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### Faculty Senate Newsletter, September 2015

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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# Faculty Senate Newsletter

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

In recent months, the top officers—or, as they like to call themselves, the “CEOs”—of Louisiana’s university systems have asked their public relations departments to proclaim their great accomplishment in staving off the economic starvation of campuses by a penurious legislature. According to this narrative, a heroic effort by the Fab Four of higher education administration convinced backwoods politicians that prosperous campuses were good for everyone. Like all narratives, this one features a beginning and an ending. Beginnings and endings have a way of eclipsing our vision of what went on before or after the story. By focusing attention on a bad starting point and a good climax, they tend to occlude much of occurred during the story line.



Kevin Cope

If we open the portals at the arbitrary start and stop points of this story, we discover that not very much really happened as a direct result of the efforts of the lead characters in this slightly tall tale. The story had already been written. Decades of compliant leaders, spurred on by political appointees from both parties, had cooperated in the writing of an economic story in which universities need enough funding to produce sports entertainment and provide a competent but home-loving workforce willing to work at below-market wages. Very few experienced observers believe that legislators, most of whom have some political or economic motivation to keep their favorite campus alive, would allow institutions to fall much below or rise much above this threshold. On the other, *post hoc* side of the narrative, we see little evidence that the highest level of administration wants to continue forcing the point about funding. Rather, System Presidents are now cowering in fear, convinced that the slightest pre-Halloween “boo” will scare lawmakers back into an anti-funding posture. Looking all the way around the narrative, it is important to note that the top, system level of leadership has seen a fifty percent turnover in the last eighteen months and a one-hundred percent turnover in the last two years, suggesting that whatever is going on with regard to politics and funding has little to do with any one set of would-be leaders.

More fundamental than the question of whether this, that, or the other leader led the charge and saved the day is the question of whether any campus or system “CEO” can do, say, or achieve anything in an environment that prizes the abstraction “leadership” rather than the fact of competence or courage. When was the last time that the head of a Louisiana campus or system took a stand on any topic other than administration itself? The full range of contemporary favorite topics—environmental stewardship and population control; the possibility of extraterrestrial life; the worldwide surge in fundamentalism in all creeds; the world after the age of nations; what “race” means—are de facto off-limits. Entering into any of these areas will brand an administrator as a crackpot, an ideologue, or, worst of all, someone who is not perfectly “balanced” in every way. By stylizing themselves as the exclusive experts in the abstract practice of “leadership,” chief academic executives have painted themselves into a corner where they not only can say nothing of substance but, in fact, can do nothing, for any action or statement at all is potentially offensive—dangerous—to someone.

The cult of student retention and student success is but one epitome of the debilitation of university leadership. No one wishes students anything other than long-running success, but the prizing of that as a thing in itself rather than a consequence of action produces debacles such as abandoned climbing walls and exercise-free, ornamental “lazy river” swimming pools. Perhaps it is time to challenge both administrators and students to run some sort of risk and to note that the some of the most memorable contributors in human history have recognized that worldly “success” and generalized “leadership” may come at a higher price than occasional honest failure.

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# Higher Education Headliner



Dr. Randy Duran

Randy Duran, the Gordon A. Cain chair in STEM literacy at LSU, was only sixteen years old when he became an undergraduate at Case Western Reserve University in his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. "My parents didn't want me too far from home," he admits. An ambitious young scholar, he received a Lavoisier fellowship from the French Embassy, which allowed him to study at any university he chose in France. Taking his wife, whom he had met at Case, Duran decided to pursue his doctorate at the Université Louis Pasteur in Strasbourg, France—one of only a small handful of Americans to achieve such an accomplishment in a science discipline in the past thirty years. Over those same thirty years, three Nobel Prizes have been awarded to researchers at this university. There Duran encountered many wonderful scientists who helped to shape his ideas, including his mentor, Antoine Skoulios.

Having received such an opportunity for study abroad, Duran is committed to affording similar opportunities to both undergraduate and graduate students. He wishes to instill the desire in each student to become a "global citizen." To that end, he has helped students receive such awards as Fulbright Scholarships, Churchills and even opportunities provided by the French Embassy. A recent collaboration with Grenoble has resulted in an award from the European Union's Erasmus+ program that will allow many students and faculty to do scholarship and research abroad. Duran enjoys his role as a mentor, assisting students with not only his enthusiasm, but his ability to help them go to other countries, such as those in Europe, South America, and the Middle East. By going abroad, students gain not only experience in research and scholarship, but a cultural and educational experience that transcends academia. For Duran, such an opportunity is an authentic experience that no amount of technology can replace.

As one of the stewards of STEM literacy at LSU, Duran and others in the Cain Center for STEM Literacy aid in the creation of educational programs not only directed at student achievement, but teaching excellence. Duran is particularly enthusiastic about the Cain Center's efforts led by many in the Cain Center, to help Louisiana's high school science teachers create meaningful lessons that aid in students' understanding and help to close the achievement gap between Louisiana and other states. Duran's passion for helping teachers was particularly

apparent when asked about his most memorable experience at the Cain Center. He spoke animatedly about the Career Forum held in 2011, which the Cain Center co-sponsored. Instructors from almost every college and university in Louisiana, members from eleven school districts, and representatives from seven states attended, 280 in all, an impressive showing. Duran knows, though, that more work needs to be done. In particular, he is frustrated that teachers are not acknowledged as much as they ought to be, especially when the issue of salary arises. "Some Garbage collectors make more than teachers in this state," Duran says, "and that needs to change." The salary of a professional reflects the esteem in which that professional is held, and teachers are not paid well.

Yet, in an effort led by Frank Neubrandner, East Baton Rouge is getting a new high school, Lee High School, and Duran has high hopes for its programs. A solid secondary education is necessary for high achievement at the college level, and Duran wants as many students as possible to be successful in the transition to higher education. He is especially mindful of the importance of dual enrollment programs, which aid in college readiness. At LSU, under the leadership of Phoebe Rouse, more than ten departments have joined together to aid in that mission of college readiness. In addition, the International Baccalaureate program, in which Louisiana ranks dead last in the United States, needs an overhaul. Yet, no program, however passionate the proponents are, can do everything alone and needs support and buy-in at the community level. Only then can programs be expanded to include schools all over the state.

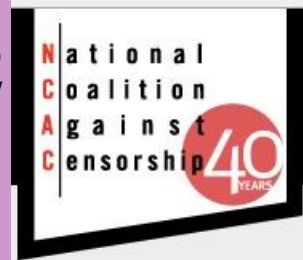
Duran has high hopes for the continuation of the Cain Center's programs. Duran came to LSU for the opportunity to make a difference in the quality of education that Louisiana's students receive. He loves writing research proposals, giving awards, and working with so many different faculty members and student populations. He also was drawn to LSU for its many fine programs that are not often acknowledged, such as the University Press, the opera program, and the Hill Memorial Library's special collections. Duran has found his niche at the Cain Center and hopes to continue to have an impact and make a difference not just in students' lives, but in the professional lives of teachers, as well.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman



## NCAC, AAUP, FIRE PUT THE HEAT ON LSU OVER BUCHANAN OUSTER

An old adage holds that "where there's smoke, there's fire," and so it is that smoldering faculty concerns over the firing of Professor Teresa Buchanan has attracted a barrage of criticism from reputable national groups. First up to the line of fire was no less than FIRE, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a group concerned with faculty professors, especially with free speech. FIRE analysts posted a no-holds-barred, easily accessible [response](#) to LSU's claims concerning alleged violations of federal law owing to the peppery style of the so-called salty-languaged professor. Meanwhile, the National Coalition Against Censorship, a prominent advocacy group concerned with the preservation of free speech rights and with the advancement of free inquiry, fired off a blazing [letter](#) to LSU leadership, delivering a litany of precedents that challenged LSU's position and cautioning about the ill social effects of censorship on campuses. The final bit of murky icing went on this large serving of devil's food cake when the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a supplementary [report](#) on the Buchanan case that not only panned LSU but that put LSU in the dubious ranks of only seven universities that have attracted not only a censure but a supplemental investigation. One can only wonder: Does the LSU administration expect anyone to believe that so many reputable public interest groups can misperceive events?



LSU ends up on the wrong side of human rights groups

## ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE ENERGIZES A&M COMMUNITY

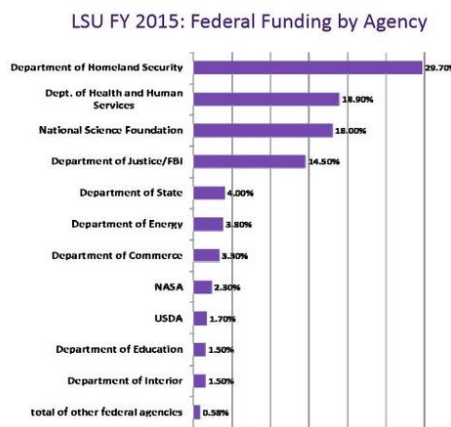
One of the boldest and most sweeping moves of the LSU A&M Faculty Senate was the passage of its Resolution 14–11, “Management Processes and the Primacy of the Faculty,” which proposed a sweeping investigation of the reasons for inefficiencies in the services rendered to faculty, whether purchasing or travel arranging or retirement payouts or meeting room reservations. Responding to this outcry, energetic interim LSU A&M Provost and Executive Vice-Chancellor Richard Koubek has created the Administrative Performance Improvement Committee (APIC), a special task force composed of the most experienced faculty and the most amenable administrators which is charged with conducting the grand project proposed by the aforementioned Senate resolution. APIC is already performing at an unprecedented rate. It has created a [web page](#) for the submission of suggestions, requests, and ideas; it has met regularly, enthusiastically, and, above all, productively. Everyone at the Baton Rouge campus has great confidence in the APIC program and is grateful to Provost Koubek for decisive, visionary, and no-nonsense action. Other campuses out there: why not devise an APIC committee of your very own?



