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### Faculty Senate Newsletter, October 2015

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# Faculty Senate Newsletter

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Unanimity or the appearance thereof is often a symptom of error. Unanimity or its various affiliates—commitment; team spirit; the embrace of a corporate culture—usually emerge from uncertainty, as happens when players are asked to commit to a plan in order to win a hard game or when ambitious beginners avoid questioning their superiors lest they seem out of sync with purportedly shared strategies or goals. Currently, few words, ideas, or practices enjoy more unanimous support than does “collaboration.” Academic professionals hear the word ceaselessly. We are called on to collaborate, we are offered prizes for collaborative research, we are urged to collaborate with industry, and we have even now more-or-less replaced the previously cachet term “interdisciplinary” with the various inflections of the more encompassing “c” word. Is collaboration all that it is cracked up to be?

Collaboration, as both a practice and concept, is highly useful to those who prefer to concentrate on institutions rather than on specific academic achievements. Collaboration almost always requires an institutional framework or a higher-level administrator, whether a center with a director or a program with a coordinator or a go-between to reconcile the needs and ambitions of collaborating parties. The plenary speaker at the recent retreat of the LSU Office of Research and Development was an even more metaphysical entity: a full-time collaboration specialist working within the collaborative framework of her institution and traveling the country propagating other collaboration-controlling systems and “units.” As it grows and develops, the management dimension of collaboration not only expands but also becomes more expensive. A host of specialist fundraisers, multi-campus or multi-system diplomats, grant officers, and even journalists latch on to the institutional scaffolding that binds the collaborators to one another, often leeching energy and running up costs. All of the foregoing is equally true of the liberal arts as it is of the sciences, an example being the emergence of big-time online databases and of the digital humanities, both of which require gigantic institutional management structures.

Collaboration has another downside with respect to the production of new ideas. Contemporary universities, with their nervous administrations, understand that collaboration reduces dissent. Collaborators must agree among themselves, which usually means taking what the majority in the syndicate regard as the safest, least offbeat approach or position. They must work with various managers, who constantly advise them as to what this or that administration or funding entity will like or dislike. Collaboration is a great favorite for the editors of the glossy reports and magazines issued by foundations and alumni association, for the heavy emphasis on agreement that is endemic to the collaborative process helps the “PR” people downplay disagreements on campus and to present a spurious utopian picture to their clients and donors. The mania for collaboration is now producing scholarly publications that claim more than 1,000 authors, which, given the short length of scientific reports, suggests that every word, even “the” and “some,” must have been produced by multi-author collaboration.

In the not-so-brave, indeed timorous new world of big data, big science, and covered-up big mistakes, collaboration is, admittedly, a necessity. Projects such as LIGO, Louisiana’s gravity wave observatory, could not function without some degree of cooperation among multiple participants. The canon of a profuse composer, such as Johann Sebastian Bach, could not be settled by one old bloke in a leathery wing chair. What friendly but sometimes misled academic professionals should avoid is worshiping that golden calf of fundraising, collaboration itself. By all means, collaborate when needed, but, please, remember that collaboration is not the ultimate goal of humanity and that there have been and will continue to be many worthwhile solo contributions.



Kevin Cope

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# Higher Education Headliner



Jessica Lacher-Feldman

A native of New York and graduate of the State University of New York at Albany with a BA in French studies, a MA in History, and a MLS degree, Jessica Lacher-Feldman decided to leave the snow and take a position at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. There she embarked on an ambitious project, Publishers' Bindings Online, which cataloged the different components of book binding, from end papers to the covers to spines and more. She even included items from the special collections at Louisiana State University (LSU). In fact, the special collections at LSU, housed in Hill Memorial Library, were especially tempting to a person who is excited by "collections of objects that convey meaning." She speaks enthusiastically about her deep connection with the unique culture of south Louisiana as reflected in the special collections in Hill Memorial Library. "Not many people can say they have their dream job," she says, "But I really do have mine here."

Lacher-Feldman is particularly drawn to the aesthetics of books, as the Publishers' Bindings Online project demonstrates, and speaks passionately about rare art books. That same love of aesthetics drives her to create interesting and relevant displays and exhibits. Sometimes those displays are part of a larger program, such as a recent exhibition of comics and graphic novels in Hill Memorial. The timing was especially important because *The Fantastic Four* had just come out in theaters, and some scenes were filmed in Hill Memorial. In addition, the library owns a copy of *The Fantastic Four* #1, a fact which many comic enthusiasts were surprised to discover. As part of this same program, Lacher-Feldman convinced a comic book writer and a scholar to do a talk, and over one hundred and thirty people, many of them undergraduates, squeezed into the conference room to hear these speakers. This was a particularly successful program, and Lacher-Feldman would like to do more like this.

