ticket college environment).

Professors should also start speaking out against the working conditions for online educators. We have not yet seen the claims for industrial injuries owing to a work life built around typing, screen-viewing, and sitting, but those claims will surely come. Although many if not most online courses are nominally taught by a professor at full wage, the sections of successful courses are operated by an undefined and largely unmonitored mass of adjunct, itinerant, and, worst, retired faculty, the latter of whom should think about the morality of driving down wages for younger faculty while collecting retirement benefits. Whether the celebrity cult that converts a few professors into online superstars promotes collegial research or merely preening remains to be seen. Similarly, where research fits into online education remains a semi-taboo topic. If anything good comes out of the overly touted “online revolution,” it might well be the disassociation of research from teaching: the resurgence of the researcher or intellectual in residence who is not required to justify his or her groundbreaking work by teaching inadequately educated teenagers what they should have learned in elementary school.

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### AAUP Issues Salary Data Report

Readers in all universities will want to peruse the newly-released AAUP salary report. The data-rich [report](#), which is available online, shows that, nationwide, faculty members received an average 3.2% raise, thereby demonstrating that the usual justification for the lack of raises, that the economic situation is bad everywhere, is false. The report also contains state-by-state data, chronicles the rise of adjunct and contingent labor (which has now reached 76% of the academic workforce), and measures the economic disadvantages of working at public rather than private institutions.

### Retirement Income Projections Obtained

Drawing on highly-placed but anonymous sources, the *Newsletter* has obtained a document prepared by TRSL that shows the projected yearly retirement income from five “optional” (defined contribution) retirement plans: the current Louisiana “ORP”; the proposed “cash balance” version of the plan, with its 1.8% “normal cost” (flow-through to employee accounts); and the plans for Mississippi, Georgia, and Texas. The hypothetical projection applies to a person who enters the system at age 35, remains in-place for thirty years, and receives 3.5% annual salary increases (which certainly seems generous in relation to current compensation practices). The differences are walloping; a current ORP member would retire with 45% of his or her salary, whereas even a Mississippi professor would take away 68%. Only Texas apparently dips beneath Louisiana, but Texas pays into Social Security, raising it far above Louisiana. Under the proposed cash balance plan, the imagined retiree would leave employment with only 29% of his or her current salary.

### CAL State Faculty Flog Celebrity Philosopher

From reader Jeffrey Roland we learn that Philosophy professors at San Jose State, part of King Alexander’s Cal State System, are less than enamored with MOOCs (massively open online courses). In a move nothing short of Socratic, these philosophers in the Double-A league of academe have lashed out at celebrity Harvard philosopher Michael Sandel, an enthusiast for ethics and a MOOC superstar, for self-promotion at the expense of departments that offer students a rich and diverse education. This thoughtful slam against hypocrisy may be viewed online via [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#). The embarrassed Sandel, who has twenty-two entries in the [Harvard](#) online library catalogue, subsequently issued a [statement](#) in which he defended himself by claiming to “know very little” about what was underway at San Jose State. It seems that “plausible deniability” has a use for those at the top of the MOOC pyramid.

### Regents Issue List, Summary of Key Bills

Board of Regents Counsel Uma Subramanian has prepared an informative PowerPoint summarizing and briefly characterizing the various Bills and Resolutions that are being monitored by the Regents. This useful PowerPoint presentation is available via the LSU Faculty Senate web site, in the [media archive](#), where it is accessible via what is currently the first link on the main menu.

## Higher Education Headliner

### Delma McLeod-Porter, Director, Write to Excellence Center, McNeese State University

In a continuation of the *Newsletter* staff's departure from the geographical confines of the LSU A&M campus, this month's Higher Education Headliner takes us to the southwest corner of the state and onto the charming campus of McNeese State University. McNeese, a 9,000-student branch of the University of Louisiana System in Lake Charles, aims to deliver an educational experience founded on "Excellence with a Personal Touch."

One of the University's go-to destinations for that level of individual attention is the popular Write to Excellence Center, under the direction of Dr. Delma McLeod-Porter. The Write to Excellence Center, or Writing Center for short, provides one-on-one and group assistance for students, faculty, staff, and community members wishing to increase their writing proficiency.

As Director of the Writing Center, Dr. McLeod-Porter has overseen the administration and management of the tutoring center since its inception in January of 2008. For more than a year, she traversed the state and the continent to visit some of the country's best writing centers as part of the program's development committee. The experience, she says, helped shape her plans for the Center's tutor development, physical configuration, and overall mission: "We wanted our writing center to be, truly, a sort of multipurpose place where all things intellectual and academic were a part of our goals." The vision, she says, was to have "The Writing Center become the nexus of intellectual activity on the campus."

Since that time, the Director's work has primarily been dedicated to researching writing center trends and writing grants worth more than \$1 million, conducting the occasional tutoring session, promoting literacy and writing in the community, and editing the University's SACS compliance documents. A significant amount of time has also been devoted to training the tutors who make the Center a success. "After we got started, the tutors were instrumental in driving the character of the center," she says. "We established the framework and set up the idea that we were a community of writers who supported each other."

The Write to Excellence Center employs the peer tutoring method of instruction. In this student-driven operation, extensively trained undergraduate and graduate students from an array of degree programs engage students and other visitors in conversations meant to help tutees embrace their voice. McLeod-Porter's hope is that upon leaving a tutoring session, tutees feel that "we helped them find a voice if they didn't know what it was, or helped them in some way enhance it . . . Our whole focus [is] on helping people see that what they have in their heads [is] important enough to put on paper."

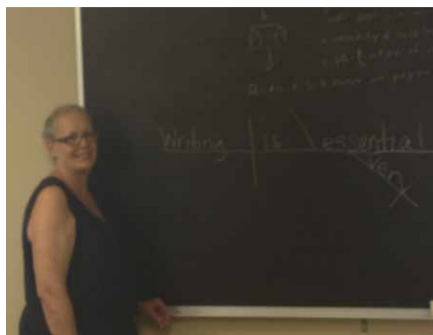
Despite the many visitors encouraged to use the Write to Excellence Center's services today, the undergraduate aspect of the peer-tutoring approach has not always been popular among faculty. "In the beginning I think that a large part of the faculty was suspicious," she says. McLeod-Porter attributes this suspicion with a misguided belief that undergraduate tutors would only correct grammatical errors or, even worse, misappropriate students' work by impelling their own ideas. Instead, all tutors offer suggestions on how to make writing stronger and refrain from judging or grading student papers. Eventually McLeod-Porter won over a significant portion of her fellow faculty members, many of whom now rely on the Center's assistance in steering students in the right direction.

Whether Louisiana's higher education machine is steering students in the right direction is another matter entirely. McLeod-Porter has a lot to say about the state of education, which she believes is currently maxed out thanks to the faltering economy and an increasingly pejorative attitude toward higher education. The push for job training in particular, she says, has come at the cost of sacrificing what higher education was originally about: the well-rounded liberal arts education that produces a "thoughtful citizen who understands the issues that impact our lives."

Financially speaking, McLeod-Porter anticipates that the state's difficulties are not quite over thanks to looming budget cuts. It also does not help that higher education inflated itself with unnecessary administrative positions. "Somebody wasn't paying attention," she reflects. Still, she is optimistic about the future of her home campus. McNeese, she feels, will fare well thanks to smart management practices.

McLeod-Porter's insight into higher ed comes after thirty-seven years in the teaching business. This particular chapter of her story will take a different turn this week, as she retires from McNeese and officially hands the baton of responsibility off to the Write to Excellence Center's Associate Director, Corliss Badeaux. McLeod-Porter doesn't anticipate that retirement will make her life any less busy, though, as she plans to pursue a host of projects that suit her extensive skill set. As an immigration manager for the Saint Frances Cabrini Immigration Law Center, she will help ease the legal and cultural transition of the area's newcomers. She is also actively using her life-long love of writing to help pen the memoirs of women with powerful stories to share. The writing workshops she has long conducted for business, industry, and hobbyists are also still going strong, which is a testament to her belief that "I didn't choose teaching, teaching chose me."

While reminiscing on her career at McNeese, McLeod-Porter has a number of good things to say about the experience. Her twenty-one years as an English professor there also included a stint as the director of freshman composition and a role in the implementation of a writing-across-the-curriculum initiative. The highlight of that career is very likely her time as the Director of the Write to Excellence Center. "Every day was a different day . . . Those were a good five years," she says with a big smile.