Provost Koubek's APIC program puts LSU on hyperbolic trajectory

## NOTTOWAY HOSTS VALSARAJ FUNDING FEAST

Students of history recognize that the modern science academy and the “R&D” machinery that supports have deeper roots in English Puritanism and in the working class than do the liberal arts, which derive from the semi-liberal Catholic universities that spangled what Donald Rumsfeld dismissed as “old Europe.” It is thus all the more admirable that one of the true *internationales* of Louisiana academe, LSU Office of Research and Economic Development chief K. T. Valsaraj, year-in and year-out produces classy, decidedly more-than-Puritan workshops on funded research and economic outreach. This year, the ORED funding feast took place at legendary Nottoway Plantation, where conferees experienced a series of workshops and updates on the advancement of learning through ardent fundraising and where the catering was exquisite. Never daunted by the awkward and always eager to get to truth via any posture, K. T. unveiled an astounding array of slides, many of them showing progress in research funding but some of them revealing disconcerting facts, including the heavy dependence of LSU on one or two funding agencies. Congratulations on K. T. For showing Louisiana administrations that learning, funding, and elegance can coincide.



K T Valsaraj reveals the asymmetry in funding sources

## FACULTY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM DEFEATS TWO GOLIATHS

The summer of 2015 set new standards and high achievement records for faculty environmental activism. Louisiana faculty not only took leadership positions in but have prevailed with respect to two gigantic threats to local as well as campus environments. Up in Shreveport, LSUS chemist and environmentalist Brian Salvatore spearheaded [Concerned Citizens of the Campus Minden Explosives Open Burn](#), a public action group that joined the town and the gown in a campaign to regulate the igneous disposal of vast stores of dated M6 propellant at Camp Minden. Without the intervention of Salvatore and his syndicate, an assortment of north Louisiana campuses—LSUS; SUSLA; Grambling; Louisiana Tech—would have found themselves spending months under the caustic haze of rocket fuel fumes, to the ill effect of faculty, students, staff, and anyone who chose to breathe. As of our publication date, the Concerned Citizens group had elicited a suitable and safe burn plan from the government contractor charged with the disposal project.



Tubal Cain and the military brought all their armaments but could not defeat organized faculty

Meanwhile, down in Baton Rouge, faculty members kept up the pressure on both the LSU administration and an assortment of governmental bodies with respect to a proposed Tubal—Cain barge cleaning plant along the banks of the Mississippi River, within walking distance of LSU. Through interview after interview and testimony after testimony, an ensemble of faculty members headed by Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, Sophy Bart, and Judith Schiebout, along with supporters from the general public, achieved a rezoning of the property where the plant would have been built, effectively terminating the project. Bridwell-Bowles, Bart, and Schiebout will soon become the beneficiaries of an LSU Faculty Senate [Resolution](#) lauding them for their accomplishments.

By surmounting enormous odds, the aforementioned colleagues demonstrated not only that David and still defeat Goliath—twice!—but that faculty have far more power, even in Louisiana, than they may realize.



## A.G.'s Corner

LSU HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER, CHIEF A. G. MONACO, ADDRESSES QUESTIONS ABOUT HRM AND "EMPLOYEES' LIVES" IN GENERAL. IF YOU HAVE A PRESSING HRM ISSUE FOR A G TO ADDRESS, PLEASE SEND YOUR QUERIES TO ENCOPE@LSU.EDU.

**A.G. will be on leave for one month, gathering information, and will resume his column on Halloween.**

# GUEST COLUMN

## A Decade of Research after Katrina and Rita

Ten years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita made landfall on the region, leaving an indelible mark on everyone's lives, LSU faculty gathered to share the research across disciplines that has come out of this collective experience. Since the storms, over 175 peer-reviewed papers by LSU faculty have been published on the topic. To present this to the community and the world, the Office of Research & Economic Development sponsored a coordinated series of events from Aug. 25-28. About 600 people attended the events that comprised Katrina & Rita: A Decade of Research & Response.

The anniversary week opened with a Science Café talk by Katie Cherry, psychology professor and the executive director of the LSU Life Course & Aging Center, entitled "Survivors from the Coastal Parishes." Cherry and her research assistants interviewed over 190 coastal residents in the aftermath of the storm. She presented her research findings on religiosity and resilience. About 126 people attended the August Science Café talk at Chelsea's Café.

On Aug. 27, there was a poetry reading by Vincent Cellucci, the College of Art & Design CxC coordinator, and a film screening by Assistant Professor Zack Godshall. Cellucci read from his book of poetry, *An Easy Place/To Die*, which is set in post-Katrina New Orleans. Godshall's film, *Low and Behold*, is based on real events and tells the story of a young insurance claim adjuster after Hurricane Katrina who risks his job to help a local man find his lost dog. An audience Q&A with the artists followed the presentation. Also on that day, Katrina@10: A Photography Exhibition at the LSU School of Art Alfred C. Glassell Jr. Exhibition Gallery opened. The curated show featuring works by David G. Spielman, Jennifer Shaw, Jonathan Traviesa, Cate Sampson and Professor Emeritus Thomas Neff will be up through Oct. 4.



The week culminated with an all-day symposium featuring the breadth and depth of research that has been conducted since the storms. Over 90 speakers presented research ranging from animal rescue, communication, economic impact, engineering, design and mitigation, disaster response, cultural preservation, coastal and ecological ramifications, geography, poetry, social recovery and support, visual expression and more. The wealth of information and experience from these presentations will be archived in the LSU Institutional Repository

with video documentation of the presentations. LSU senior Adam Grashoff was awarded the inaugural Sean O'Keefe Leadership Award for his demonstrated leadership. Interim Provost Rick Koubek and former Chancellor Sean O'Keefe presented Grashoff with the award, which is a \$10,000 cash award.

O'Keefe also participated in the panel discussion entitled "LSU in the Eye of the Storm: A University Model for Disaster Response." The presentation gave a behind-the-scenes look at LSU's emergency response on the days following Hurricane Katrina. Former Chancellor Sean O'Keefe, D'Ann Morris, interim director of the Emergency Operations Center, LSU Police Chief Lawrence Rabalais and Kristine Calongne Sanders, assistant vice president of the Division of Strategic Communications shared their experience and lessons learned to a packed room.

In all, the coordinated events succeeded in recognizing the loss, resiliency and strength of our community in response to these two life-changing storms. For more information on upcoming events commemorating this anniversary, visit [katrina.LSU.edu](http://katrina.LSU.edu).

-By Stephen David Beck & Alison Lee Satake

## COSTELLO LEAPS AGAIN INTO RING

Regular contributor and *Newsletter* professional wrestling correspondent Professor Brannon Costello has checked in to report that those troubadours of the squared circle, The Mountain Goats, have released a masterpiece of a single, [The Legend of Chavo Guerrero](#). Give it a view and listen online!



## NEW GRAMBLING PRESIDENT FACES UPHILL LEGITIMACY BATTLE

On July 1, 2015, troubled Grambling State University acquired a new President, Willie D. Larkin. As he comes into office, President Larkin faces a number of challenges, whether the financial instability of one of America's most distinguished HBCUs or the difficulty of defining a mission for such an institution or the task of convincing clever students who love urban areas to rush toward a life in Natchitoches. Whatever President Larkin may do, it is time for him to collaborate with other University of Louisiana System leaders so as to revise the search procedures in the University of Louisiana System, which fill the search committees with University of Louisiana Board members and which limit input from faculty, who have only one voting member on the search panel. Incognito canvassers on the Grambling campus have advised the *Newsletter* that not everyone felt fully empowered with regard to input into the presidential choice. It is now Willie Larkin's make-or-break moment; let us hope that he goes to bat for faculty (and for the recruitment of promising young people into an academic profession that looks less than desirable on the Grambling campus).



Willie Larkin faces a skeptical reception at Grambling

## FACULTY GOVERNANCE TACKLES PROFESSORIAL IDENTITY THEFT

Thanks to faculty activist Suresh Rai, faculty governance officials have recognized the extent of identity theft in the ranks of the professorate. Professors, who engage in abundant online activity and who mix it up in a variety of economic subsystems, present a temptation to those who would pilfer a personality or make off with sensitive, identifying data. Professor Rai has partnered with a retinue of colleagues to create an information sheet on all aspects of identity theft, from prevention to cure. That generously produced [information sheet](#) is available online.



Generous Suresh Rai prepares information sheet on identity theft

## FINANCIAL INNOVATIONS EMERGE FROM HRM, ORED

Viewers of the classic musical *Cabaret* remember that "money makes the world go round." Those who are fond of a better-than-stereo rendition of "that clinking, clanking sound" should listen up for the new advice emerging from the LSU financial helpers. From LSU HRM comes a new utility called "[Retirement Manager](#)" that will provide 24/7 access to, information about, and transaction utilities for some retirement accounts within the diverse economic world of Louisiana's universities. Meanwhile, more than a few professors have recognized that crowdfunding of research might be a whole lot easier than dealing with either donors or granting agencies. To avoid a the potential for a debacle involving informal financial arrangements and the standing of universities among grant givers, LSU A&M has issued temporary guidelines concerning the crowdfunding of research. As usual, those [guidelines](#) are available online.



## Louisiana State Museum in the News

Check out the [article in the Advocate](#) on the Louisiana State Museum's efforts to preserve the Conrad Albrizio mozaic, which they have entitled, "Health and Happiness." The mozaic is available for viewing at the Capitol Park Museum, so if you have a moment, stop by and admire this beautiful piece of Louisiana history.