Lacher-Feldman emphasizes that one of her chief duties is getting people inside the special collections library, where what she refers to as "spontaneous learning" can occur. Her passion for and delight in the special collections at Hill Memorial is tangible when she speaks. She wants those collections to be used and appreciated. To that end, the hard-working staff em-

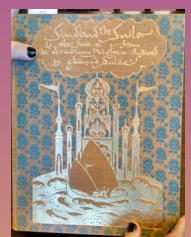
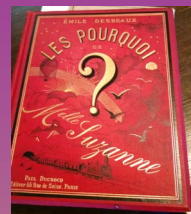
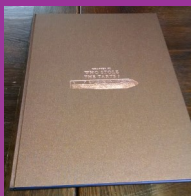
barked on a plan to get Aeon, a special collections request system, up and running. This system makes requesting works from the special collections much easier and less time intensive than in previous years. Instead of having to go to the second floor, request the item, and have a runner retrieve it, a patron will be able to request the item online and have it waiting for them. If the system is easier to navigate, more patrons will be willing to use it.

Unfortunately, in spite of the amazing ten million items housed in the special collections, including a rare and beautiful work like the double elephant folio edition of John James Audubon's *Birds of America* (London, 1827-1838), Hill Memorial, like many programs at LSU, suffers from a lack of funds and personnel. Preserving, maintaining, and developing the collection does not happen without funding and the hard work, care, and attention of many individuals. In addition, archivists, in particular, are having to don more and more hats in an effort to keep up with the demands of the profession with fewer and fewer resources. This is why building relationships both on and off campus is so important. These relationships are what help to keep such amazing programs alive.

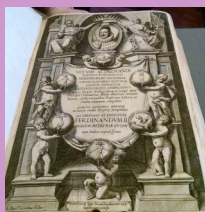
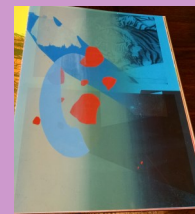
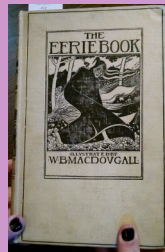
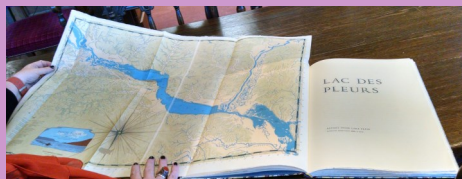
Lacher-Feldman, however, is not just interested in the books in her collection. Like many librarians, she likes to indulge in a good book. For her own reading pleasure, she especially likes non-fiction works, like *In Cold Blood*, and holds the work of historian Robert Darnton in high esteem. Lacher-Feldman admits to being recently "obsessed" with the works of William March, and in particular, with his last novel, the psychological thriller, *The Bad Seed*.

Her interest in history, as well as her passion for rare and beautiful works, steered Lacher-Feldman toward archival librarianship and the special collections at LSU. LSU may be known for its great football, but it should also be known for having such a fascinating and eclectic collection, as well as for dedicated individuals, like Jessica Lacher-Feldman, who collect objects that convey meaning, not just about the university or Louisiana, but about where we have been and who we are as human beings.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman



## A TASTE OF THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS IN HILL MEMORIAL LIBRARY



## RETIREMENT LAWSUIT PROGRESS

From time to time, colleagues around the state inquire about progress on the [law-suit](#) concerning the assortment of problems, deficiencies, and illegalities in the retirement plans for academic professionals in Louisiana. On July 27, 2015, Judge Janice Clark of the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court heard preliminary pleadings from the plaintiffs (representatives of the faculty) and the defendants (Teachers Retirement Plan of Louisiana [TRSL] and the LSU Board of Supervisors). TRSL and the LSU Supervisors sought to have the case dismissed, while faculty plaintiffs requested a declaratory judgment on the merits of plaintiff's arguments. After a careful deliberation, Judge Clark determined that the case did evidence a cause of action, a ruling that allows the case to proceed. Writs and other supporting material have now been submitted by both sides. Worthy of note by faculty members is the sad fact that LSU and TRSL, which claim to work for faculty welfare, deployed not less than five legal professionals, doubtless at no small expense, to battle against faculty demands for a fair retirement program