"Writing is very essential"

### Civil Service Links Academic Compensation to Charity

A member of the battalion of readers who comprise not only the *Newsletter* audience but who also occasionally serve as reporters has discovered that LSU Foundation President G. Lee Griffin also belongs to the Louisiana State Civil Service Commission. Given that LSU A&M has now passed over the economic midpoint and is now supported more by private than by state money and given that LSU A&M and given that all Louisiana universities abound in Civil Service employees, our roving reporter wonders whether the implied duality of purpose—the combined duty to regulate employee compensation and the duty to pay the costs of running the thrifty institutions where Civil Service employees work—might be somewhat awkward. Could it be that charity begins not at home but in the minimization of employee salaries?



"Employee Friend or Charity Poor Farm?"

### Unequal Opportunity On The Gridiron

The derby to redirect the last resources available to university into athletic entertainments continues this month as Southern University inked a six-figure, five-year contract with basketball coach Roman Banks. Although such expenditures stagger the imagination when remembering that Southern Athletics makes no profit and indeed operates at a deficit, it is even more sobering to recognize the degree of economic inequality along racial lines in sports. Over at LSU, for example, the management Board approved a contract for Euro-ethnic Offensive Coordinator Malcolm "Cam" Cameron at a base rate of \$600,000.00 per year, nearly four times the sum paid to head coach Roman Banks. Worse, the LSU Supervisors continued their tradition of concealment and deception by burying, on pages 5-6 of the Cameron contract, a stipulation that Cameron would receive supplemental compensation in sums that, by 2015, will reach \$1,000,000.00, or roughly fifteen times the average annual professorial salary at LSU A&M. All of which suggests that, whatever economic picture public rhetoric might create, it pays more, in Louisiana, to be a mainstream subordinate than a black leader.



Have a great summer, *Newsletter* readers!

## MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

**ROGER EBERT (1942-2013)** By Carl Freedman

I take it for granted that no explanation—and certainly no apology—is required for the fact that, this month, I offer not a movie review but an obituary for Roger Ebert, who died this past April 4th. True, Ebert never directed a movie (though directors thought so highly of him that he was made an honorary lifetime member of the Directors Guild of America). He did write a few scripts (mainly under pen-names), but—to put it mildly—his greatness does not rest on such credits as the screenplay for *BENEATH THE VALLEY OF THE ULTRA-VIXENS* (Russ Meyer, 1979). Yet few filmmakers of his generation contributed as much to American cinematic culture as Ebert did. If I were to sum up his overall achievement as simply as possible, I would just say that, in an extraordinarily wide variety of forums—his movie reviews for the *CHICAGO SUN-TIMES*, which were syndicated in over 200 other newspapers; his more than 20 books; his several television series; his teaching and lecturing (which included several excellent DVD commentary tracks); his active presence on such social media as Facebook and Twitter (whose importance he was perhaps the first major journalist to recognize); and, especially in recent years, his splendidly designed website—Roger Ebert taught America about the movies.

In some ways, I think, Ebert did for American film what Julia Child did for American cuisine. Child came of age in a country where—outside of certain ethnic enclaves and some (but by no means all) extremely expensive restaurants—consistently excellent food was hard to find. More than any other single individual, she taught Americans that there was more to eating than steaks, chops, casseroles, and overcooked vegetables; that one should have standards in cuisine, because life is simply too short to spend any of it eating bad or even mediocre food; and that preparing really fine dishes is not as difficult or as costly as most people had assumed. By the time she died in 2004, the transformation in American eating habits was so great that the pre-Julia era seemed like ancient history.

Ebert's impact, though doubtless less dramatic, was in many respects similar. He also insisted upon standards, and—more successfully than even his own two chief predecessors and mentors, Andrew Sarris and Pauline Kael—he taught Americans how to watch films intelligently. In clear, accessible prose, Ebert demonstrated that films are worth taking seriously and that one's opinions about them can and should be defended with reason and evidence. He loved many popular Hollywood movies—and said exactly why—but he also protested against Hollywood's frequent degradation of cinematic art, and could memorably explain exactly how a bad film was bad (a 2007 collection of his unfavorable reviews is titled *YOUR MOVIE SUCKS*). He also taught Americans that—to employ a Shakespearian phrase that Ebert, who at one point was a doctoral student in English at the University of Chicago, would have appreciated—there is a world elsewhere. Nobody did more to make America conscious that film does not begin and end in the big Hollywood studios, that there is great work to be found in small-budget independent productions and in the cinematic traditions of France, Italy, Germany, Britain, Sweden, Russia, Japan, China, Mexico, and many other countries. Ebert came to possess a virtually encyclopedic knowledge of film history, but he also understood that no one who knows only film can know film really well. His grounding in other arts, most notably literature, helped to give his writing a special depth and resonance.

It is common, in colloquial usage, to describe journalistic reviewers as “critics,” but of course most of them are nothing of the sort. One of the most appropriate compliments that can be paid to Ebert is simply to say that he really and truly was a critic.

Consider, for example, his role as Martin Scorsese's chief critical advocate. With Scorsese's first (and still, I believe, somewhat underrated) feature film—I *CALL FIRST* (1967), later retitled “Who's That Knocking at My Door”—Ebert instantly recognized that a new kind of intelligence and harsh realism had come to American cinema. He felt a kinship with Scorsese, as both had received strict Roman Catholic upbringings just prior to the Vatican Two liberalization of the church; and, in Scorsese's debut film and later, Ebert shrewdly analyzed the way that the filmmaker exposed yet also struggled with the Madonna/Whore complex and other elements of Catholic ideology concerning women and sexuality. His 2008 volume *Scorsese by Ebert* is essential reading for anyone seriously interested in this indispensable American director. At the current moment Scorsese is reported to be at work on a film about Ebert's life.

Or consider how Ebert helped Americans to appreciate Werner Herzog. Though he enjoyed a brief minor celebrity in this country following the release of *AGUIRRE, THE WRATH OF GOD* (1972), Herzog, perhaps the finest German filmmaker of his generation, has never been fundamentally congenial to a filmgoing public trained on Hollywood sentimentalism. Ebert saw all of Herzog's dozens of films, reviewed many of them, and persuaded many of his readers to share his devotion to an artist who was fascinated by extreme human efforts but who nonetheless insisted that human beings are, in the end, cruelly limited. Ebert felt a deep personal affinity with the way that Herzog not only celebrates the splendid madness with which some people set themselves against the universe but also insists that the universe is, however, bound to win. In an extraordinarily rare gesture, Herzog eventually dedicated a film to Ebert.

A seriously critical mind like Ebert's would be poorly honored indeed by mere panegyric; if his achievement is to be truly appreciated, it is essential to understand his shortcomings as well as his strengths. His chief weakness, I think, was the result not of any native incapacity but of the exigencies of his job. George Orwell, who for a time helped to make ends meet by reviewing contemporary novels, once commented that the problem with this occupation was simply that the only genuinely honest and appropriate review of most novels would be a single sentence to the effect that the book was not worth reading; but, of course, no one, as Orwell wryly noted, will pay for that sort of review. Much the same is true of journalistic film reviewing. Ebert reviewed hundreds of movies a year—sometimes more than 300—and the almost inevitable result was that he not infrequently found merit and interest in productions that really deserve nobody's time or money. Conversely, being force-fed a steady diet of commercial fluff sometimes—though not often—seems to have made Ebert impatient with more ambitious films; he was not entirely immune to the Hollywood anti-intellectualism that he normally combatted with great force and intelligence. I would cite as examples his impatient dismissals of such seriously flawed but not unrewarding masterpieces as Luchino Visconti's *LUDWIG* (1973) and Michael Cimino's *HEAVEN'S GATE* (1981), or his disastrous (and factually somewhat inaccurate) panning of Bernardo Bertolucci's toweringly brilliant *NOVOCENTO* (1977). (continued on page 5)

## Center-School Controversy Erupts Again

The *Newsletter* has previously reported on the actions of the shadowy “center-school” would-be group, which has repeatedly issued a long and vociferous treatise critical of almost every aspect of the professional and personal actions and lives of Ag Center officialdom. New aromas have emerged from the compost heap with the discovery that Ag Center detectives were able to pin down the public-access computer from which this hottest of letters emanated and have identified a suspect, who has been notified of his status as a person-of-interest. Trouble is, although the mysterious “center-school” will never qualify as a runner in the discretion derby, the reason for his/her/their/its investigation remains unclear, it not being a crime, here in the land of the free and the home of the brave, to commit satire and it being well-known that public figures are exempt from libel protections.