Picture taken by April Buffington and originally published in the *Advocate*



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## REGENTS FLIP SWITCH ON E-NOTIFICATION SYSTEM



The number-one problem in Louisiana higher education has always been communication. Some university systems have no mailing list of their faculty; TRSL, the retirement plan manager, claims to have no emailing contact with its program participants; some campuses lack even a bulletin board. Higher Education Commissioner

Joseph C. Rallo has thus made a huge advance through the creation of a new electronic notification system by which institutions may be instantly notified of the availability of grants and contracts. Such a system may also allow for coordination of cross-campus and cross-system initiatives. Of course, much work remains to be done on campuses, where notifications from the Regents' office often slip into the black hole of second-level administration. Next step for the laudably instigating Rallo: A direct email system to notify *faculty* of all that is underway.

## RALLO RALLIES FACULTY, POPS IN POLLS WITH BOLD CONSULTING MOVE

At the very moment when the new Commissioner's honeymoon period seemed in danger of quick conclusion owing to his politician-distressing discovery of the \$15,000,000.00 owed to higher education by the Louisiana Racing Commission, the devilish inventiveness of the clever colonel



Faculty leaders confer with Deloitte consultants at the Board of Regents

produced a major pop in his standing in faculty popularity polls. Practicing what he preaches—a potentially dangerous habit in Louisiana—the Commissioner invited an ensemble of faculty leaders to a top-level consultation with analysts from accounting, auditing, and consulting mega-firm Deloitte. Composed of McNeese's Vipin Menon, SUSLA's Sonya Hester, Fletcher's Bonnie Le, LSU's Kenneth McMillin, and ALFS's Kevin Cope, the faculty delegation huddled with Deloitte representatives for nearly two hours. Although only preliminary—the discussion was limited to evaluation of three of the goals from the 2012 Master Plan, admittedly a narrow and somewhat arbitrary subset of the Louisiana educational project—the encounter allowed faculty delegates an opportunity to voice an assortment of concerns while establishing a new tradition of consultation with the Regents. Considering that the Regents seldom consult with anyone outside Louisiana's ruling class, Rallo's rending of the veil must count as a bold move and as something of a challenge to the Sanhedrin. Next assignment for the daring Rallo: convene a faculty-rich experts' panel on the strategic plan, the current incarnation of which was invented by those who were seeking a workforce for such innovations as the V-Vehicle factory and the chicken processing plant.

## COMMISSIONER OPENS COMM CHANNELS, SHARES BUDGET

More evidence of the rising standing of faculty governance in Louisiana came along in the form of a welcome move by Higher Education Commissioner Joseph C. Rallo to open lines of communication between the Board of Regents and the faculty that it sometimes regulates but should always serve. In June, Rallo advised faculty governance leaders that faculty leadership would be added to the Regents' e-distribution list by way of maintaining and timely and continuous information flow. The first item down the information thruway was the FY2015–2016 operating [budget](#) that was approved at the June Board of Regents meeting. Thanks go to Commissioner Rallo for creating a communications system worthy of a distinguished faculty.



Regents add new pelican chicken\_ communications joins union, justice, and confidence

## SELU LEADER KIRYLO PROMOS SHARED GOVERNANCE TO MASS AUDIENCE

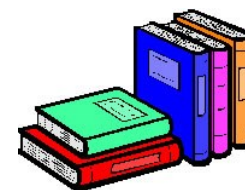
Prior to the time of Anita Bryant, it was easy to accept that a day without orange juice was a day without sunshine; nowadays, it is easy to affirm that a day without a sagacity from South-eastern Louisiana University Faculty Senate President James Kirylo would be worse than Santa Claus without Reindeer Rudolph or Tootsie without a pop. Widely recognized both for his dedication and his productive reliability, Kirylo has developed a specialty in outreach to large populations, most often through Hammond newspaper *The Daily Star*. In one of his best outings to date, this proficient in the use of periodicals has given the general public an understanding of the centrality of shared governance to good decision-making and of the errors that result from totalitarian leadership on campuses. The full account of Kirylo's comments is available [online](#).



SELU Faculty Senate President James Kirylo

## WILDER ENRICHES LIBRARY BY BUYING FACULTY BOOKS

In one of the most daring moves in the history of librarianship at financially challenged universities, [Stanley Wilder](#), Dean of Libraries at LSU, has made his own special contribution to the building of faculty morale. Innovative Wilder has pioneered a plan to buy all faculty-produced (written or edited) books so as to ensure that the LSU Library can serve as a monument to LSU faculty achievement. For years, LSU has been struggling to come up with a plan for an institutional archive. Wilder has taken the first and the biggest step by insuring that, if not until eternity begins its process of never ending, then at least as long and the Middleton Library stands, faculty publications will find a friendly shelf.





## LSU WEB SITE GETS BUBBLE GUM MAKEOVER

Just when cynics thought that the age of *Ozzie and Harriet* had finally concluded, the LSU publicity machine decided that it was time to climb into Sherman's Way-back Machine and celebrate childhood. From a surprise announcement at the June LSU Board of



The representation of female students at LSU

Supervisors meeting, astonished attendees learned that the LSU web site had undergone a complete revamp and that, without the slightest bit of faculty consultation, the site would be unleashed during the summer. An inspection of the [new web site](#) quickly demonstrates why the makeover was given the Area 51 top-secret treatment. Gone is anything that looks hard, controversial, or, worst of



The representation of female students at Harvard

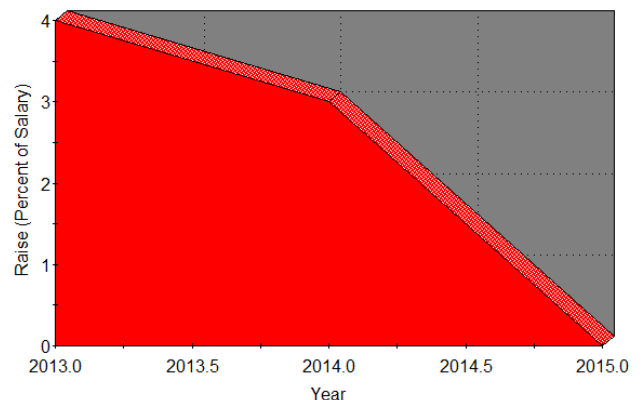
all, adult; present and in plain site are multiple boxes offering insights into wondrous pre-college and delayed-childhood experiences. Panels offer views of the campus as seen by youthful recruits; exhortations to "join the tiger family"; commands to "get involved" and "to prepare"; an abstraction called "buzzworthy" that feature the unrevised exudations of teenagers; a box soliciting tweets about game day; and an accolade to undergraduate-specific LSU Discover. The viewer will look long and hard for equal blazoning of such LSU research ac-

complishments as the LIGO gravitational wave detector or editions of the verse of Christina Rossetti; instead, one sees nonstop representations of childish gang behavior and nonstop festivity (and to think that Mark Emmert bragged about getting off the Princeton best party school list). Most distressing of all is the dearth of pictures of women doing anything other than venting riotous happiness or, alternatively, engaging in public service (one will look long and hard for anyone even faintly resembling the ambitious Carly Fiorina or the radiant Marie Curie). Whatever happened to the idea that Louisiana universities advance knowledge and train youngsters to be something other than perpetual children?

## LSU SUPERVISORS PUT BEST-EFFORT KING IN CHECK

By all accounts, mid-2015 was not the worst moment in the economic history of LSU A&M or of Louisiana higher education. Through ardent lobbying and clever messaging, LSU President King Alexander, along with the three other System leaders, managed to beat back attempts to de-fund higher education, all while upping the understanding of our legislators with respect to the value of higher education. Meanwhile, enrollment numbers across the LSU System soared, bringing tuition dollars to the proverbial table. Money continued to pour in from the SEC and SEC television contracts. The Alexander regime never hesitated to proclaim victory in these and many other areas, releasing bulletin after bulletin lauding the effectiveness of Lakeshore staffers. All of this leaves one wondering why the faculty received little or no benefit from these triumphs—why the 4% and 3% raises that were given in 2013 and 2014 were allowed to dribble out into much lower actual raises (on only a handful of campuses) and why 2015 saw no raise at all. A hint might be found in an event at the June 2015 LSU Board of Supervisors meeting, where Supervisor and gubernatorial candidate Scott Angelle mounted a bizarre attack on the exercise of LSU's hard-earned fee autonomy. As a result of hard-won LAGRAD Act success, LSU acquired the right to levy fees on students who are presently paying only a fraction of the cost of their education. Overlooking the labors and the welfare of those whose toil had produced LAGRAD Act success and had moved LSU into the elite class of fee-enhanced universities, Angelle mounted a demagogic appeal for caution and economy in the application of fees, repeatedly voicing his concern for the imagined average citizen (and voter). Shortly after that display, rumors began circulating that the System thought the political "optics" not right for a faculty raise. And then there is the "affordability" campaign that has raised King Alexander into high national visibility, a campaign that dovetails into the down-home rhetoric of Angelle and several other Supervisors. With respect to his plans to elevate faculty compensation, it appears that King has allowed himself to slide into checkmate by the governor's pawns.

### LSU A&M Faculty Raises since Appointment of King Alexander



Supervisors send King Alexander's raise productivity numbers tumbling

## ATHLETIC RAISES CONTINUE AMIDST FACULTY RAISE MORATORIUM

Think that raises cannot occur in universities operating in the current fiscal environment? Think again! LSU opened the summer by handing its volleyball coach a ten percent, \$15,000.00 raise, then opened the fall by forking over an array of raises to assorted coaches, some of which pushed twenty-five percent. It then approved a seven-figure "football operations center" coming at a sum that could have provided cost-of-living increases to every LSU campus in the state.