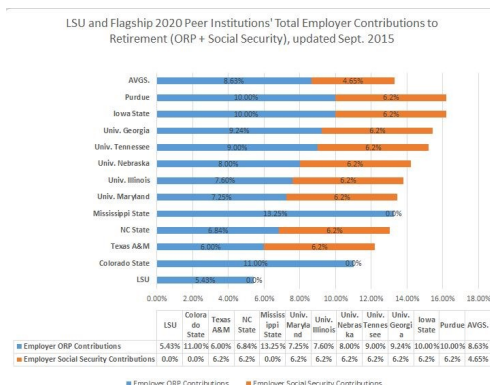
## GROUP BENEFITS DRUG PLAN WARNING ALARMS RETIREES

The Office of Group Benefits (OGB) recently unnerved more than a few retirees with the release of an opaquely written letter informing those who participate in post-career medical coverage with OGB face grave consequences for the exercise of free market principles. Despite competition and consumer choice being a core component of the current governor's gospel, OGB advised retired members that selection of a Medicare-related drug plan other than one "sponsored" by OGB would result either in summary termination of prescription drug coverage or even in complete termination of medical insurance. No reasons were given for this suddenly imposed new rule, but plan participants were warned that those who fell out of the sphere of sponsorship would not be readmitted: "be aware," the letter admonishes, "that you and your dependents, in most cases, will not be able to get this coverage back." Whatever happened to the helpful OGB that once had a half-billion dollar surplus and a high consumer satisfaction rating?



## RETIREMENT ACTIVIST MORELAND RELEASES DEVASTATING BAR GRAPH

Recognizing that the complex economics of Louisiana retirement plans can baffle uninitiated colleagues, retirement expert Richard "Rick" Moreland has generously prepared a new bar graph showing the disparity between the Louisiana retirement plans and the retirement plans of other institutions. Moreland's chart sets the LSU contribution against LSU's announced peer and aspirational institutions, but the chart could equally well illustrate the retirement arrangements for any Louisiana university in comparison to any peer groups. Colleagues are encouraged to show this graph to other academic professionals so as to promote a broader understanding of the gravity of the problem.



New bar graph shows retirement plan penalty

## AG CENTER OFFERS RETIREMENT INCENTIVE

For many years, faculty activists statewide have attempted to persuade campus executives to develop creative and financially attractive retirement opportunities for faculty members who may like the color of those greener pastures. Subsidized buyouts by campus foundations, service credit toward retirement, and cash emoluments have all been proposed as means to diminish the payroll in a way that provides dignity and financial security to senior colleagues while allowing campuses to balance budgets. A huge step forward in this drive toward innovative career conclusions has come from the blotter of AgCenter Chancellor William Richardson, who has deployed a plan allowing a departure payment of up to 24% of salary subject to a cap of \$35,000.00. Although probably not enough to propel drives into retirement's groves, the plan evidences good will toward faculty and shows admirable as well as humane flexibility when it comes to rewarding log-term contributors to the profession.



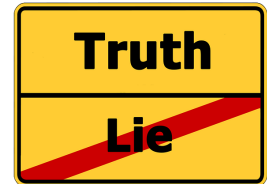
## LSUA FACULTY SENATE CONSIDERS CALL FOR RAISE

During the great budget crisis of 2008–2014, alignments of power in Louisiana universities shifted from the standard labor-versus-management (or professors-versus-administrators) arrangement to an alliance of both faculty and administration against hostile legislators and a hostile governor. In anticipation of a new, less surly state government and with the continuing consolidation of power in the headquarters of university systems, alignments are again changing, with faculty lining up with campus officials (deans, chancellors, presidents) against autocratic central offices. Out ahead of the wave in this realignment is the highly creative Faculty Senate at LSU of Alexandria (LSUA), which is considering a resolution demanding that campus administrators be allowed to implement a planned raise that was, apparently, vetoed by GHQ. One of the nostrums of Louisiana higher education is that every campus is unique and has a special mission. If that is true, we may not only hope for but can expect more such attempts to maintain local prerogatives and to spare local faculty from the imperial schemes of distant authorities.



## ATTENTION ADMINISTRATORS: HONESTY HAS A CASH VALUE

One of the raps against the administration of former LSU System President John Lombardi was that Lombardi's love for data and selection of competent assistants led to discoveries that disquieted those at the top of state government. When Lombardi and his staff were driven from office, administrators everywhere took this bitter event as a sign that honesty seldom pays. As if in some Akira Kurosawa movie, Lombardi's disciples were scattered by the winds, many of them eventually settling into prominent posts at university systems hither and yon. In the most recent turn of destiny, however, one of those scattered leaves has raked in a substantial cash settlement in exchange for remaining silent about the astounding abuses that this former top-level administrator discovered in the office of President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU). CSCU forked over \$70,000.00 to the departing official to sign a non-disparagement clause by way of protecting the CSCU President's image. The [full story](#) is available online.