## LAE Fortifies Faculty Beachhead At SB117

The Three Stooges of anti-academic legislation—Louisiana Senator Conrad Appel, Senator Elbert Guillory, and Representative Stephen Carter—continued their aggressive mischief-making with the filing of Senate Bill 117, which calls for the creation of a panel to study the rewriting of the higher-education funding formula with reference to “outcomes.” Although “outcomes” remained vaguely defined, the “digest” for the bill made it clear that the production of baccalaureate degrees in workforce-relevant areas was the number-one goal. The word “research” to designate the pursuit of knowledge appears only once; a few other occurrences reference support staff for the operations of the proposed panel. Disciplines that engage in cultural work—music, art history, religious studies—had no place in this legislation. In its original form, SB117 proposed an outcomes-funding panel that included only higher education system presidents, the Commissioner of Higher Education, and a raft of officials consecrated to economic and workforce development. No academic representative appeared in the original manifest, nor did any party who could not be dismissed from employment by the Governor. With help from Senator Karen Carter Peterson, the Louisiana Association of Educators succeeded in amending the bill. Peterson and LAE Executive Director Michael Walker-Jones hammered home the necessity of deploying faculty expertise in dealing with the “productivity” issue. The revised version of SB117 includes a provision to appoint to the “outcomes funding” panel four system-level faculty representatives as well as the President of LSUnited. In the House version of the bill, two of these five faculty representatives again vanished, but hopes are high that, in the conference committees, some or all of these three deleted faculty members will return.



Conrad Appel, Outcomes Education Agitator

## MOVIE REVIEW (continued)

It is no accident that Ebert's best film criticism often came in the pieces he designated as belonging to his "Great Movies" series, which were eventually collected into three volumes; here he allowed himself more space than in most of his reviews, and, even more important, here he wrote only about films he truly loved.

A perhaps somewhat related weakness in the Ebert oeuvre is that, for all the good use he made of his knowledge of literature and, to a lesser degree, history, he seems to have been almost entirely innocent of philosophy—the field that has, arguably, contributed more than any other traditional discipline to our knowledge of cinema. One seriously handicaps oneself by writing about films without at least attempting to take the pressure of the insights to be found in the work on cinema by important philosophers like Siegfried Kracauer, Gilles Deleuze, Slavoj Žižek, and many others. Yet such material was outside the considerable range of Ebert's evident interests.

In his last years, a growing percentage of Ebert's most interesting writing (especially in his blogging) was devoted, however, to subjects other than movies, including himself, and, more specifically, his grievous health problems. The cancers and related medical misfortunes that wreaked such havoc on his final decade not only sent him to the hospital for—literally—more surgeries than he could count, but eventually robbed him of his ability to eat and to talk, always two of his favorite activities. Yet Ebert wrote about his situation with inspiring courage, intelligence, lucidity, and even a certain cheerfulness—and without any religious consolations (in his 2011 memoir *LIFE ITSELF*, he reports that he rejected Catholic theology at an early age, though he continued to consider himself "culturally Catholic" and in agreement with most Catholic social teaching). While he had lost much, it seemed that Ebert preferred to concentrate on what he had retained: the power to read, to think, and to write, to interact with other human beings (most importantly his beloved wife Chaz), and, of course, to watch and enjoy movies. Only two days before his death, he announced that he would be cutting back on his reviewing schedule and that he was looking forward to writing—for the first time in his career—only about films he really wanted to write about. Perhaps some of his best criticism was still to come.

A word should be said about Ebert's widely reported personal kindness. I never met him and so can't offer any first-hand testimony; but the accounts by those who did know him, even slightly, seem to be unanimously positive. Long after he was established as the most famous and influential—and probably the richest—film critic in the world, those meeting him for the first time found him to be the same affable, unpretentious Midwesterner that he had presumably always been. He was especially noted for being helpful to young, aspiring film critics, people who were in no position to do anything for him in return and whom he had no conceivable motivation to help except for spontaneous friendliness and unaffected generosity.

Ebert once said that Heaven, as he imagined it, was a place where *CITIZEN KANE* (Orson Welles, 1941) was always playing—it was his all-time favorite movie, and one to which he contributed a valuable DVD commentary track—and there was plenty of Häagen-Dazs vanilla ice cream to eat. Here's hoping that Roger Ebert is now enjoying his favorite snack while engrossed, for the millionth time, in one of the most endlessly fascinating of all films.

## Lifestyle Feature



Sullivan's Steakhouse

## The Burgers Of Baton Rouge

There was a time when the word "burgher" meant a solid citizen and a pillar of bourgeois society, but the dropping of that hissing old "h" has transferred the primary referent of these two syllables from admirable aldermen to the sandwich that everybody loves and that a few health fanatics love to hate. As summer approaches and as grills begin heating, more than a small segment of the population will be thinking about the myriad variations of the beefy disk between dressed buns. Not everyone will possess the skill, discipline, or time to create the true backyard burger or even to fire up the cooktop for an indoor treat. To answer the need when that burger craving hits, the Newsletter culinary task force has assembled an evaluative survey of the best burger bins in Baton Rouge.

Over its long history, the hamburger has picked up at least two stereotypical associations with which the majority of restaurants must confront as they attempt to put a house signature on the most common dish in the restaurant industry.

The first stereotype is the hamburger as a masculine province—as something that "guys" like to eat, even to cook. That stereotype has been worked for all its worth by two operations that ought to be erased from the academic menu, the hyper-sexist Hooters and its inferior competitor, Twin Peaks, where later-middle-aged weekend imitation Hell's Angels ride in on the "bikes" they purchased at Harley-Davidson on Siegen Lane to gawk at young women dressed in Ellie Mae Clampett apparel.

The second stereotype, which has been run into the ground by the fast food industry, is the hamburger as the ultimate family meal and the very antithesis of hypertrophic sexuality: as the preferred dish for the hard-working dad, the harried mom, and the squealing kids.

Botanists tell us that hybrid vigor results from the combining of two over-bred strains. The interplay of these stereotypes is thus energizing the hamburger revolution of the last decade. A slightly clumsy attempt at bringing the familial and the testosterone together occurs at the Baton Rouge location of the Sullivan's chain, where a masculine boxing (prizefighting) motif blends with a refined jazz strain to produce a genteel version of a man's club that is, in fact, patronized in large measure by ladies. A related effect is the emergence of a solid if somewhat unimaginative cheeseburger—sort of the "standard of the breed," to borrow a phrase from the American Kennel Club. Sullivan's, with its massive, national franchise apparatus and home-office expertise, is only the leading edge of the "gourmet burger" revolution.

(continued on page 6)

## Shreveport Scientist Salvatore Electrifies Alexandria

LSU in Shreveport scientist Brian Salvatore dazzled participants in the "Alexandria Summit" on April 20th by arriving without the slightest sound in his high-tech all-electric Tesla-S sports coupe. Salvatore, long an advocate for alternative energy applications, slipped into the Alexandria Summit in the style of either a quiet Batman or ecologically aware James Bond. The first instance in Louisiana of long-distance conference commuting using an all-electric vehicle, Salvatore's trip added to the long list of "firsts" accomplished at Alexandria. Through an advance arrangement with LSUA biologist Elisabeth Elder, Salvatore borrowed an on-site electrical outlet by which to recharge for his homeward voyage. Minutes after the green "charge" light began blinking on the LSUA office building outlet, no less than LSUA Chancellor David Manuel came "charging" on-foot to ascertain whether scoundrels were purloining valuable LSUA electricity or whether a new wonder was afoot—or a-road. Salvatore continues his electrical explorations this summer with the installation of a solar power array on his Shreveport habitation. May the force remain with you, Brian!



Brian Salvatore with his Tesla

David Manuel, Kevin Cope, and James Robinson recharge Brian Salvatore's electric chariot



## Tohline Garners Praise

Every now and then, someone in higher education does something right. The latest example of good deeds by a genuine academic and sometimes administrator is the service of Joel Tohline, Director of the Center for Computation and Technology at LSU A&M, as Chair of the search committee for the LSU A&M Vice-

Chancellor for Research and Economic Development. Tohline's exemplary search included abundant public exposure for candidates; early and efficient posting of credentials; interview opportunities for faculty governance officers; outreach to multiple constituencies; and plain old-school efficiency. Faculty leaders will continue to explore the decision process for executive hires after search committees make their recommendations, but they also hold up Joel Tohline as a role model for Louisiana academic administrators and as an instance of a good colleague who not only gets the job done, but gets it done in the right, honest way. Thank you, Joel!