# Lifestyle Feature



## Five Overlooked Museums

Those who follow the academic frequently travel of both familiar and offbeat places. Wherever they go, they are seldom occupied 24/7, for only braggarts claim to pursue the life of the mind without occasional remissions from the labors of the intellect. With at least a little bit of free time on their hands, academic travelers are always looking for stimulating but not overwhelming ways to spend their leisure hours. They may not have the energy to queue for several hours to enter the Vatican Museums, but they do have the time and wherewithal to visit a smaller institution that might yield more insight and stronger delight, minute per minute, than the grand establishments of the curatorial world. The lifestyle feature this month offers a view of five understated, modestly sized, and yet altogether delightful museums in Europe and North America, museums found in venues that academics are likely to visit but that may not fluoresce on the radar screen of the busy visitor.

Among the dozens of museums that can delight the visitor to Paris, few are more charming than the [Musée Cognacq-Jay](#), located on the east side of the colorful and historic Marais district. Founded by a married couple who owned a department store, the Cognacq-Jay museum occupies the premises of a former hotel that could easily pass as a cloister. In addition to a formidable array of seventeenth- through nineteenth-century paintings, the collection includes a gigantic inventory of domestic items, whether furniture, pottery, serveware, or, especially, tea and coffee cups. The recent exhibition on the apparatus pertinent to tea and coffee service combined decorative whimsy with rigorous scholarship to present a pan-European picture of the international trade in the “three drugs” of the modern period (chocolate, coffee, and tea). Better, the museum is adjacent to all the splendid cafés and bakery that line the Marais, thus ensuring that the museum visit will be followed by a fine piece of cake and a rich espresso!

Those visiting London should betake themselves to [Sir John Soane's Museum](#), the purportedly untouched urban mansion of architect and collector Sir John Soane. Soane's museum might well be described as a highly selective suite of *everything*, from fragments of ancient sculpture to reconstructions of historical cities to knickknacks. This avalanche of paraphernalia appears on every conceivable variety of display unit, whether pedestals that pop out of



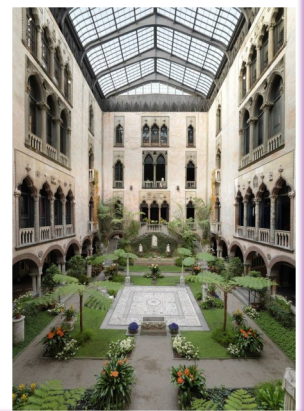
nooks in walls or *objets d'art* suspended from beams and chandeliers. Sir John Soane culminated the great tradition of collecting and personal (eccentric) curatorship that characterized the Enlightenment. His house is both a temple for and a caricature of that most important phase in the emergence of modern science. It is breathtaking, but exhausting within limits, and well-suited to a few hours away from a conference floor.



Known as “MainHattan” owing to its resemblance to New York and its situation along the Rhine River, Frankfurt, Germany, has never quite made its way into the league of international cultural cities, yet it offers a formidable Main River promenade festooned with museums of every species, from traditional cabinets of artifacts to explorations of cinema. Among these rich offerings, the [Liebighaus](#) stands out for both the disciplined character of its collection and its readiness to venture into inventive special exhibitions. Primarily a sculpture museum, the Liebighaus has understood the chiseler's art as extensive—as involving the history of technology and of the culture that supports the most costly of plastic arts. A recent exhibition on the history of the polychrome painting of ancient sculptures drew rave reviews and attracted worldwide academic recognition. Those who are less than concerned about maintaining a physique worthy of a Grecian sculpture will marathon their way to the splendid café operated in the delightful courtyard of the museum, where some of the finest museum-originated cakes pop out of the oven every day.

America is not without its selection of fetching minor museums. Almost invisible in the Fenway area of Boston is the [Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum](#), a kind of Bostonian counterpart to the John Soanes museum that celebrates Mrs. Gardner's taste while creating a neo-Tuscan environment in which paintings and plants may romp together. Gardner seems to have thought it possible to create a Tuscan villa, replete with courtyard and atrium, in the middle of chilly, working-class Boston; what is remarkable is that she has almost succeeded and has certainly outdone most of her Victorian and Edwardian era counterparts when it comes to creating a composite nature-and-art experience in an unlikely place. The Gardner museum also includes some world-class artifacts and so will reward the visitor with a genuine scholarly as well as aesthetic experience.

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## A Call to Action, A Stand in Unity

By: Sonya Hester

On July 1, 2015, a historic moment occurred. For the first time, Faculty Senate Presidents representing the Southern University System of SUBR, SUNO, and SUSLA came together in one setting. The faculty leaders had been invited to engage with the new system President/Chancellor, Dr. Ray L. Belton.

The conversation brought forward both issues and innovations; one of which was the faculty introduced possibility of a Southern University System Faculty Conference; whereby faculty will have a call for papers, discuss pedagogy, exchange ideas with regard to technological innovations, talk candidly about faculty concerns, and recommend solutions.

Post meeting, the Faculty Senate Presidents decided to broaden the new found collaboration to include the Vice Presidents. As the days passed and the joint discussions intensified, a common thread, among many, emerged: the ongoing and longstanding frustration with low salaries; which is also a mutual concern among colleagues from across the state of Louisiana.

Faculty marveled at the huge salaries immediately afforded to administrators while being told they should wait until next year to realize increases. Next year never seemed to arrive. What could be done to shed light on this issue in a meaningful and impactful way?

In response to this question, the Southern University System Executive Council of Faculty Senates was formed. The first action of this body was to draft a joint resolution speaking directly to the problem of compensation inequality among faculty.

On Friday, August 28, 2015, faculty leaders of the Southern University System individually addressed the Southern University System Board of Supervisors; each speaking in a data driven and thought provoking manner. The room, filled with a wide cross section of faculty, staff, administrators, and media representatives, listened intently.

The individual appeals concluded with a reading of the joint resolution. All faculty leaders stood together in unity as the resolution was read; another first for the Southern University System.

Those in the room were awe struck.

The President/Chancellor and Board of Supervisors responded positively to the sentiments and actions of the Council. As result, a comprehensive study of faculty salaries will be executed and actions taken to address the long standing concerns with regard. Faculty leaders were assured that a monthly report would be submitted to track the progress of the study and subsequent actions of salary adjustments. Media representatives wrote articles highlighting faculty driven occurrences surrounding the August 28th Board Meeting.

The Southern University System Executive Council of Faculty Senates realizes that this is a continuing discussion, and change will not come overnight. Perseverance is paramount to progress. However, the Council is prepared to drive the discussion for as long as it takes for dawn to arrive; signaling the arrival of a new and glorious future for faculty everywhere.



Southern University Faculty Senate President meet with President Ray Belton

## GEAUX SHOP DELIVERY STANDARDS SLIPPING

Faculty governance watches more than the vacillations of presidents or the impetuositities of provosts. It also monitors every aspect of performance on Louisiana campuses. Recently, it came to the attention of LSU A&M faculty governance secret shoppers that delivery and inventory standards for LSU's much-touted Geaux Shop, the online purchasing utility that takes advantage of those economic autonomies won through LAGRAD Act compliance, had reduced its standards for delivery. Originally, the office supply firm that had won special status as the sole Geaux Shop stationer had promised to provide an almost global inventory and to deliver over ninety percent of goods overnight. Since the consolidation of America's big box office supply shops, however, the warehouse for a large number of orders has moved to Houston, while a large number of items have been declared to be special cases that require longer delivery periods. More than a few ordinary items now require up to three days' time; several offerings that can be found in any local store are declared to be of "limited availability." Faculty governance officers have begun an inquiry into this effort to concentrate the office supply offering (often around Office Depot-branded in-house items) and to economize through faculty inconvenience. To date, excellent cooperation has been rendered by purchasing officials.



Ination Secure Drive Hardware Encrypted Flash Drive  
64GB  
Limited Availability  
Sold Online

Is it available or not--Office Depot drives consumer choice to smaller inventory



## JOIN LSUNITED

### WHO WE ARE:

An independent advocacy organization formed to serve LSU faculty and graduate assistants

### OUR GOALS:

- Securing regular, periodic raises for faculty
- Improving starting salaries for Instructors
- Protecting and improving health and retirement benefits

### CONTACT:

Mike Russo, 6923louis@gmail.com

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Last but not least on today's spotty tour is [The R. W. Norton Gallery](#) in nearby Shreveport. If you happen to be visiting the SUSAL, LSUS, or LaTech campus, take the short drive into the Shreveport garden district to visit this astounding collection of artifacts pertinent to the American west. Assembled by oil magnate R. W. Norton and always free to the public, the museum offers an astounding array of paintings and sculptures by Remington, Sergeant, Bierstadt, and more. It also includes, within its precincts, a small library replete with an assortment of rare if inadequately catalogued books. For its first forty years, the Norton Museum was somewhat funky with regarding to its exhibition practices. For example, it played a continuous musical track of Gustav Holst's *The Planets* and Richard Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* in the Remington exhibit gallery. New, younger, and sharper curators have now taken over the guidance of the collection, have ventured into the creation of special exhibitions, and have upgraded to overall character of this rich museum.

One need not always go to the Louvre. Small museums need love, too!



## GUEST COLUMNS

### Adobe Connect Life Cycle Ending and McNair Research Scholars Program

#### END OF ADOBE CONNECT LIFE CYCLE: OVERVIEW

At LSU Information Technology Services, we strive to provide excellent and valued services and support to enable LSU to best reach its missions in teaching and learning, research, and student life. As we strive to be a recognized national leader, we are always evaluating and assessing our current systems and their ability to adequately meet the needs of the LSU community. With recent assessment and research, LSU ITS is now moving away from Adobe Connect to a new web conferencing system, WebEx starting on August 1st.