## LSU FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION RECONFIGURES; BRUIITS FONT CHANGE

We at the *Newsletter* are usually suspicious of corporate-style shakeups in the academic executive suite, but, in the case of the latest administrative reconfiguration by transparency-enthusiast Dan Layzell (Vice-president for Finance and Administration at LSU), applause is the only possible response. Layzell has move dAuxiliary Services, Procurement and Property Management, and efficiency expert Mary Stebbing into a command line headed by his immediate deputy, Sandi Gillilan, who will emerge as Vice-President for Operations. The metamorphosis is exactly what LSU needs, for "operations" is where it is most sorely deficient. The new arrangement bodes fair to replicate the greater efficiencies possible with the emerging computerized business enterprise systems. Only one area where friendly joking is required: let's cut the multiple-modifier and somewhat paradoxical titles ("assistant vice-president for" contains at least three indications of subordination ["assistant," "vice" and "for"], which points up that there is nothing of the substantive, "presidency," remaining in the title). Dan's October 2015 newsletter also contains a list of the latest logo changes in the LSU System, all part of a graphic unification of the campuses. It is unfortunate, however, that LSU clings to a logo font that, if not utterly soulless, is at least zombie-like: that looks like the lettering on the credits for one of those movies about neurotic teenagers who think themselves demonically possessed. Perhaps that effect is the outgrowth of the history of the font, which, as can be discovered [online](#), was devised during a series of closed-door conferences in corporate boardrooms. Fortunately, those who have seen Dan Layzell's office door know that this man of good will has not been stamped with the font equivalent of the mark of the beast.



## PLUNGE IN ONLINE EDUCATION SHARE VALUE EXPOSES ADMINISTRATIVE FALLIBILITY

It was only a year or two ago that top-level administrators around Louisiana proudly and self-assuredly announced the end of traditional classroom education as well as the extinction of the "sage on the stage" at the front of the lecture hall. Big dollars were paid for consultation visits by the likes of journalist Jeff Selingo, who, despite having no academic credentials, confidently tolled the last days of live education in favor of online, hybrid, and "flipped" instruction. Gratefully, the last two years tell a different story as the share value of all for-profit online education providers has plunged, as the Department of Defense has removed the University of Phoenix from its list of supported institutions, and as advertising for online education aims at an ever *less* prosperous segment of the population. The next time that someone with minimal classroom or laboratory experience expresses certainty about some or other trend in higher education, simply show him or her the graph accompanying this story and, like the bust of Hippocrates in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, moan "forebear."



Share value of Apollo Group (University of Phoenix) over the last year



## 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. is temporarily on sabbatical from journalism and should continue his column in January 2016.

### Capitol Park Museum Events

#### Event: Thirsty Thursday at the Capitol Park Museum

**When:** November 19, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.

**Where:** Capitol Park Museum

**Body Copy:** Friends of the Capitol Park Museum and Pelican House celebrate Louisiana's tailgating culture. Samples of Pelican House's cocktail creations and fried delicacies will be available. For more information, contact [CapitolParkMuseum@crt.la.gov](mailto:CapitolParkMuseum@crt.la.gov) or 225.342.5428.

**Footer:** Admission is free for Friends of the Capitol Park Museum members and \$10 for the general public.



#### Event: Christmas at Capitol Park

**When:** December 12, 2015 at 11 a.m.

**Where:** Capitol Park Museum

**Body Copy:** Bring the entire family and enjoy the holiday spirit! Museum open house includes complimentary tours of the exhibits, a visit from Santa "Claws" and reindeer food and Christmas ornament crafts. Musical performances by local school choirs and bands begin at 11 a.m. Program concludes with a special performance by the East Baton Rouge Gifted and Talented Music Program at 2 p.m.

**Footer:** Admission is free. For more information, contact [CapitolParkMuseum@crt.la.gov](mailto:CapitolParkMuseum@crt.la.gov) or 225.342.5428.



### FIZZY WATER BRAND FLAP IRKS ACTIVISTS

The Good Book tells us to "clothe the naked and feed the hungry," but apparently the provision of ordinary water is exempted, at least if a new LSU policy remains on the books. LSUnited faculty activists who were preparing a booth for LSU Fall Fest recently received a memorandum warning that, if beverages should be distributed, "bottled water or other beverages should comply with the LSU contract with Coca-Cola. For example, all bottled water distributed must be a Dasani product." Fortunately, Faculty Senate interveners arrived to take up the matter with Finance and Administration expediter Dan Layzell, who now has the policy under reconsideration. As is well advised, considering that the Pennington Center recently faced an embarrassing moment when the [New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com) discovered that Pennington had released a Coke-funded study of worldwide childhood obesity that quietly skipped over sugar-laden drinks as a cause of pediatric bariatric disorders.