Joel Tohline

## LIFESTYLE (continued)

Two new developments downtown, for example, take the burger in new directions. At **Stroube's**, an upscale bistro immediately behind the Manship Center, prize-winning chef Scott Varnadoe zooms in on three classics—the black and blue; the cheddar jalapeno; and the bacon brie burgers—which he executes with intense precision and concentration of flavor, flavor enhanced by the soaringly modern environment created on the back porch of a cultural center. Meanwhile and just down the street, the new **Restaurant IPO**, although presenting itself as an American version of a tapas bar and although unveiling a selection of effete new-American small plates, explores the anatomical resonances of Wimpy's favorite dish by proffering a "ribeye burger" ground from a hearty cut that is normally treated as a steak. This deluxe



Stroube's

bite is enhanced with Worcestershire mayonnaise as well as with the obligatory semi-locavore caramelized onions (which, nowadays, have become so overused that the Vidalia breed seems to be running down). Perhaps few pleasures can be at once so cultivated and barbarian as visiting a venue with a with-it atmosphere while bypassing such delicacies as "divers in nage" in favor of a burger unlike any that would ever have appeared in any all-American setting.

The search for the ultimate gourmet burger has run into the mid-city region at **Bistro Byronz**, where two entrants, the straightforward Byronz Burger and the lavish Beaucoup Burger, comprise the two most sumptuous burger options in Baton Rouge. Sumptuous is not always the same thing as good; the heavy loading of the Beaucoup Burger with heaps of melted cheese topped by pommes frites and veloute sauce may come close to the brink of "too much." The equally

rich appetizers, such as Byronz's delicious home-fried blue cheese chips, should be reserved for starting lighter meals. Nevertheless, there is no missing that a Byronz burger is a major hit, although sometimes a single will do just as well as a home run. Last in the category of "gourmet" hamburgers is the offering at the new **Fat Cow**, which attempts to cram a huge amount of burger action into a diminutive mall slot storefront. Admittedly, Fat Cow manages a cheekily classy informal environment. Responses to Fat Cow have been overall good, although performance on the tempting duck-fat fries has been irregular and rumors of pre-cooking of meats prepared off-site have made some chary of this venue—and, admittedly, the service has something of a pre-packaged look, as if the proprietors could not decide whether to be a restaurant, bar, or fast food outlet.

At the other end of the spectrum from the gourmet restaurants are those that negotiate the he-man/family dialectic by presenting themselves as family venues, albeit family venues that have nothing to do with the family eateries of the golden age of American dining such as Denny's,



Fat Cow

IHOP, or Howard Johnson. These restaurants, which, in the last analysis, serve the best burgers, increase their market share by emphasizing the accessibility of their menus and by suggesting that more people belong to happy families than statistics indicate. They tend to locate in affluent but distant suburbs where lower home prices but higher ambitions create families with discretionary income. An instance might be the delightful semi-pub **Dempsey's**, with its original location on mega-suburban Coursey Boulevard but its highest-profit venue across the street from that fictional representation of the ideal wise-dieting family, Whole Foods. Displacing the former upscale venue Dajonel's, Dempsey's has self-consciously created the look of a slightly shabby pub so as to give its affluent customers a Bohemian experience. At its heart a poboy



Fat Cow

shop, Dempsey's also delivers an excellent burger with a nicely seared surface and a marvelous bit of dressing. The presentation, like the dressing, is reminiscent of a poboy, with the result that the cheese and the bun are a little weak; although the bun remains crunchy on the outside, supporting the hamburger with no seepage, it falls somewhat short on wheat, bread flavor. Two restaurants vie for top honors in the family category and indeed are likely to garner all the laurels in an open competition: **Frank's in Prairieville** and **Mason's Grill** in far east Baton Rouge Parish. Fresh from a repainting and (sort of) renovation, Mason's produces one of the top burgers in Baton Rouge, which burgers come in several varieties (the bacon-cheese, with its unique choice of Swiss cheese, being the clear winner). Mason's seems to bake its own buns, buns with a slightly sweet flavor that may not be for everyone but that nicely complements the intensely savory burgers. Those burgers come with a side order. Mason's onion rings cannot be beat, even by the legendary Chimes;



Mason's Grill

its seasoned french fries also win the derby. A very close competitor would be the quaint **Frank's Restaurant**, which not only dishes up an appetite-whetting burger with a superb beefy taste but which delivers all its foods piping hot, as if they were flying right off the grill. The patty melt, that unique midwestern variation on the hamburger, is an extra-special hit, as are the fresh-cut french fries, which also reverberate with potato flavor and which arrive at a heat that would make even the devil concede defeat.

The future of hamburger restaurants seems to lie in venues that create a nostalgic pub environment: that conjure up the neighborhood pub and that manufacture a sense of community that may well be

no more. Least successful in this category would be LSU-incubated **Walk-Ons**, which started as a cheerful sports bar with lively pub food but which, as the proprietors' restaurant empire has grown, has become stereotyped and sloppy, with service declining as students replace mature managers and as dishes become too formatted. Walk-Ons can still present a fine burger with an assortment of dressing and lively waffle fries, but it will generally arrive thirty minutes or more after the order and will be presented by a young lady in an exploitative mixed sports-appropriate and brothel-inspired costume. A more refined approach is taken at **Burgersmith**, a Baton Rouge extension of a Lafayette chain that prides itself on superior beef and that offers diners a matrix of addition and dressing choices that could generate thousands of specialist burgers. Burgersmith concocts a quality product with a clear high-quality beef taste and some delicious dressing that have been made on-site and that savor of freshness.



Burgersmith

## Secret Informants Check In

The secret communications continue to flow into the *Newsletter* office. The undercover operative known only by the code-name "Knowledgeable" reports from deep within state government that Jindal officials continue the campaign to rig a golden parachute in the LSU System for Secretary of Economic Development Stephen Moret, who hovers among the highest paid state employees (\$320,000.00) but whose post-Jindal prospects remain as uncertain as the Governor's approval ratings. From another agent under deep cover, the spy known only by the plural moniker "Observers," comes the suggestion that the deal to place an IBM location in Baton Rouge, which has been hailed by LSU officials as a means to secure jobs for the workforce that Baton Rouge campuses aim to develop, may be characterized more by exaggeration than by hard data. Sources suggest that the announced average salary of \$62,000.00 for IBM jobs may escape mention in the IBM contract. The actual salary level may be far lower. The *Newsletter* is hot on the trail and is in the process of requesting a copy of the contract from the Department of Economic Development. Meanwhile, a wit in the Kingdom of Agriculture, noting the South African connections of LSU interim President William Jenkins, has called attention to a South African start-up company that markets a "socially responsible," "ecologically sustainable," natural product called "Zembrin" to which 300 years of results among indigenous medical practitioners is ascribed. This Ag-based informant suggests that interim President Jenkins should call on his countrymen to distribute to faculty members free samples of a product that "reduces stress, enhances mood, and improves cognition." This product, moreover, is billed as "fully traceable from seed to extract," which is more than can be said of any initiative, hiring campaign, or strategic plan undertaken by the LSU System.



"IBM turns back the clock on salaries"

## Newsletter Cinema Critic Carl Freedman Wins DRM

LSU A&M annually confers "Distinguished Research Master" status on two faculty members: one committed to the liberal arts and one practicing one of the STEM disciplines. The *Newsletter* delights in reporting that its cinema and occasional restaurant critic, Carl Freedman, has won the 2012 "DRM" award for the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Congratulations to Carl for attracting an award, the demanding criteria for which would send Einstein in search of remediation and Shakespeare in search of an eraser!

## LIFESTYLE (continued)

The layout of the menu, with its multiple columns and wandering add-on lists, can be a bit of a challenge, but some novelty items shed new light on the burger plate. The sweet potato bites, a kind of improved tater tot, for example, dazzles the diner by straddling exactly the boundary between savory and sweet and by providing a good foil for the robust hamburger flavor resident in Burgersmith sandwiches. Topping all the neo-pubs is, of course, **The Chimes**, which amazingly maintains, in all its locations, a sincere and genuine pub feel—a great wonder considering the gigantically high volume of this restaurant. Although the hamburgers on the Chimes menu may not number among the hallmark works of this eatery, they are nevertheless well-executed and happily accompanied by the Chimes's zesty shoestring fries. The special-of-the-day burgers tend to be juicier and more interesting than the standard burger selections, which can be a bit dry, but, then, the diner can always wash down the standard burger with one of those 150 beers on the Chimes liquid menu.

There is more to the hamburger than meets the untutored eye. Better, the good old burger is always within the Louisiana budget. It is never the most expensive item on the menu. This summer, load one up with chipotle mayonnaise or blue cheese or whatever. Then, for a time, forget about the woes of academe!