#### TIMELINE

The timeline for the end of the Adobe Connect life cycle is as follows:

Adobe Connect will be available for LSU users through the end of July 31st.

**Note:** LSU Online users in the 2nd Summer module will retain access through August 22, 2015, in order to avoid any disruption of service during an on-going semester.

WebEx will be available to all LSU faculty/staff and students starting on August 1st.

**Note:** In preparation for the fall semester, LSU faculty can refer to the [Digital Media Quick Reference Guide](#) for information regarding which systems and services are available.

#### WHAT TO EXPECT

On August 1, 2015, LSU users will no longer have access to the Adobe Connect web portal (with the exception of specific LSU Online users, as mentioned above). While no information will be lost during this migration, ITS recommends that users download any content that may be needed for immediate re-use in the upcoming semester and that is desired for permanent retention purposes. Users must download information for personal or immediate use prior to August 1, 2015. Please see the article on [downloading an Adobe Connect recording](#) for more information. All content currently housed in Adobe Connect will be transitioned to new, in-house storage over the course of the Fall semester, but user-requests for this data may be delayed during this process.

ITS is currently preparing GROK documentation for WebEx. This documentation will highlight the main features and provide user-case scenarios for the new web conferencing system. The [LSU Faculty Technology Center](#) and the [ITS Help Desk](#) are both available to assist users throughout this transition.

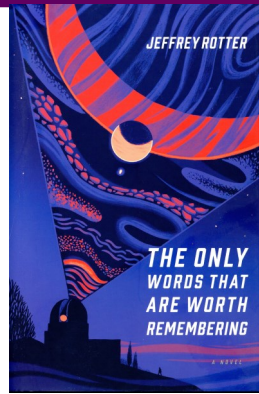
Attribute to Sheri Thompson - IT Communications & Planning Officer  
LSU Information Technology Services

—Continued on page 16

—Jacquelyn Schulz Craddock, MPA  
Assistant Director of Development and Public Relations

## TIP OF THE MONTH: A FRESH DYSTOPIC NOVEL

Talk about a great big beautiful tomorrow is common and easy enough, but dystopic novels—stories about ruined, devastated, or otherwise unfriendly futures—have been big sellers since Sir Thomas More displayed the totalitarian tendencies of Utopia or since Sigourney Weaver battled that nasty alien. Given the enormous number of works in this genre, attempts at refreshing the dystopic novel would seem difficult if not futile. Just when the future of this literary mode seemed bleaker than the worlds it depicts, along comes Jeffrey Rotter with *The Only Words that are Worth Remembering*, an invocation of the post-university future in which all cultural achievements have been forgotten or distorted by propagandists and where universities have been replaced by workforce development centers (does that sound familiar?). Set in “Cape Cannibal,” the half-witty, half-cynical, and wholly expository novel uses malapropisms, abundant cultural and historical allusions, and occasional references to contemporary life to conjure a future society surrounded by the ruins of western civilization that is inadvertently drawn back into the space age. Certainly any novel that positions the last hope for humankind in the observatory zone of the Atacama Desert is worth a closer-than-binocular glimpse.



Jeffrey Rotter visits cape cannibal

## GRAMBLING NURSING PROGRAM GOES EXIGENT

One of the most astounding, as well as disconcerting, stories of the year has been the descent of Grambling State University's nursing program into an unaccredited and unfunded state. Throughout Louisiana, questions have arisen as to how a program that seems at the very center of both workforce development and the advancement of minorities could descend into devastation. During the summer, new Grambling State University President Willie Larkin requested authority to place the nursing program in a state of financial exigency and thereby to fire (“layoff” was the euphemism) tenured faculty members. The move immediately attracted the attention of *HBCU Digest*, which focused national attention on the unanswered questions concerning the decline of a program central not only to Louisiana's geography but also to its future—and to the future well-being of its poorest citizens.



## LSU OUTSOURCES ETHICS

One of the strangest if perhaps well-intended moves of the summer was the creation of an outsourced ethics reporting system for the LS campuses. Dubbed the “LSU Ethics and Integrity Hotline,” this utility is operated by EthicsPoint, a company about which information is suspiciously scarce. A secret shopper attempted to submit a complaint to the hotline only to receive a robo-message indicating that the results of the inquiry were so confidential that they could not be shared. There is clearly more to come on this story (if only to determine whether this company has enough bandwidth to receive all the ethics report that could be filed).



## MCNEESE FOUNDATION DESIGN STREAK CONTINUES

Recent issues of the *Newsletter* have reported on the stream of innovative, whimsical, and occasional startling logo-emblazoned items emanating from the McNeese Foundation. Latest in this easel-overturning series is an irregular, arch-shaped mouse pad bearing the profile of John McNeese, the eponymous guiding spirit of McNeese State University. Compact and conveniently shaped, the mouse pad exhibits admirable ergonomic and features insofar as it both fits neatly alongside small computers such as laptops or notebooks and permits easy movement on small desks. Only one question: Might a rakish art historian not wonder whether the Rockwell Kent style silhouette may lead to cases of mistaken identity owing to the uncanny resemblance of the stylized John McNeese to Vladimir Lenin?



McNeese mousepad in futurist style



Vladimir Lenin in futurist style

## ORWELL OR “OH WELL...”: STRANGE STORIES FROM THE LSU PROPAGANDA MINISTRY

Scholars of the media cannot miss the uptick in both the frequency and quality of propaganda flowing from the Lakeshore office. In recent months, the stream of image-rich messages, proclamations of success, online videos, and assorted multimedia clips has swelled from the trickle that characterized the Lombardi and Jenkins era to a flood flowing from the current California-originated regime. Most of these releases might be characterized as “cotton candy”:



Logo hard hat says would-be commoner King is an ordinary guy

nonstop renderings of success and happiness could lead an unfamiliar observer to mistake the Flagship University for the Good Ship Lollipop. Nevertheless, contradictions and uncertainties—the awkward confusion in the administration about whether to present the tapped-out university as a model of success amidst parsimony or a victim of the calamities arising from underfunding—present themselves in unexpected guises. In the latest release, a [YouTube](#) “welcome” message from King Alexander, the back-



LSU video shows uniformed drones supporting scaled-down STEM industries

ground proves more interesting than the highlighted content. Carefully positioned behind President Alexander is a slightly out-of-focus LSU logo hard hat that aims to suggest that the President is in touch with ordinary folks and that the “hard” side of STEM is, along with workforce development, always in the back of his mind. Meanwhile, the edge of an LSU baseball cap peeks out over Alexander’s shoulder, as if to assure fans that the President has no ill intentions toward Athletics programs

but is not wholly controlled by the sports behemoth. Alexander’s welcome message contains no images pertaining to the humanities other than a one-second view of someone turning the pages of a folio-sized book (perhaps the ultimate cliché); although the text alludes to faculty who have authored “[musical] scores and *New York Times* best-sellers,” it offers no specific citations. In another scene, which celebrates the Orwellian future of industry-specific STEM collaborations, the camera—presumably the viewpoint of the omniscient President—surveys a large facility with multitudinous identically apparelled laboratory workers droning away at some unnamed project. After this moment with Louisiana’s promising young zombies, the President closes with an exclamation that he “can’t wait to see what this year brings.” One thing we know for sure is that all this success has not brought faculty a raise.

## PETITIONING FACULTY MEMBER CRIES OUT TO POPE FRANCIS

Although the *Newsletter* usually stays in the confines of Louisiana in pursuit of its stories, occasionally something so remarkable happens that it transcends the boundaries of campuses, towns, states, and Boards. Perhaps the most over-the-top event of recent academic history is the



Professor seeks supernatural career help from friendly Pope

move by one Jacob Bennett, an instructor at Catholic La Salle University, to obtain help from no less than the mega-popular Pope Francis in his quest for job security and for economic justice for all faculty members. Bennett has embarrassed the rulers of his religious-affiliated institution by exposing the exploitation of adjunct and contingent faculty, driving home his point by comparison of Catholic teaching on social justice to the practices of both Catholic and secular institutions when it comes to the deployment of cheap, unprotected labor. The plea relies on more than the power of prayer; it has been linked up to an online petition directed at the jovial Holy Father. Remember, LSU is under AAUP censure primarily owing to its refusal to grant job security to long-serving instructors, and institutions such as Northwestern State University in Natchitoches are using unorganized labor to replace credentialed professionals. Interested parties may sign the [petition](#) online.

## IT Gets an Upgrade

- ◆ [@tigers.lsu.edu](mailto:tigers.lsu.edu) is now just [@lsu.edu](mailto:lsu.edu) (TigerMail is being replaced by LSUMail campus-wide) – [www.lsu.edu/lsuemail](http://www.lsu.edu/lsuemail)
- ◆ Everyone has access through LSUMail ([mail.lsu.edu](mailto:mail.lsu.edu)) to MS Office 365 resources for free - <https://grok.lsu.edu/Article.aspx?articleId=17762>
- ◆ Workday implementation is underway with go-live set for July 1, 2016 - [www.lsu.edu/workday](http://www.lsu.edu/workday)
- ◆ Adobe Connect Life Cycle’s end—see [Grok article](#) for more information



## **BIRDMAN: OR (THE UNEXPECTED VIRTUE OF IGNORANCE)**

(Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2014)

By: Carl Freedman

Of the so-called “three amigos”—that is, Guillermo del Toro, Alfonso Cuarón, and Alejandro González Iñárritu, the three Mexican filmmakers who in recent years have contributed so much to the cinema of their own country and of Hollywood, and who evidently are indeed all close personal friends—Iñárritu has until recently been the least well-known in the US. Yet he has to his credit a body of work that seems to me almost equal in interest to del Toro’s and decidedly superior to Cuarón’s.