LSU clamps down on water options

## COMMENCEMENT REGALIA POLICY IN THE WORKS

For many years, the LSU A&M Faculty Senate has worked to upgrade Commencement ceremonies, continuously reminding administrations that the Commencement is the academic equivalent of a sacrament and that it dramatically expresses the value of education to the broad general audience. Commencement, the Faculty Senate has opined, is for all members of the academic community, whether recipients of honorary degrees or newly commissioned military officers or guest Commencement speakers. It is thus highly pleasing to learn that LSU Vice-Provost Matthew Lee is in the midst of formalizing a [new policy](#) that will govern academic regalia (the current selection of which was designed by the Faculty Senate in consultation with Registrar Emeritus Robert Doolos and assorted regalia manufacturers). To date, regalia policy has been covered by a 1992 letter of understanding between former Faculty Senate President Billy Collier and the LSU administration. That letter limits extraneous ornamentation such as honor cords, badges, or stoles to the two national honor fraternities with chapters at LSU and to those who receive stoles during the robing ceremony sponsored by the African-American Studies faculty. Vice-Provost Lee's draft policy promises to tighten up informal understandings into disciplined policy. Congratulations, Matt, on another demonstration of wisdom.



## NSULA POSTS TELEOLOGICAL BILLBOARD

The long-running billboard battle among campuses continues in southwest Louisiana, an area ably served by McNeese State University and by Southwest Louisiana Technical Community College (SOWELA).

There, Northeastern State University of Louisiana has set up, alongside Interstate 10, a series of highway billboards in brilliant reddish purple (a color easily distinguished from the bluish, indigo purple of LSU) that apparently aim to poach students from the local rival institutions. What is most remarkable about these text-only, image-free billboards is their intensely teleological yet weakly modest, outgoingly narcissistic message. The first billboard reports that, at NSULA, everyone is dedicated only to one goal, "yours" (whoever "you" may be and whatever might be "your" goal—an interesting uncertainty given the number of bypassing drivers who are returning home from the casinos or from the Delta Downs race track). The second billboard backs up this message, as does an online video version of the message. Apparently learning is only a secondary ambition in this demonstration of unqualified commitment to whatever the customer might desire—and to protecting the academic customer from any change of mind that might come from a less purposive education.



Online complement to teleologically monaural NSULA billboard campaign



## JOIN LSUNITED

### WHO WE ARE:

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

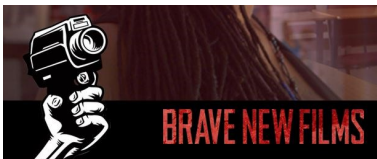
### OUR GOALS:

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

### CONTACT:

## VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS IMPOVERISHED PROFESSORS

To the great shame of American higher education, many “adcon” (adjunct or contingent) faculty members earn wages that keep them at or below the poverty line. Their abjection can become an economic black hole; for example, many cannot afford the clothing required to make a good impression at interview for better jobs. A new short film by documentary produce Brave New Films exposes the contrast between the rhetoric of universities that spare no expense to create an image, for recruited students, of ideal collegiate life while staffing their operations with idealistic professionals who get few or even no benefits and who live in continual financial anxiety. Catch a glimpse online of [Professors in Poverty](#) and, if so inclined, sign the petition pertaining to this disgrace.



Brave New Films releases study of professors in economic abjection

## NEW TRAVEL REGULATIONS LIGHTEN REGULATORY BURDEN

Travelers on some LSU campuses have reason to rejoice. Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, an



array of travel regulations were updated, relaxed, or otherwise revised. Although many of these revisions are of a technical, procedural variety, a few directly impact faculty members. Most notable among the adjustments is the approval of full mileage reimbursement for the use of personal vehicles: a de facto suspension of the 99-mile rule that limited drivers to a measly \$50.49 (99 miles x 51¢ per mile) compensation for each trip. It is not altogether surprising that, in our frequently cloudy state, some of the information about this laudable development should remain in eclipse. No one seems to know where the new regulations are posted; likewise, whether or not this happy development pertains only to the LSU A&M campus or to the other LSU campuses remains in what our medieval forebears called “the cloud of unknowing.” The escape of LSU from at least a few travel inhibitions leaves Louisiana with at least three different sets of travel rules: one for LSU A&M; one for the LSU campuses; and one for all the other campuses. Time for a statewide revamp?

## APOLOGY AND CORRECTION

The September 2015 issue of the *Newsletter* forgot to mention that [Brigett Scott](#) of Nicholls State University was among those participating in the discussion with consultants from Deloitte that took place at the Board of Regents Office. Scott, the President of the Nicholls State Faculty Senate, is also shown in the accompanying picture. We apologize for the omission and thank Dr. Scott for her service.



Brigett Scott

## ORANGE ALERT: BRUSH WAR ON FACULTY

Not all of the reports received at the *Newsletter* office lend themselves to cheeky or humorous treatment. Lately, our reporters have heard of one attempted faculty dismissal at LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans and of two attempted dismissals at the LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport. The New Orleans case, which included intervention by the AAUP, has apparently been resolved in favor of the faculty member, but the other cases are pending. Additionally, there are unconfirmed reports of at least three other personnel actions underway. *Newsletter* readers should help their less engaged colleagues understand that hostility toward and career dangers facing faculty members is increasing.