The Chimes

## Alexandria Summit Soars to Next Level

Two-and-one-half years into their operation, the "Alexandria Summit Meeting" series has soared to new levels. Drawing over forty colleagues from every higher education system in the state, the meeting offered both an unparalleled array of distinguished speakers and an unmatched chance for dialogue with the top-level decision-makers in Louisiana academe. The session opened with a dazzling, nearly two-hour presentation and discussion session with the electrifying Sandra Woodley, the new and reasonably dynamic leader of the University of Louisiana System, who addressed almost every topic that could pop up in the academic mind and who, through affable action as well as thoughtful words, laid out a new course for Louisiana higher education—a new course that is long overdue. Woodley's down-to-earth but star-seeking overture was followed by an investigation by Larry Jarrell of the variety of offerings available at a "tech" university such as his own beloved LaTech—a survey that opened new understandings of an institution that is too often



Hala Esmail Explains Social Media

stereotyped as an engineering asylum. Woodley was not the only chief executive in the house; next in the superstar lineup was Michael Walker-Jones, Executive Director of the Louisiana Association of Educators, who examined the most crucial legislation of the 2013 session, with special attention to the nefariousness of SB117 and SB118, bills aimed at linking funding to what is euphemistically called "outcomes." Still another precedent was set with the participation in the Alexandria Summit of a delegation from the Louisiana chapter of the American Association of University Professor (AAUP), which enriched the dialogue with updates on topics from the fate of the dismissed Southeastern French professors to the new leadership at AAUP HQ. If all of this were not enough,

Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell regaled conferees with another near-two-hour presentation-discussion session dealing with every topic pertinent to the future of Louisiana intellection. The generous Purcell was making his second trip to Alexandria, thereby joining Woodley in setting a high and fine example for the new generation of educational leaders. Purcell, moreover, revealed even more of his secretly famous and quietly applauded wry wit, offering a set of embedded gallows-humor jests that would set the academic jailhouse reeling and rocking. Brian Salvatore, a highly-touted Shreveport chemist, followed Purcell with a study of public outreach in the



Representatives from All Systems

universities, regaling summiteers with the stories of the successes of his A.S.P.I.R.E. program, which brings science to youngsters in environments not conducive to science. The day wrapped up with a brilliant presentation by LSU IT Services social media maven Hala Esmail, who answered cries from conferees for help with establishing professional and political presences in cyberspace. Hala's compact but cleverly conceived presentation led to the formulation of plans for information relays that would assist colleagues in the application of influence in the legislature and wherever academic policies are bought or sold (thanks, Hala!).

The next Alexandria Summit has been set for September 28th. Already, three system heads have agreed to attend, and the confirmation of the fourth is expected. Mark your calendars; it will be a bonanza of a meeting!



LAE Chief Michael Walker-Jones Reviews Legislation



LaTech Expert Larry Jarrell



The AAUP Delegation

## Regents Rally Behind Purcell

Everyone who is experienced in faculty governance is exulting over the recent move by the Board of Regents to affirm support for Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell by way of fending off criticism from Jindal operatives. In one bold move, the Regents removed months or even years of adverse publicity, winning, if not the hearts, then at least an artery or two of faculty members. Although initially greeted with skepticism, Purcell has shown himself, over the long haul, to be a friend of faculty and a voice of balance, reason, and accurate information in the midst of academic crisis and controversy. The "stellar" reviews that Purcell reportedly received from reviewers are only the beginning; if Purcell remains on-course, those reviews are destined to reach galactic luminescence.

## Development Fee Draws Discussion

LSU Foundation head Lee Griffin has recently embarked on a campus-wide outreach effort in an effort to garner support from assorted constituencies for a "development fee." Said fee would be assessed to benefactions that pass through the Foundation. Of the proposed 5% assessment, 2% would make its way to the Deans of the LSU A&M colleges. The remaining 3% would remain with the Foundation to support its operations. On the "up" side of this proposal is evidence suggesting that adequately funded Foundations generate more revenue for all units within a university—and, heaven knows, the tripartite division of fundraising at the top level of LSU A&M could benefit from revision. On the down side, however, there is the question of the autonomy of the colleges and the reception of the Deans to the idea of surrendering both some of their autonomy and some of their fundraising sums. The proposed arrangement seems to be something of a novelty in the collegiate fundraising world, but, then, novelty is not always bad. The jury continues to deliberate.

## Burden Estate to Reorganize, Re-Brand

For years if not decades, the array of cultural-agricultural facilities located at Essen Lane and I-10 in Baton Rouge has struggled for an identity. It has never been too burdensome to visit the Burden Center, with its immense array of flowering plants and its quaint habitations, although, admittedly, the museum, with its old-time farm equipment, recalls nothing so much as an erudite rendition of a Cracker Barrel restaurant. And one does wonder whether the "Master Gardeners" who hold their plant sales and gardening clinics at the Burden campus hold the MA-level credentials that their title implies. Making a wise decision to upgrade what could easily become more of a novelty facility than a research center, LSU interim President William Jenkins has announced his intention to rename the entire complex "The Burden Museum and Gardens," thereby establishing what sounds like brand unity over this somewhat miscellaneous array of resources.



## Fair Or Foul, Judge A Garment By The Cloth

Anyone who doubts whether interdisciplinarity and inter-campus cooperation has yet to catch on in Louisiana need only look to the management boards for evidence to the contrary. By now, readers of the newspapers have surely read more than enough about the scurrilous conduct of the LSU A&M Board of Supervisors as it fights, squirms, wriggles, and runs in the attempt to maintain the secrecy of its illicit presidential search. Few can do anything but wonder as the shameful Supervisors, not all of whom managed to earn college degrees, invoke legal force to bludgeon into obedience those members of the student and professional media who seek the open and free exchange of information that universities are said to support. What is less known, however, is the back story about LSU's legal representation, the origin of the payments for which remains unknown and the cost of which is surely astronomical. Out of all the attorneys in town who could have represented LSU, the Supervisors selected gubernatorial favorite Jimmy Faircloth, whose losing campaign for Louisiana Supreme Court included video spots by Bobby Jindal that can be viewed on [Judgepedia](#) and who describes himself as "a lifelong conservative." Although now working on-hire for the LSU System, Faircloth is an alumnus of the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors, where he supported the reduction of tenure rights that was accomplished through a stealth vote (with only one day of advance notification to faculty) during the regime of Randy Moffatt. Through clandestine maneuvering, Faircloth exited the University of Louisiana Board when the governor needed him to argue such not-so-noble cases as the public-education-gutting voucher law and the law requiring teaching of creationism in Louisiana high schools. Meanwhile, a vast search through the talent in Louisiana ended up with the appointment of Faircloth's wife, Kelly Faircloth, a chiropractor, as the sole female member of the UoL Board. So much for setting examples for young people.



Creationist Superstars Adam and Eve--Part of the Presidential Search

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## SACSCOC Chief Wheelan Worries System Wizards

In the latest strange turn in the LSU reorganization drama, SACSCOC President Belle Wheelan and Vice-President Barry Goldstein paid a hastily arranged (two-day advance notice) visit to Baton Rouge, apparently to provide LSU System wizards with tips and warnings about the accreditation dimension of reorganization. Incoming LSU System President F. King Alexander attended for twenty minutes, then split with Provost Stuart Bell; only one other Chancellor, LSUE's William Nunez, managed to roll into Baton Rouge in response to the 48-hour summons. Wheelan's announcements certainly gave reorganization enthusiasts food for thought. Opening with a caution that an undertaking with "so many moving parts" could not possibly be accomplished by the next deadline, October 1, she further warned that engineers of transitions should have some idea of that to which they are transiting before they initiate transitions. Given the time required to imagine that goal, she counseled reformers to proceed with the accreditation of individual campuses so as not to jeopardize their accreditation while thinking a little too big. Wheelan articulated what everyone has been thinking but has been afraid to mention owing to fear of reprisal: that a double role for a two-site president-chancellor is problematic vis-a-vis the SACSCOC requirement that a CEO must be loyal to his or her institution, not to that institution and also something else; that the presence of multiple foundations on multiple campuses creates questions about organization, chain of command, and mutual fit; that it would be a good idea to develop a mission plan for the new university configuration before any changes occur; and that it will be hard, in Louisiana, to show that there are enough qualified administrators or suitable faculty or flush resources to operate such a gigantic enterprise.

The *Newsletter* has obtained a slate of questions from SACSCOC for the LSU Transition Team which is viewable [online](#). Reports indicate that none of the questions could be answered.