Iñárritu established himself as a major filmmaker with the great trilogy of “hyperlink” films constituted by *Amores Perros* (2000), *21 Grams* (2003), and—the best of them all—*Babel* (2006). A hyperlink film is a film in which apparently unrelated stories and characters are all connected through random events: an urban car accident, for example, in *Amores Perros*. Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction* (1994), which had a huge impact on young Mexican filmmakers, is sometimes taken as the paradigm of the form; yet it is not a perfectly clear example, since in that film all the characters belong to more or less the same milieu of organized crime. Paul Haggis’s *Crash* (2004) is a purer instance of the hyperlink film. But to compare Iñárritu with Haggis is almost like comparing Cézanne with a paint-by-numbers hobbyist. For the Mexican director, the hyperlink technique is no mere gimmick but a means to concretizing his overriding theme of human connectedness—whether within one specific cultural scene (Mexico City in *Amores Perros*) or within a virtually global field (Japan, Morocco, Mexico, and the US all bump up against one another in *Babel*). In the trilogy, Iñárritu shows human connectedness more often through hurt and destruction than through solidarity and mutual assistance; but he also, I think, suggests that more harm is done through ignorance, thoughtlessness, and happenstance than through calculated malice.

*Biutiful* (2010), Iñárritu’s later masterpiece, differs from the trilogy in that here the focus is relentlessly on a single character, brilliantly portrayed by Javier Bardem. Bardem’s character is a mid-level criminal—yet also a loving father—who learns that he has incurable cancer; and the film is exceptionally moving as it shows his attempts (by no means always successful) to do some good in the short time he has left. As in *Babel*, Iñárritu commands a global narrative reach, which here includes not only Spain (where the movie is set) but also China and Senegal.

*Birdman* is a very different kind of film, and, at least north of the Rio Grande, has gained more recognition for the director than all of his prior—and better—work put together; it received nine Academy Award nominations and won four Oscars, including Best Picture and the Best Director prize for Iñárritu. Here all the action and all the human connectedness take place within a single building in the middle of Manhattan. The film centers on one Riggan Thomson, memorably played by Michael Keaton (who won a Best Actor prize at the Screen Actors Guild Awards). Two decades before the time present of the film, Riggan was a rich and famous Hollywood star, best known for his lead role in a series of wildly popular comic-book films featuring the superhero Birdman. Now, however, he is something of a has-been, his fame having declined and nearly all his money having somehow been squandered. (The parallels with Keaton himself—who starred in two blockbuster Batman films in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but whose career has more recently, until *Birdman*, been relatively lackluster—have naturally been much commented upon.) But Riggan is planning a comeback. It is not, indeed, one that is designed to do wonders for his bank account or for his reputation with the mass multiplex audience. But it will, he hopes, win him something he has always craved and to which the Birdman movies contributed less than nothing: critical respect as a serious creative artist. Riggan has written a play called “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,”

which he has loosely adapted from the well-known short story of the same title by Raymond Carver—an author who has had a special significance for Riggan ever since the evening long ago when, after appearing in a high-school play, he received a note from Carver in the audience, thanking him “for an honest performance.” (Riggan evidently carries the note, written on a cocktail napkin, with him everywhere he goes.) Riggan is directing and starring in his own play, and, as the film begins, opening night on Broadway is just a few days away. Riggan’s play, like so much of modern theatre, appears to be in the tradition of Chekhov: a relatively small group of men and women talk with each other at great length, displaying strong, varied, and complicated emotions. The play ends with a literal bang, that is, with the on-stage suicide of Riggan’s character (something that has no equivalent in the Carver story).

François Truffaut, playing the director in *Day for Night* (1973), his own film about filmmaking, says that making a movie is like going on a stage-coach journey in the Wild West. At first, you hope to have a pleasant trip; later, you just hope that you will survive to reach your destination. *Birdman* suggests that much the same is true of mounting a stage production; and, as the film begins, Riggan and his colleagues are long past the point at which hopes of an enjoyable journey could be entertained. The production, and Riggan in particular, are bedeviled by all manner of problems and crises—personal, professional, financial, legal. The play is being produced by Riggan’s attorney and best friend Jake (Zach Galifianakis, showing real skill at something other than broad comedy), who is constantly nagging Riggan with fearful worries about cost overruns (at one point Riggan has to refinance his house to keep the production afloat). Riggan’s girlfriend Laura (Andrea Riseborough), who has a major role in the play, feels insecure about Riggan’s personal commitment to her; and she tells him that she thinks she is pregnant. His ex-wife Sylvia (Amy Ryan) drops in on Riggan backstage, adding an extra dose of tension to the proceedings. Meanwhile, their daughter Sam (the excellent Emma Stone) has just gotten out of rehabilitation for drug addiction, and is working for her father as a personal assistant. He is terrified that she may relapse at any moment, while she—though not without affection for Riggan—considers him hopelessly archaic in the modern media world. “You mock Twitter,” she once shouts at Riggan, as though that were the equivalent of scrawling graffiti on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (and Sam takes for granted that nothing that happens in a single 800-seat theatre can be important). During one of the final rehearsals, a lead actor is seriously hurt when a light fixture falls on his head; not only is he out of the production, but he soon returns to the theatre, wheelchair-bound and with his lawyer, promising to sue. This mishap does seem to have a silver lining when Riggan, unexpectedly, is able to replace the injured actor with one Mike Shiner, a legendarily brilliant performer (like Edward Norton, who plays him). But Mike brings problems of his own, many of them related to the fact that, as an experienced, respected Broadway veteran, he has contempt for Hollywood celebrities like Riggan. This contempt is shared—and multiplied—by Tabitha Dickinson (Lindsay Duncan), the senior drama critic for *The New York Times*. Though she has not yet read or seen one bit of *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, she tells Riggan that she intends to use her review to “kill” his play (and it is made clear that Tabitha is uniquely capable of making or breaking any Broadway production). All the while, Riggan is haunted by the voice of his old character Birdman, whose view of live theatre is essentially like Sam’s and who keeps insisting that Riggan should go back to making superhero movies and raking in billions at the worldwide box office.

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## BRIEFLY NOTED BUT PERMANENTLY APPRECIATED: FOUR BITS OF GOOD NEWS

Not everything that happens around the world of higher education will fill a story, but sometimes the tiny turn toward the better makes a permanent favorable change in educators' and researchers' worlds. So it is that the *News-letter* beat reporters have heard, on the streets, of four excellent, small but balance-tipping developments. First among these is the resurgence of the LSU A&M Library Committee, a unit of the Faculty Senate that has long lain dormant owing to inadequate funding of Library facilities and thereby the inability to make significant headway. Dean Stanley Wilder of the LSU Libraries delegated Associate Dean Lois Kuyper-Rushing to petition the Faculty Senate for the reactivation of the Library Committee. Serving on the new committee are William Daly; Ramachandran "Vaidy" Vaidyanathan; Alan Sikes; Gundela Hachmann; Jeff Gillespie; and Judith Schiebout. Already, that committee has tackled such knotty problems as the value of the extant master plan and the acquisitions lag problem. Bravo to Dean Wilder and Associate Dean Kuyper-Rushing (a former Faculty Senate officer) for their vigorous pursuit of excellence.



Second on the list of helpful accomplishments is the resurgence of the LSU Farmer's Market. While not exactly a "food desert"—there are a few oases on the campus!—LSU, like many other Louisiana campuses, falls somewhat short of the legendary reputation of Louisiana when it comes to culinary creativity. Perhaps "food sand dunes" would be more accurate; long stretches of the campus offer little more than vending machine fare, while others provide the equivalent of date and coconut trees dripping with manna. The Farmer's Market materializes every Wednesday from 10:00 until 1:00 in Free Speech Alley in front of the LSU Student Union.

Good news item number three is the emergence of a "Partners in Progress" program at the LSU A&M Alumni Association. For years, perhaps for decades, the LSU Alumni Association has hovered in a bizarre limbo outside the gates of the campus, occasionally connecting with the deck of the Flagship University for commencement ceremonies but otherwise residing in a world of remote special events and glossy alumni magazines. Youthful and sparky Alumni Association President Cliff Vannoy devised the idea of a venue in which an assortment of administrators, deans, and faculty representatives could gather for informal chats about the future of the University and about what the Alumni Association can do to realize that future. Bravo for the President Vannoy!

Finally, word came in from "upstairs" that Standard & Poor's Rating Services had removed not only LSU but a gaggle of Louisiana universities from its credit watch. Now that it has been handed the "get out of debtor's prison free" card, LSU can at long last resume issuing bonds and restart delayed construction. Let us hope, however, that the money borrowed at an interest rate discount can go to something more worthwhile than the now-notorious swimming pool in the shape of the letters L, S, and U.

### LSU POLITBURO REVISES HISTORY, DELETES LOMBARDI

Regimes that come into power under dubious circumstances always indulge an (obsessive) interest in history and pedigree. Those who suspect that not everyone believes their origin tales often enough to believe that the manufacture or, rather, deletion of historical accounts will conceal the cracks in the foundations of legitimacy. As part of its campaign to convince its audience that the reorganization of the University is genuine and that the current leadership came into power according to normal methods of succession, the Inner Temple at the LSU System has partitioned the Board of Supervisors web site, splitting it into separate LSU-hosted sites for the President, the administration, and the Board of Supervisors. Each of these sites moves the emphasis from proper institutions to cults of personality, whether the persons of the Supervisors or the persons of administrators. Emerging as the only possessor of a solo web page is the [President](#), who, predictably, has been linked up to an elaborate, multi-page genealogy of [Presidents](#), rather in the way that the Habsburgs hired ancestor-hounds to sniff out a lineage leading back to Moses and Hercules. What is most amusing about this monumental effort at historical research—an effort, the cost of which could have easily subsidized, say, a visiting lecture on history—is what is omitted. The political genealogy of the present office-holder includes every last detail concerning every possible predecessor except for one: John Lombardi. One can only wonder why the regime would be so frightened of this mighty name that it would be willing to risk the detection of a dismissal-worthy offense such as academic dishonesty in order to move the feisty Etruscan off the stage.