## REGENTS RESCHEDULE GUBERNATORIAL SHINDIG

Shakespeare’s character Macbeth wondered whether any deed could “trammel up the [its] consequence”—if it were possible to do something, anything, that didn’t lead to unexpected results. So it is that the best laid plans of Higher Education Commissioner Joseph Rallo have resulted in a diversion, albeit, unlike that which faced Macbeth, a salutary one. Rallo expended some of his abundant political capital to arrange a post-primary debate between the two remaining gubernatorial candidates. Alas, the original scheduling of the post-electoral shindig for late October allowed only three days in which to sort out the victor and arrange a full-scale theatrically-situated debate. The ingenious Rallo quickly compensated by devising an alternate plan: a truly post-electoral confab on December 1<sup>st</sup> that would feature the winner of the election in conversation with higher education leaders. The *Newsletter* adjustments department congratulates the Commissioner on his quick thinking and, remembering that one of the longest-running features in multimedia history is the whimsical animated *Gumby* series, applauds his flexibility.



Commissioner’s gubernatorial forum rescheduled



## ALFS ALEXANDRIA SUMMIT COVERS DAZZLING SPECTRUM OF ACADEMIC ISSUES

Early autumn brought its usual sense of reflective renewal as nearly three dozen colleagues dropped in on Alexandria for the first ALFS (Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates) Summit Meeting of the 2015–2016 academic year, there to turn some of the largest leaves in the academic book. Owing to the flooding and subsequent renovation of the lovely Live Oaks Conference Room, members convened, symbolically enough, in the most transparent facility on the beautiful LSU of Alexandria (LSUA) campus, the glass-abundant Bolton Library, there to hear and to comment on a rich selection of presentations. Following the welcome message from gregarious LSUA Chancellor Dan Howard, keynote speaker Verjanis Peoples, Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Southern University, delivered a thorough analysis of the situation at Louisiana's flagship HBCU. Southern University Baton Rouge Faculty Senate President Thomas Miller joined Dr. Peoples for the Q&A section of the event, providing a bifocal, faculty-administration perspective on a campus that has climbed more than a few bluffs during these troubled times. Next up in the academic batting box were Kenneth McMillin (LSU and AgCenter) and Leslie Bary (University of Louisiana Lafayette) who conducted a lively *Crossfire*-style debate concerning the use of business-inspired and provocatively entrepreneurial language in the description of universities and in the recruitment of students. Leadership expert Barry Humphus (SOWELA) unveiled a promising history of faculty leadership development programs in the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, which is far ahead of the four-year systems when it comes to integrating faculty into the "command line." Two "blitz" workshops designed to produce plans of action in a quick and efficient fashion followed: one led by James Kirylo, who addressed the question of adequate response times and constructive communication with top-level administrators; one led by Vipin Menon (McNeese) and Michael Russo (LSU A&M) on the techniques for starting AAUP chapters and faculty advocacy groups on assorted campuses. Several initiatives emerged from the meeting; these are highlighted elsewhere in this *Newsletter*. All participants agreed that this was an impressively encouraging and productive. Get ready for the next Alexandria Summit meeting on November 21<sup>st</sup>!



Thomas Miller and Verjanis Peoples explore the future of Southern University



Michael Russo teaches techniques for starting faculty advocacy groups



Kenneth McMillin debates the language of entrepreneurship

## LSU FACULTY SENATE CENSURES ALEXANDER, ALEXANDER DEPLOYS MEDIA COUNTERMEASURES

Watchers of the LSU political scene know that the tattered flagship campus has drawn more than a small amount of public attention owing to the dismissal of tenured Professor Teresa Buchanan, who was cashiered despite a faculty recommendation for lesser, remedial sanctions. Outlets from the prestigious *Washington Post* to statewide Louisiana commentator blogs howled long and loud about a preemptive approach to justice that seemed carefully designed to wriggle through the letter of the law while subverting the collegial spirit of LSU policies. In its October meeting, the LSU Faculty Senate voted by an overwhelming majority to censure LSU President F. King Alexander along with former Provost Stuart Bell and Human Sciences and Education Dean Damon Andrew. The [censure](#), which was sponsored by nearly two dozen senior professors, may be viewed online. Immediately following this robust vote, representatives from the LSU Office of Strategic Communications fanned out in the Faculty Senate chambers, distributing a pre-fabricated statement reaffirming the President's positions and reiterating the claim that students need protection and that civil rights issues were at stake. Carefully avoided is any indication as to which government authority determined that federal laws were violated. The statement, which includes two grammatical errors in the space of eleven lines, drew quick reaction from faculty activists, who opined that, through posse justice, President Alexander was creating more of a hostile work environment for more people than did the ejected faculty member. Apparently sensing that the press release didn't work, Alexander surprised the crowd at the October 23<sup>rd</sup> LSU Board of Supervisors meeting with a wandering harangue on the theories articulated in the press release and—as is all too typical in Puritan America—built his case around the frequently repeated wiggly-word "belief." The geyser moment was captured on the [Board of Supervisors video](#) at approximately the 4:02:00 mark. No rebuttal to Alexander's profession of faith was requested. Meanwhile, the American Association of University Professors, the National Coalition Against Censorship, and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education continue to probe a case that has brought LSU more than a small bit of publicity.