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## TRSL Reps Peppered With Questions At Retirement Forum

Recycling the standing-room-only event that it sponsored last year, budding faculty union LSUnited sponsored a retirement plan information forum featuring three top-level administrators from the [Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana](#) (TRSL). An ensemble comprised of Lisa Honore, TRSL Public Information Officer; Jim Buras, Retirement Benefits Administrator; and Katerine Whitney, TRSL Deputy General Counsel offered a substantial presentation on both the current status of the plans and on legislation under consideration this term, a presentation that is available [online](#). The event took on a harsher note as the afternoon progressed, with nearly fifty faculty members peppering TRSL officials with questions about (and expressions of outrage over) the lack of pro-faculty advocacy by TRSL leadership. TRSL reiterated its longstanding position that it only administers laws and that its primary task is maintaining the integrity of TRSL. Those who posted questions concerning the stronger advocacy positions taken by other state retirement systems were referred to those agencies.



Lisa Honore of TRSL

## Financial Education Seminar Goes "SRO"

Financially depleted after years without raises, frustrated by the lack of service from retirement plan vendors, and bewildered by the actions of the retirement plan administrator (TRSL), over 120 colleagues flooded two [financial planning forums](#) sponsored by the LSU Faculty Senate and the Campus Federal Credit Union. Divided into two sections, the identical seminars included either breakfast or lunch, for which faculty around Louisiana thank the Credit Union. Conducted by CFCU financial advisor [ThirtyNorth](#), the sessions featured presentations by ThirtyNorth planners and executives Suzanne Mestayer, Fritz Gomila, and Marcel Dupré, who explained retirement need calculations, fund selection, savings management, risk, benefit management, medical costs, and a plethora of other topics. The enormity of the crowd indicated a clear and definitive need among professionals for help and instruction in financial planning. As a result, the LSU Faculty Senate plans to repeat the offering at LSU and to develop a circuit of statewide presentations. Catch the profile video of ThirtyNorth CEO [Suzanne Mestayer](#).



ThirtyNorth CEO Suzanne Mestayer

## LSU Applies Cosmetics to Facebook

Although little known to most folks on the big Baton Rouge campus, a brush war has been raging on LSU A&M's Facebook page, where comments critical of the presidential search process and comments that question the credentials of LSU System President Designate F. King Alexander are being deleted by an anonymous "page administrator." Once the startled visitor to this page gets past the grammatical errors committed by this "page administrator" (for example, the use of "their" as a singular pronoun), the citizen who would like to controvert a point is confronted with an array of regulations intended to keep the rhetoric cool—and about as true-to-life as the whimsical ethnic figures in Disneyland's *Small World* theme-park ride. We learn, for example, that only happy remarks are welcome: that "LSU Facebook page is a troll-free zone. Comments and content designed specifically to elicit a negative emotional response or anger are prohibited." Similarly, "terminology judged to be overly offensive will be removed"—so be sure to keep it only offensive, not "overly" so. Perhaps the most telling statement is "the university reserves the right to determine what is permissible." Truer words were never spoken about the attitude toward truthful criticism in Louisiana.

facebook





## Billboard Battle Blazes

Over the last year, the *Newsletter* has reported on the new craze among enrollment service managers: the raising of big, bold, and occasionally bombastic billboards either in the territory of a rival university or in an unlikely venue such as a well-known Texas-proximate center of gambling, horse-racing, and boudin-vending. Despite chasing the economic green, these campaigns are anything but ecologically “green.” They encourage students living at the proverbial “point A” to commute to “the State University of Point B” while also using additional electrons to take an online course at “Terminal C.” Expressing the restlessness and a few of the contradictions of American culture, these billboards boast of the merits of regional cultures and venue-relevant education while also urging students to go to school anywhere other than where they reside (perhaps the now-dormant Rosepine Ag station needs a billboard so as to become the next destination school). This public-relations equivalent to nuclear proliferation continues. This month, Newsletter spotters have detected a truly colossal “Discover” ULM billboard soaring over exit 100 on Interstate 10—the very exit that leads to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (let us hope that a u-turn pocket is provided for those who might change their minds en route to ULL). The otherwise static battle of the billboards takes on a packed, mobile quality in the Alexandria area, where spotters have found and LSUA billboard facing off with another ULM escutcheon. Situated near milepost 83 on the southbound side of Interstate 49, the ULM billboard intones the “Discover” ULM theme in a quiet font that evokes the Louisiana marsh but that is somewhat less than legible for high-speed travelers. Meanwhile, only two miles down the road, at milepost 81, a rampant LSUA billboard in startling cobalt blue proclaims that “at LSUA, your future is our future,” blazoning its message of personal concern through an image of a female student who, dressed in apparel of a kind seldom seen in Alexandria, is clearly a resident of the “generic file photo” cabinet. At the moment, a highway interchange keeps these two billboards at bay from one another, but perhaps a direct encounter is in the offing, or at least on the off-ramp.

## Supervisor Prays, “Let My Names Go!”

Every Saturday, the Baton Rouge newspaper, *The Advocate*, publishes a spiritual message in a half-page layout at the back of the “religion” section. Sponsored by a group of nineteen business leaders who presumably seek favor from the divinity, the message occupies one-quarter of the advertisement while information about the sponsors occupies more than half the page (at last report, the members of the holy trinity shared space equally, in thirds, but such is not the case in this competition between message and merchant). The *Newsletter* staff notes that one of these highly visible practitioners of prayer is Manda Fine Meats, the CEO of which serves on the LSU Board of Supervisors. Entitled “Occasions for Prayer,” the April 27th message in this spiritualized advertisement advises readers that “there is never an inappropriate occasion for prayer.” From this, we deduce that the Supervisor in question is busy praying about a thousand matters, indeed is surely joining with the public in praying for release of the names of the presidential candidates that the other, less religious Supervisors have hidden in their Ark of Broken Covenants.



Supervisor Prays--Let the Candidates' Names Go!

## Another Advance At LSU: The Mar-Go-Rita

Former LSU A&M Vice-Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, now Georgia Southern University President Brooks Keel was wont to boast about LSU's research by pointing to the high level of arts and humanities work planned for the new EA Sports Building, where products such as *Madden NFL* would doubtless assist those liberal arts researchers exploring specialist dialects or undertaking other humanities projects. It is well known in not-so-well-known circles that outspoken former LSU System President John Lombardi irritated more than a few folks by pointing out that such enterprises demonstrated that LSU A&M was perhaps not so awesome a research institution as its propaganda might suggest. LSU once again felt the embarrassments of prosperity when LSU 100: Fastest Growing Tiger Businesses, a wing of the LSU Stephenson Entrepreneurship Institute, proclaimed its number-one business of 2012–2013 to be Cordina New Orleans Cocktails, a company that has soared into the forefront of entrepreneurship by developing mylar-pouch doses of cocktails that can be gulped anywhere and anytime. Cordina Cocktails, whose web site carries images of frothy drinks sporting a logo reading “alcohol inside!”, has, according to this same web site, a vision of the future: “What’s in store for the future? The Cordina team is working hard to bring all of our tasty flavors nationwide because no one should be denied a delicious, on-the-go cocktail alternative. So, stay tuned, grab a Cordina and raise your pouch!” Cordina's awareness of history ensures that the scholars in Himes Hall will have their work cut out for them chronicling a record of relentless research: “The Mar-GO-rita was soon followed by the Strawberry Daiq-GO-ri and Pina-GO-lada. In 2012, a new Watermelon Mar-GO-rita debuted as well as the Choc-GO-late, which is patterned after a Mudslide.” Those who have been around Louisiana for a good many years can only be amazed at this celebration of bibulousness when remembering that only two decades ago LSU hired attorneys to run a Murphy's bar out-of-business following a fatal excess-drinking incident. So much for being a “space grant institution”—FAA rules forbid operation of any air- or spacecraft less than eight hours after guzzling.



LSU Research Includes Agricultural Products, Silicon Applications

## Zapata Zip Enlivens International Outreach

Most Louisiana universities have lagged far behind their respective compeers when it comes to international programs. The international effort at LSU A&M, the would-be flagship university, have sunk so low that one would need binoculars to see the belly of this program-cum-bathysphere. Now a one-man flotation device is in place. With the arrival of the zippy Hector Zapata as the new Director of LSU International Programs, international efforts are, in the words of that old Vaudeville tune, about to “hit the heights.” After only a few weeks in office, zooming Zapata hired consultants Tim Barnes (of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) and Susan Gronbeck-Tedesco (of the University of Kansas) to do a bottom-to-top analysis of the international portfolio. Interviewing dozens of colleagues and seeking input from a portfolio of constituent groups, Gronbeck-Tedesco and Barnes were at once aghast at Louisiana's international intransigence but were also bubbly with optimism about the future of internationalism at LSU. Their report is due soon.