**2005** (February 21) Honorable Sean O'Keefe becomes chancellor of LSU.

**2008** (January) Sean O'Keefe resigns as LSU chancellor.  
(February) William L. Jenkins appointed acting chancellor.  
(August) Michael V. Martin becomes chancellor of LSU.

**2012** (July) Michael V. Martin resigns as LSU chancellor.  
(August) William L. Jenkins appointing acting chancellor.

**2013** (June) William L. Jenkins retires as interim chancellor and president.  
(June 24) F. King Alexander appointed president and chancellor.

Excerpt from the political genealogy of King Alexander—all points  
bulletin out for the missing John Lombardi

### USE OF UNIVERSITY EMAIL FOR UNIONIZING PROFESSORS MOVING CLOSER TO LEGALITY

Faculty members around Louisiana have wondered aloud about the use of university communications systems in organizing faculty members into unions. While colleagues are advised to proceed with caution and to continue using private email addresses at least for the transmission of recruitment materials, the opening up of university communications systems for use in the organizing of academic labor has moved a bit closer to reality. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) recently determined that employees at private universities who have been given access to campus communications utilities such as email must be allowed to use those systems during non-working hours to engage in an assortment of protected communications, including union recruitment and criticism of employers. The ruling presently applies only to private universities but may be expanded to public institutions. Details of the decision are [available online](#).





# GUEST COLUMNS

## Giving LSU's Workday a Face-Lift

In keeping with Louisiana State University's commitment to a culture of innovation and excellence, LSU's multicampuses are implementing Workday to modernize their financial and human resources (HR) systems. This joint project will result in standardized business practices across LSU, and will end the reliance on antiquated technology and excessive paperwork.

LSU Workday will improve access to data to run reports and make informed decisions in a timely fashion. It will enable LSU faculty and staff to more efficiently complete their day-to-day fiscal and HR related responsibilities. LSU employees will have automated mechanisms for leave requests and approvals, travel requests and expense reimbursements. Work that used to require interactions with the mainframe or involved sending forms across campus for signatures and processing will now involve an intuitive self-service system with applications available on desktops and mobile devices.

The implementation process is well underway. It consists of five phases: Plan, Architect, Configure & Prototype, Test, and Deploy. LSU Workday completed the Plan phase in March and the Architect phase in mid-August. The project is currently in the Configuration and Prototype Phase which will run through the rest of the calendar year. During this phase, there will be a second round of roadshows to the various campuses throughout the state. The roadshows will provide an opportunity for the LSU community to experience the look, feel, and functionality of the new product with LSU data and processes.

LSU Workday will bring a number of changes to the way in which the campuses operate. Some of the changes to anticipate may include account numbers, object codes, leave tracking, the hiring process, and travel requests and reimbursements.

Prospective changes will be part of training opportunities and communications in the next calendar year.

LSU Workday will go live on July 1, 2016.



-By Marry Stebbing  
Change Management Lead

—Continued from page 11

MCNAIR RESEARCH SCHOLARS, a TRIO program administered through LSU University College, provides undergraduate research internships and graduate school application assistance for students who would be the first in their family to complete college, students who are from a background of financial need, and students from ethnic groups underrepresented in graduate education.

Contact McNair Research Scholars at [www.mcnair.lsu.edu](http://www.mcnair.lsu.edu) or Joseph Givens directly at [givens@lsu.edu](mailto:givens@lsu.edu) or call 225-578-4321.

Our services are FREE to program participants.

### We need your help.

Invite us to speak with your classes about the McNair Program

Refer students to the McNair Program

### Offer to Mentor a student or host an undergraduate research experience

Share your expertise and advice with McNair Scholars students through a presentation or discussion

### We help students prepare for graduate school.

Faculty and graduate student mentorship provide a strong network of academic support

McNair participants attend workshops designed to help them prepare to be competitive graduate school applicants

Students receive comprehensive advisement on strategies and resources for graduate school funding

### We help students obtain undergraduate research experience.

McNair participants are funded up to \$2,800 per academic year for research activities

Students are provided instruction on the basics of scientific and scholastic research

We help students locate funded undergraduate research opportunities at other universities in the United States and abroad

### We can work together.

Students who are participating in other undergraduate research programs are welcome to apply for the McNair Research Scholars program

We will provide support to your students throughout their undergraduate studies

We welcome opportunities to collaborate with departments and programs to maximize the use of resources and to best serve students

An ideal candidate for the McNair Research Scholars program is an eligible **sophomore student** with a **3.0 GPA or higher**, and is **interested in research and pursuing a graduate education** or is currently working in a research lab and could benefit from more funding and graduate school preparation services.

### We are taking applications.

Priority deadline for the 2016 Cohort is **OCTOBER 28, 2015**.

Application details are available at [lsu.edu/mcnair](http://lsu.edu/mcnair).

To view McNair Research Scholars' recent LSU Gold stories

[A Worldly View](#)

[McNair Research Program Helps Military Veteran Enter World of Quantum Physics](#)

Follow the conversation at

[www.facebook.com/LSUMcNair](http://www.facebook.com/LSUMcNair)

[www.twitter.com/LSUMcNair](http://www.twitter.com/LSUMcNair)

Follow the conversation at [www.facebook.com/LSU.UniversityCollege](http://www.facebook.com/LSU.UniversityCollege).

The **RONALD E. MCNAIR RESEARCH SCHOLARS PROGRAM** is a TRIO Program funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the amount of \$1.35 Million.

# Louisiana State Museum



## October Events

### Keeping Time: Extraordinary Images from Louisiana's Musical Past

(Special preview viewing. Free and open to the public.)

**When:** 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Oct. 8

**Where:** Capitol Park Museum

**What:** With subjects including early jazz innovators Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet to zydeco accordionist Boozoo Chavis and jazz and funk master Trombone Shorty, this exhibition showcases the great musicians who have made Louisiana music famous around the world.

**Admission:** Free

### Lunchtime Lagniappe!

#### Sharing the Stories of Depression Era Louisianans

**When:** Noon Oct. 14

**Where:** Capitol Park Museum

**What:** Hear stories as told by north Louisiana natives who lived through the Great Depression, Bonnie and Clyde, the KKK and the Flood of 1927.

Dee Scallan is a Louisiana author, storyteller performer and education specialist at the Capitol Park Museum.

**Admission:** Free. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own lunches and may come and go as their schedules require. For more information visit [LouisianaStateMuseum.org](http://LouisianaStateMuseum.org) or call 225.342.5428.

### Hard Times do People Good: Louisiana Stories of the Great Depression, Film

**When:** 6 p.m. Oct. 15

**Where:** Capitol Park Museum

**What:** Join us for an excerpt from the film; *Hard Times do People Good*, by award winning filmmaker Patrick Long. Program includes a welcome and introduction from education specialist and storyteller Dee Scallan.

**Admission:** Free. For more information, visit [LouisianaStateMuseum.org](http://LouisianaStateMuseum.org) or call 225.342.5428.

### Louisiana Book Festival

**When:** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 31

**Where:** State Library, State Capitol, Capitol Park and Capitol Park Museum

**What:** More than 200 authors will take part in the 12th edition of this free, world-class literary celebration in a festival atmosphere.

**Admission:** Free. For more information, visit [LouisianaBookFestival.org](http://LouisianaBookFestival.org).



## THINK THAT FACULTY MEMBERS KNOW HOW TO COMMUNICATE? MEDIA MAVENS SAY “THINK AGAIN”

To date, reasonable persons have assumed that those who hold doctoral or other professional degrees know how, if not to communicate, at least to identify themselves. That assumption has lately been challenged by an assortment of public - and media-relations departments around the state. The first flap erupted at Grambling University, where colleagues who had many decades of telephone answering experience received an administrative memo instructing them to answer the telephone according to this formula: “Good morning/afternoon/evening, this is Dr. [state your name], how may I serve you?” Faculty at an institution devoted to liberating and advancing the oppressed and underprivileged bristled at the suggestion that they should relish the opportunity to “serve” the student “clientele.” The next bit of overweening occurred at the LSU Media Relations think tank, from which faculty received an advisory concerning the urgency of revising their email signatures so as to conform to a (poorly designed) LSU standard that emphasizes proper corporate identity. More than a few LSU faculty members have reacted against this push to industrialize personal identity; an LSU Faculty Senate investigation will soon be underway.

### Option 1

**LSU**

Firstname Lastname, PhD  
Title  
Unit or Department Name  
Louisiana State University  
000 Bldg Name, Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
office 225-578-#### | mobile 225-578-####  
email@lsu.edu | lsu.edu | lsu.edu/unitwebsite



**Media relations units around the state push to put corporate stamp on personal identity**

## LEGISLATURE, COMMISSIONER CREATE MILITARY-FRIENDLY CAMPUS PROGRAM

Despite the suggestion, in the old situation comedy *Gomer Pyle*, that North Carolina was the primary homeland of those in the service of arms, lovers of statistics know that Louisiana has the highest per capita veteran population in the nation. Whether the bodacious bombers that zoom over Barksdale-enhanced Bossier City or whether the armories of Fort Polk, Louisiana-based military equipment and infrastructure creates a gigantic demand for boots on the ground or mechanics in the turbines or cleat-smiths in the interstices of tank treads. Recognizing both the moral obligation and the practical value of upgrading the skill sets of America’s warriors, the Louisiana legislature has created the Military and Veteran Friendly Campus program, which is presently in the implementation phase under the supervision of higher Education Commissioner Joseph C. Rallo, himself a former son of Mars. In order to qualify as military-friendly, campuses must expedite and reduce the cost of application processes for veterans and must provide a variety of services from a large menu or special indulgences, whether special courses on adaptation to civilian college or free tutoring or veteran-centered courses in History, Political Science, English, or Mathematics. Congratulations to Commissioner Rallo on his outreach to a huge potential student population that has served so many.