Surprise eruption rumbles through Supervisor confab

# Lifestyle Feature

## CHEDDAR IN LOUISIANA

Those who have had the opportunity to view the Cheddar Gorge, wander the Cheddar bluffs, or ramble through the Cheddar caves recognize that cheddar cheese is anything but native to Louisiana. Way over on the chilly and damp Bristol coast, the village of Cheddar enjoys a climate unlike any found on the Gulf coast. Despite its cultural and climatological distance from dear old Louisiana, Cheddar has graced our rather warmer land with a legacy of cheesemaking that encompasses the entire world but that varies in its many local installations. Out of the hundreds of cheddar cheeses produced in Britain, in boutique cheddaries, and by mass producers, some subset makes its way into the assorted regions of America and the world. Louisiana is no exception to this rule of variegated distribution. The unique blend of specialty markets, restaurant demand, and (highly variable) consumer education has ensured that Louisianans will have access to their own special section of the cheddar spectrum. This column provides a guide to the cheddar cheeses that appear on Louisiana marketers' shelves, cheeses that most Louisianians can expect to find and buy most of the time.

At the top of the official cheddar hierarchy are those that make emanate from, if not the Somerset homeland of cheddar, at least from England and its precincts. With respect to complete comestibility—to suitability for consumption either in almost any context or as a primary meal focus—the most elegant as well as well-rounded English offering is surely what is marketed as Somerdale Cheddar. “Somerdale” is something of a fiction; the name of a cheese wholesaler, it references a large inventory of distinguished cheeses sold under a common trademark. The Louisiana version of Somerdale seems to be a slightly downgraded version of [Long Clawson Aged Leicester](#), a slightly aged version of Leicester that acquires a rusty color as well an impressively deep flavor bouquet, a bouquet redolent of walnuts and perhaps even a bit of Salisbury steak. Creamy in texture, Somerdale can top a hamburger with smooth suavity but can also caress a cracker in an homage to simple completeness. The younger brother of Somerdale, Leicester, is also widely available in Louisiana markets, albeit without the price-pumping trademarking. Leicester is the quintessential English picnic cheese, its cheerful red color and its bright acidity coupling with its firm but seldom aggressive mouth-feel to designate it as the go-to bite between courses hopping out of the rustic basket. Worthy of special mention, too, is the increasingly popular Seaside Cheddar, which also hails from the south coast of England. Emphatically bright and texturally light, Seaside Cheddar imposes no excess burden on those seeking a quick cheesy “hit.” Comparatively low in fat and crumbly in texture, Seaside Cheddar brightens up everything that it touches, although its lively, salty acidity can overpower the other components of a sandwich while its pebbly texture can interfere with melting. Seaside Cheddar is more of a match for robust meats such as ham or even steak than for delicately flavored viands such as chicken or turkey. It does, however, stand alone among cheddars in its ability to stand up to the warm *umami* of an avocado and the dark flavors of whole-grain bread. Much as England has its colonial

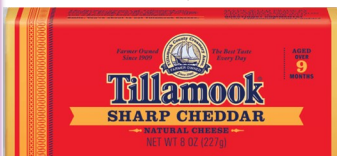
sphere of influence, so Cheddar extends its culture across that empire where the sun never sets. Across the channel, in Ireland, one finds the easily exportable [Kerrygold Cheddar](#), which, despite commercialization and globalization, can trace its heritage back into the monasteries of the deep medieval period. Kerrygold evidences an unusual mixture of brittleness with creaminess. Sliced, it easily breaks into bits and pieces, which, even if a bit of an annoyance, suggests an artisanal background; eaten, however, it smooths out on the tongue with the ease of grease on a country-fair hog's belly. The quintessential pub cheese, smooth but not overwhelming, invitingly multi-tonal Kerrygold asks for accompaniment by a jug of cider or a pint of ale. Kerrygold seems to be the model for the slightly less successful New Zealand Cheddar, a pleasant, moderately sharp offering with a bit of an “aged,” musky flavor that delivers a mix of textural instability and experiential smoothness somewhat like its Irish competitor. New Zealand Cheddar travels a

long way to reach America, with the result that its performance is unpredictable, some blocks having withstood transit better than others. Yet it is definitely a worthy variation that, in its generality, blends well one sandwiches with such complex flavors as sausages draped in micro-greens.