## Supervisor Bubbles Up Into Airways

One of the most paradoxical habits of the denizens of Louisiana's higher education management boards is the affectation of normality: the suggestion that persons who are largely inheritors of family wealth have risen to their position through hard effort and that they are in every respect, other than intensity of effort, identical to ordinary citizens. This affectation of normality—a kind of boastful anonymity—usually manifests itself in a reclining or slumped-over posture during board meetings or as a showy reluctance to banter with reporters. This boastful bashfulness broke down when LSU Supervisor Stephen Perry made an appearance on page 86 of the April 2013 issue of *USAirways Magazine* in a promotional section on New Orleans tourism. In that high-flying publication, this beneficiary of that which trickles down



Supervisor to USAir --Workforce Development Leads to Red Beans Cookery

from the top—Perry got his start as a Mike Foster appointee, joined the LSU Board as a Jindal appointee, and found his way into the presidency of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau—quotes Ellis Marsalis's pre-Katrina characterization of New Orleans as a venue where “culture doesn't come down from on high. It bubbles up from the street.” While doing the right thing by lauding New Orleans's restaurants, architecture, music, and painting, Perry also manages to do the wrong thing by not breathing a word about New Orleans's universities. Perhaps forgetting that the LSU Board of Supervisors ceded UNO to the University of Louisiana System and that the *John Folse Culinary Institute* belongs to Nicholls State in Thibodaux, Perry instead opines that New Orleans is a place where a youngster “becomes a phenomenal cook.” The common denominator in this is 33,000: the flight altitude at which this story is most frequently read and the maximum salary for a non-celebrity “line” cook who bypasses college.

## AG Answers ?

"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).

Dear A G,

*I'm suffering from what might be called an embarrassment of recovered riches. I'm in the final third of my working life—I'm in my fifties, with around twenty-five years of university service—and have paid off my credit-card debt and also paid down most of my mortgage. I'm now in a position to save more money, but I'd say that I'm also a civic-minded kind of guy. So I have two questions.*

*First, on the basis of your experience, do you think it would be wiser to put more money into my TRSL-connected 403(b) account, which is tax-free up-front but which offers only a few investment choices and which attracts taxation at payout, or do you think it would be better to seek out other investments, perhaps a Roth IRA, where I'd pay in with taxable dollars but owe no tax at payout and where I'd have more investment choices?*

*Second question: Do you think it might be better to be "civic-minded" and use my money for a tax-sheltered "green" lifestyle improvement such as solar panels for my house or an electric car?*

With thanks,

Donald

Dear Donald,

One thinks that part of your question is designed to bait me into posting some wisecrack about the "carbon footprint" of Al Gore's masseuse or the inability of a Prius to tow a decent size bass boat. I will however avoid that trap and instead paraphrase a number of financial advisors in regard to whether one should actively prepare for their retirement or invest in the wellbeing of the community. – "In order to provide for others you must first feed yourself."

Actively preparing for your retirement will relieve yourself of the worry that with retirement comes poverty and also allow you to consider and act upon civic minded and humanitarian pursuits as you age. Entering into your seventies without a viable income will not go far toward preserving our environment or extending your life. Save for retirement first!

Now for the central part of your question –

What is the better strategy, opening a Roth IRA or opening a University sponsored 403(b) account?

While I have opinions on everything, one should recognize that I am not a financial planner, just an opinionated guy who used to have a subscription to The Wall Street Journal. With retirement planning should come lots of reading and research and discussions with professionals (who don't necessarily have products to sell)

Roth IRAS –

•A Roth IRA is an independent individual retirement account that you set up directly with an investment firm. (The name comes from its chief legislative sponsor, Senator William Roth, Jr., a five-term senator from Delaware.) When opening a Roth IRA, the individual sets up an account with an investment house, chooses investment options through them, and then directly deposits after-tax money into the Roth IRA. Upon meeting a few basic requirements (you're 59 1/2 years old or older and have had the plan for five years or more), you can withdraw both your deposits and gains completely tax-free. In 2013, the maximum contribution you are allowed is \$5,500 a year (unless you're over 50 at which time you can contribute \$6500.00). Roth IRA's are not allowed for everyone—there are income limits on who can contribute. If you file individually: incomes up to \$110,000 qualify for a full contribution; incomes between \$110,000–\$125,000 are eligible for a partial contribution. For people filing their taxes jointly: incomes up to \$173,000 qualify for a full contribution; incomes between \$173,000–\$183,000 are eligible for a partial contribution.

•An individual may not take a loan from their Roth IRA account.

•403b Accounts

A 403(b) plan is a retirement plan for certain employees of public schools, tax-exempt organizations, and ministers. Individual 403(b) accounts are established and maintained by eligible employers. It is named after the corresponding section of the IRS code that established the fund.

Accounts under a 403(b) plan can be one of the following types:

•An annuity contract provided through an insurance company; these 403(b) annuity plans are also known as tax-sheltered annuities (TSAs) and tax-deferred annuities (TDAs).

•A custodial account provided through a retirement account custodian; investments are limited to regulated investment companies, such as mutual funds.

•A retirement income account for which investments options are either annuities or mutual funds.

•The employer not the employee selects the financial institution(s) that manage the 403(b) accounts. The employees may select a fund or funds from a set menu of offerings.

The primary advantages to the employee:

•Reduced taxable income through pretax contributions

•Much higher investment limits than a Roth IRA - For 2013: \$17,500 (\$23,000 if age 50 or older).

Unlike the Roth IRA

Since the money in a 403(b) is invested pre-tax withdrawals are taxable, members of a 403(b) plan have the ability to take loans from the 403(b) accounts.

(continued on page 10)



A G Monaco

## Tip of the Month: Bayou Teche Experience

Despite Louisiana's reputation as a land suffused with enchanted waterways, comparatively few citizens of our state brave the challenges of weather, equipment, access, insects, and wildlife to explore the bayous that moisten the not-so-deep south of our state. For most people, travel into the wetlands means corn-ball alligator-feeding sprees with would-be aboriginal guide-celebrities. Despite occupying an area far greater than the renowned Everglades, the Louisiana swamp remains largely uncultivated as a tourist destination. A huge step toward the remedy of the access problem has been solved with the arrival in Louisiana of Corey Werk, proprietor of the start-up tour company, Bayou Teche Experience. The soft-spoken but multi-lingual Werk, who passes muster in English, French, German, and Spanish, has opened an easily accessible tour operation in nearby Breaux Bridge, where he also offers canoe and kayak instruction. Werk offers a full menu of tours, whether around Lake Martin or after dark or in the Atchafalaya basin, all of them featuring the refreshing quiet and the up-close access to nature possible only with human-powered vessels. True, Werk's overly maneuverable plastic kayaks are a long way from those paddled by trappers and native Americans; true, Werk is himself an import—a combo Californian-German who is on his way to becoming the next purportedly local "figure." Yet his tours are delightful, are challenging enough to please the exercise aficionado while retaining the sluggard, and come at a reasonable price. Check in at [www.bayoutecheexperience.com](http://www.bayoutecheexperience.com) or 337-366-0337.

**CANOE & Kayak**  
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**Eco Adventures**

- Kayak & Bicycle Rentals
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- Kayak Zydeco with breakfast & live music

**337 • 366 • 0337**  
[www.BayouTecheExperience.com](http://www.BayouTecheExperience.com)

Bayou Teche Experience

## AG ANSWERS(continued)

The primary comparisons that you need to be aware of are:

Investment options/management under a 403 (b) plan are tied to whatever management and investment options are made available to you by the plan that the University selects. That often means the investment choices may not fit unique needs or desires.

Things to look out for in your investment plans are expense ratios (if they're high, that's bad) and investment options (the more choices, the better).

With a Roth IRA, you are allowed to choose your fund management and thus also your investment options – you and not your employer get to pick the investment firm you want to use.

As an example – LSU under the 403(b) plan does not include Vanguard as an option yet the firm offers popular plans because the expenses they charge are low and they offer a large number of index funds, which are a popular equities approach to investment. So if you are committed to investing in Vanguard you need to look at other options outside of the 403(b) plan.

Roth IRAs offer an advantage in that they allow you to choose your plan's manager from the entire population of investment firms, though if you believe that your 403(b) plan offers good options, this may not matter.

It is the ability of each option to shelter you from taxes that is really the major deciding factor because it involves predicting what the future holds for you.

If you think your income tax rate will be higher at withdrawal time than it is now, a Roth IRA is a better choice and will save you money in reduced taxes in the future. If you think your income tax rate will be lower at withdrawal time than it is now, a 403(b) is a better choice and will save you money in reduced taxes in the present.