**Commissioner Rallo recognizes that North Carolina is not the only state with veterans**

## SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE SYNDICATE SCORES COMPENSATION WIN

The temptation for every new administration is not only to clear the deck of all previous staffers but also to make sure that the new subordinates enter their positions at higher salaries than those offered in the bad old days of the previous administration. In the status-obsessed world of top-level academic administration, increasing the size and compensation of the lower administration counts as a “badge” and indication of high standing. New Southern University Chancellor Ray Belton, unfortunately, found his honeymoon period coming to an abrupt end when, at the August Southern University Board meeting, the unprecedented occurred. The previously scattered faculty activists for the Southern University faculty senates appeared ensemble, speaking one after another in the comments section of the meeting by way of leading up to the reading, by Southern University Shreveport (SUSLA) Faculty Senate President Sonya Hester, of a joint [resolution](#) calling for the imposition of a moratorium on increases in administrative salaries, for the chartering of a study on faculty compensation, for the creation of a compensation policy committee that includes substantial faculty representation, and for the overall elevation of Southern faculty compensation until salaries not only reach regional averages but also suffice to encourage promising youngsters to pursue academic careers. Witnesses report that the Board meeting room fell into uncanny silence as activist-leader Hester critiqued the “economic apartheid system within the Southern ranks.” Startled by this show of faculty resolve, the Southern Board members began a lively interrogation of Chancellor Belton, who agreed to create a study committee and to give monthly reports on progress toward achieving SREB salary average. Score: Hester and colleague Faculty Senate Presidents 1, bad old days 0.



**SUSLA Faculty Leader Sonya Hester**

## LSU PROVOST PAVES MULTI-LANE HIGHWAY TO HIRING EQUITY

Louisiana universities have lagged behind their prominent counterparts in other counties of the Republic of Letters when it comes to spousal and minority hiring. Although it has certainly long been true that, when pushed by necessity or ambition, Pelican-state institutions could find ways to employ “trailing spouses,” the unpredictability and uneven application of such policies has elicited chagrin and has inspired more than a few [resolutions](#) from faculty committees. Recognizing that competing universities often deploy ambitious spousal hiring programs, LSU interim Executive Vice-President and Provost Richard Koubek is piloting a “spousal accommodation program” that allocates up to \$360,000.00 to allow for hiring of appropriately qualified spouses and that allows for eventual takeover by the hiring departments of the salary cost following a period of cost sharing. Remembering that the future emerges from the past and that the moment in time when one walks down the wedding aisle is as much a matter of luck as it is of academic excellence, Koubek has also suggested that, following the pilot period, spousal accommodations might be made for current faculty members those who married after recruitment by LSU. Always ready to put the ice cream atop the pie, Koubek further sweetened the deal by announcing a parallel “opportunity hire pilot program” to support hiring of minority faculty. Congratulations to Provost Koubek for his progressive thinking and commitment to equitable treatment for faculty.



S A S A K I

Sasaki and three other planning firms  
wow LSU audience

Surely the most entertaining transaction of the unending administrative season has been the auditions conducted by the four finalists in the contest to prepare LSU's master plan. Academic personnel who are accustomed to solo interviews by nervous candidates were dazzled as four international firms brought in large entourages to unveil visions for the physical and infrastructure rejuvenation of the Old War Skule. Topping the charts in reception among academic personnel was Asian-influenced and Boston-based Sasaki Associates, whose diverse crew of aesthetically intense world persons deployed sharp, minimalist slides by way of illustrating a lavish future. Whimsical Cannon Design, as if in imitation of the Google industrial playspace, recruited attendees into participation games intended to reveal the diversity of perceptions regarding pinpointed campus spaces. Those old war horses among designers, Perkins + Will and NBBJ, hauled out their inventory of LSU-related buildings in an attempt to impress with the heavy weight of experience. Perhaps most remarkable was the consistency with which all of these firms unveiled exactly nine consultants, in one case lining them up on the stage as if in a set for a game of nine-pins (of course, no one was imitating nine-pin-playing Rip Van Winkle by sleeping during these stimulating presentations).

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The problems escalate and climax in something like farce on the night of the final preview, as Riggan, relaxing backstage prior to the final scene, accidentally locks himself out of the theatre wearing nothing but a pair of undershorts. He is forced to walk in such dishabille through a very crowded Times Square to the theatre's front entrance (while numerous surprised Birdman fans record the event on their smartphones), then to make his way to the stage by walking through the auditorium where the preview audience is already reseated and to deliver his lines almost naked. It is not what the cast had rehearsed, but it seems to work pretty well. The following night—opening night—the audience at intermission appears to be impressed by Riggan ("Birdman can act!" one theatre-goer says) and engrossed in his play. But Riggan is still depressed by all the problems that have mounted up. He has replaced the harmless stage gun used during rehearsals with a real, loaded automatic pistol, and, when it's time for his character's suicide, Riggan shoots his own nose off.

He winds up in the hospital, of course, but otherwise the evening turns out to have been a roaring success. The first-night audience loves the play. Even more important, Tabitha Dickinson, contrary to her threats, publishes a long, enthusiastic review on the front page of the arts section of the *Times* (it is titled, "The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance"), in which she hails Riggan as the pioneer of an important new form that she terms "super-realism." Despite all the signs that had pointed toward disaster, Riggan's comeback has gone more brilliantly than he could have possibly expected.

*Birdman* is very well acted (Batman, like Birdman, can act), and large stretches of it convey a plausibly realistic view of life among the people who earn their living by pretending to be people they are not. The complex rivalry between Riggan and Mike Shiner, which sometimes leads to physical blows, is particularly well done, especially as the mutual hostility is shown to be laced with considerable professional respect on Riggan's side and with some envy of Riggan's national and international fame on Mike's. Percolating somewhere just beneath the surface is, one suspects, Keaton's knowledge that Norton is a finer actor than he will ever be. Naomi Watts gives a fine performance as Lesley, one of the main actresses in the play, who has dreamed of performing on Broadway ever since she was a little girl, but who now, just as her dream is finally about to come true, has decidedly mixed feelings about the whole thing (having the talented but endlessly self-absorbed Mike as a boyfriend doesn't help). *Birdman* also nicely conveys the practical—mainly monetary—problems that theatre must face. The play here evidently has no "angels" (financial backers)—Riggan is financing it mainly with what little is left from his huge Hollywood paychecks—and the anxieties expressed by Galifianakis's character must seem familiar to anyone who has been involved in an undercapitalized Broadway production. The frenetic pace at which the characters live and work—and the complicated stew of ambition, excitement,

worry, affection, mistrust, jealousy, lust, and other emotions that bind them together—are accentuated by the film's most notable technical achievement, namely the way that it appears to be shot in a single take (presumably, many invisible digital cuts have actually been made). I confess that this appeared to me a fairly pointless stunt on my first viewing, but it has seemed more and more effective the more I have watched *Birdman*. One thinks, inevitably, of Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948).

Sometimes, to be sure, Iñárritu and his writers get things plainly wrong. The conversation in which Tabitha promises to destroy Riggan's play may be intended to help account for the deep depression that leads him to turn a gun on himself; but in itself the scene is just silly. There may be theatre reviewers who think such things—that they will pan a production they have not yet seen—but no one professional enough to rise to the very top of her field, as Tabitha has done, would be so stupid as to say such a potentially career-wrecking thing out loud, least of all to the play's own author-director-star.

But *Birdman* has a deeper problem as well. I have been discussing the film as a work of straight realism, the genre in which Iñárritu has done most of his work and in which he seems most comfortable (he is said to have decided to make *Birdman* in one apparent take because "we live our lives with no editing"). But this movie also contains significant elements of magic realism. At various points from beginning to end, Riggan seems actually to possess the superpowers of Birdman himself, being capable, for instance, of flying, levitation, and telekinesis. Some of these moments are explicable as hallucinations (Riggan sleeps hardly at all during the film's action), but not all of them. None of them adds much of interest to *Birdman*, and—though this may seem a presumptuous thing for a US critic to say of a Latin American artist—the whole device misunderstands what magic realism is really about. The genre developed as a way to express the felt impact of the major socio-economic forces of the world system on the latter's peripheral areas (Iñárritu's Mexico was the second homeland of Gabriel García Márquez himself). In this way, Iñárritu's pal del Toro employs magic realism magnificently in *The Devil's Backbone* (2001) and *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), his twin masterpieces set in Franco Spain; to a much smaller extent, Iñárritu himself has used magic realism effectively in his portrayal of modern slum Barcelona in *Biutiful*. But magic realism has no obvious function in portraying the world headquarters of global finance capital, and Iñárritu's insistence on forcing it into a movie set in Manhattan just seems stupid and pointless. Nothing about the film's characters or narrative is really illuminated when Riggan wields Birdman's paranormal abilities. I do not say that it must forever be intrinsically impossible to write or film about New York in a magic-realist mode; genius can sometimes reconfigure genres in new and apparently paradoxical ways. But, if there is a way to do the thing, Iñárritu has not found it. As a result, *Birdman*, though it contains many excellent things, is not—quite—the excellent film overall that we had a right to expect from the maker of *Babel* and *Biutiful*.