Although deciding whether to go with a 403(b) or Roth IRA is a personal decision, there's nothing stopping you from investing in both. If possible you could have a 403(b) from your job and then a Roth IRA, which allows you complete control through your personal efforts.

Lets look at this example– If you could afford to invest five hundred (\$500.00) post tax dollars each month then a split between a 403(b) account and your Roth IRA might provide investment diversity while avoiding taxes on both ends of the investments.

Assume you are in the 28% tax bracket – investing \$250.00 per month in your 403(b) account would reduce your take home pay by \$180.00. That move would leave you with \$320.00 to place in your Roth IRA account for a total investment of \$570.00 per month but with a reduction in take home pay of just \$500.00 per month. While sheltering your money from taxes both before and after retirement you actually end up with the opportunity to invest more money in the present.

I don't think it is a "cop out" to suggest that you consider using both options for your retirement investments because that approach would provide you with a wide variety of investment vehicles and tax avoidance in the present as well as in the future.

No matter which of these two options you choose, it is a sound financial move to increase your savings for retirement when you can afford it.

Now Donald, you did not mention whether or not you were married but since you only listed two investment options I must assume you have a partner. For single men over fifty there is a third investment option. It is one that I often think of each time I watch a James Bond movie.

Under option three you put on a white dinner jacket, call for the limo, and go to the casino and bet every penny of your assets on one hand of baccarat.

Alas, I am married and my partner generally keeps me from doing things as exciting as that. Reality for me involves putting on my ragged Wake Forest sweatshirt, driving to the casino in a PT Cruiser, walking past the "high roller room", and cashing in a "two for one coupon" at the "all you can eat" buffet.

"Garcon, a Diet Mountain Dew please – shaken not stirred."

### Stand With Louisiana French Professors

Louisiana is the epicenter of an assault on the university as a community of scholars. The state has become notorious for eroding academic freedom and its foundation in shared governance and tenure.

After the rough-shod procedures adopted by New Orleans universities in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, recent tactics continue to evade and undermine long-established practices for dealing with financial pressures.

In the Summer of 2010, the administration of Southeastern Louisiana University announced the closure of its French program and the dismissal of three tenured faculty members, Margaret Marshall, Katherine Kolb, and Evelyne Bornier, among the most highly regarded professors on campus. In violation of University guidelines and AAUP standards, the program closure was determined without consulting the faculty concerned. Nor did the program, in fact, close: French courses are still being taught; a French minor is still offered. In further violation of University policy and AAUP guidelines, these courses are being staffed by instructors, who, in cases of program closure are to be dismissed before tenured faculty.

The SLU administration ignored wide-spread protest, rejected the unanimous findings of the SLU Faculty Grievance committee and the Faculty Senate's urging the professors' reinstatement, and sneered at the AAUP's subsequent investigation and censure.

(continued on page 11)

# 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

**LSUnited** A Vital LSU! A Vital Community!

Need more info? Contact us at **LSUNITED@LIVE.COM** OR VISIT **LAE.ORG**

THE LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM FRIENDS  
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*Chubby*  
**CARRIER**  
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## EDITOR'S

### Note

Dear readers,

In the April 8th edition of the *Newsletter*, the "Nichols Delivers Dimes Every Quarter" mentioned that CIO Brian Nichols' 2012 *Momentum* report was not yet online. A kind and observant reader pointed out that this was not the case. In case you couldn't find it, catch this must-read online [here](#).

Once again, thanks for your continued readership of the Faculty Senate *Newsletter*.

We will resume publication in the fall of 2013 with more great stories.

Have a great summer!

--Faculty Senate Staff

### French Professors (continued)

The three professors have filed suit, a courageous action given that the legal and financial resources of the defendant far exceed their own.

The cause of the three professors is crucial to academics throughout the state and across the nation. If the university prevails in its shocking abridgment of fair treatment of these three exemplary professors, it will set a grievous precedent for arbitrary administrative infringement of tenure rights everywhere.

The Louisiana Conference of AAUP has established a fund to help cover the legal costs incurred by the three professors in their struggle on behalf of us all: students present and future, parents, and faculty everywhere.

We are asking all faculty and the community at large to make contributions in support of this fight. Give all you can.

Mail a check made out to LSC/AAUP to:

**Professor Alvin Burstein**

7008 Longvue Drive

Mandeville, LA 70448



### The Center for Academic Success Faculty Resources

The Center for Academic Success is dedicated to delivering cognitive based-strategies that enhance teaching and learning. The center provides quality tutorial and supplemental instruction services, as well individual consultations and workshops for students. Many faculty may not be aware of the services available to assist them in improving student learning and performance. The Center understands the challenges faculty face in developing our students into independent, critical thinkers. We strive to offer simple and practical strategies that are easy to integrate into practice and deliver to students.

**uLearn Video Series:** The CAS has created short videos that are focused on learning strategies from both student and faculty perspectives. These videos are perfect to post on Moodle or integrate into a lecture. Topics include: Bloom's Taxonomy, The Study Cycle, Concept Mapping and Time Management. "A Conversation With..." series provides students with advice on critical thinking, test preparation, and using resources from our experienced learning strategy consultants, including Dr. Sandra McGuire, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning. The videos can be found on our website at [www.cas.lsu.edu](http://www.cas.lsu.edu) or <http://www.youtube.com/user/lsucas>

**Workshop for Faculty Teaching Large Classes:** On **June 4th**, The Center for Academic Success will offer a workshop, "Increasing Student Engagement in Large Classes: Teaching and Learning Strategies that Work!". The workshop will be held in **Williams 214** from **8:30 am** until **3:00 pm**. A complementary lunch will also be provided. The workshop will feature a variety of LSU faculty members who will present successful strategies for increasing student engagement and success in classes of 80 students or more. Participants will also have an opportunity to develop a plan to integrate new techniques into their classes and will learn about the technology support available on campus. Click here to register. Additional information is at [cas.lsu.edu/faculty-focus-summer-workshop](http://cas.lsu.edu/faculty-focus-summer-workshop).

**Webinars:** The CAS sponsors free webinars for faculty that relate to enhancing instructional techniques to increase student engagement and improve learning.

**Customized class-room presentations:** Our learning consultants are available to conduct in-class, learning strategy workshops that can be tailored to any course and time frame. Requests can be made at <http://cas.lsu.edu/presentations-request>.

**Individual Consultations:** Faculty can schedule appointments with learning consultants to discuss ideas for implementing teaching and learning strategies in specific courses.

To learn more about how the Center for Academic Success can assist you, contact us at 578-2762 or [cas@lsu.edu](mailto:cas@lsu.edu).

**FACULTY SUFFIX (+/-) GRADE SURVEY**  
**COMPLETE THE SURVEY TODAY**

### Louisiana State Museum Friends

#### "Night at the Louisiana State Museum: Year of Louisiana Music"

Featuring Grammy award-winning artist

*Chubby Carrier and the Bayou Swamp Band*

The third annual fundraiser celebrating Louisiana music and culture is set for **June 8**

#### WHO:

Lt. Governor Jay Dardenne will serve as honorary chair of this gala event featuring Grammy award-winning zydeco artist Chubby Carrier and the Bayou Swamp Band, with opening music by the Michael Foster Project.

Presented by the Louisiana Lottery, with generous support from ExxonMobil, BlueCross BlueShield, Cypress Title and Southern Strategy Group and others.

More information on Chubby Carrier: <http://www.chubbycarrier.com/>

#### WHAT:

The event will also continue its unique tradition of bringing the museum's exhibits to life with live actors, along with a fabulous silent auction with unique items like an original painting created onsite by Louisiana primitive artist Alvin Batiste.

Ticket prices are \$40 in advance and \$50 at the door (\$35 for Louisiana State Museum Friends members) and include complimentary catering by Heirloom Cuisine, wine and beer.

Summer cocktail attire, please.

More information on Alvin Batiste: <http://alvinbatiste.com/>

#### WHEN:

Saturday, June 8

7:00 pm until 10:00 pm

#### WHERE:

Capitol Park Museum

660 N. Fourth St.

Baton Rouge, LA

More information on the Capitol Park Museum: <http://www.crt.state.la.us/museum/properties/LSMbr.aspx> or 225.342.5428

#### WHY:

Funds raised will be used to support the mission of the Louisiana State Museum Friends. The Friends group is charged with supporting the museum's educational mission and public offerings through membership, volunteerism, financial support and other resources. "Like" Louisiana State Museum Friends on Facebook for updates and more information.

#### HOW:

Tickets may be purchased through any LSM Friends board member, by calling (225) 763-1096 or by visiting <http://lsmf.eventbrite.com/>