At the other end of the spectrum from the upscale yet still supermarket-accessible cheeses are those cheddars that emerge from the big food combines and the volume producers. Far and away the best of these is [Tillamook](#), the product of a large-scale, not altogether organic cooperative in rural Oregon. Tillamook comes in medium, sharp, and extra-sharp versions, the finest of which is surely the

sharp. In the sharp, a wonderfully assertive leading edge of flavor announces a true cheddar without imposing any of the bitterness that damages some cheddar experiences. Meanwhile, a bouquet of woody aromas intensifies the depth of the flavor, all to be followed up by a distinct but definitely sylvan (rather than fruity) tang.

Tillamook—especially the sharp version—is a major accomplishment in the history of cheesemaking: a cheese that is created in tremendous volumes but that maintains the polyphonic flavor that characterizes artisanal cheeses. Also surprisingly noteworthy is [Cracker Barrel](#), which fans out into no less than five versions: mild; medium; sharp; extra sharp; and Vermont white. Cracker Barrel offers something that most cheeses only aspire to attain: complete portability. Perhaps because it receives a dollop of preservative—something of a no-no among cheese enthusiasts—it seems always to maintain its freshness. Its packaging in small sticks carries a period charm while it prevents diners from tiring of this simple pleasure. Cracker Barrel, which belongs to Kraft Foods, is always available and is always better than other supermarket options, even despite its being minimally authentic. Certainly it defeats, hands down, the other Kraft products: those unmentionable mediocre blocks of orange, annatto-tinged blocks that, in a pinch, can serve as doorstops.



—Continued on page 13

## LSUNITED RESTARTS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING EXPLORATION

A few years ago, LSUnited, LSU's dynamic and growing faculty advocacy group, temporarily idled formal efforts at establishing collective bargaining for Louisiana academic professionals owing to difficulties in squaring its goals with those of its K-12-oriented union affiliate, the Louisiana Association of Educators. Increasing chagrin among faculty members, however, has suggested to LSUnited officers that it might be time to renew efforts at some sort of formal advocacy for the largely voiceless professional cadre of Louisiana universities. The *Newsletter* has learned that faculty advocate and government documents specialist Stephanie Braunstein has volunteered to explore the possibility of voluntary binding arbitration, an option that would overleap "right to work" laws and that might appeal to administrators who have lost favor with faculty members owing to improvisational behavior with respect to employment security challenges. We anticipate great developments from Dr. Braunstein's research!



## SOUTH CAROLINA PROMO SHOWS CHARITY MAY NOT BEGIN AT HOME

One of the most perverse reinterpretations of an old adage occurred in the recent attempt by LSU officialdom to style the hosting of the LSU-South Carolina football game as an act of philanthropy. Apparently wondering whether charity began, not perhaps at home, but in the provision of a facility for a displaced home game, LSU expended no small supply of public relations expertise in suggesting that the red stick campus had helped flood-ravaged South Carolinians by lending them a stadium. On October 14<sup>th</sup>, LSU President King Alexander issued a sentimental letter expressing "pride" that the LSU community could "pull together" to host a football team, adding that \$40K had been raised for the Red Cross, presumably from donation boxes strewn around the campus. What does not appear in this letter is an accounting of what universities spend to charter jets for football entourages or, in the saddest of absurdities, to "travel" home teams to hotels just out of town so as to allow for a grand entrance to the stadium and avoid distractions (such as visiting the library?). No member of the LSU administration took to the football field to instruct the crowd concerning the role that the enormous carbon footprint of a football game plays in the climate change that produces severe weather events. Perhaps the highly physical game of football could benefit from a little less make-believe?



## LSUNITED-ULL COLLABORATION

One of the major obstacles to faculty organization and to professional labor negotiation in Louisiana has always been the dispersal of academic employees. Spread out over three dozen campuses that cover more that are dispersed over three-hundred miles of sparsely populated territory, faculty have struggled to reach the critical mass that would allow for joint efforts at the improvement of working rules and conditions. The era of isolation is now coming to an end thanks to the visionary efforts of LSUnited and the AAUP chapter at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Lafayette AAUP activists such as Leslie Bary, George Wooddell, Jon Laudun, and Lewis Deaton have entered into a dialogue with counterparts in the LSU-based LSUnited in the hopes of creating a permanent collaboration that will serve as a model for further multilateral engagements across the state. Initial plans include cross-campus invitations; biannual multi-campus social events; and planning for a response to possible budget cuts. Thanks to our LSUnited, AAUP, and ULL visionaries for taking the first step to creating a statewide faculty advocacy group.



ULL AAUP leader Leslie Bary

## CONTROVERTED BARBERSHOP TRANSPOSED TO BETTER PLACE

Cultural history has provided us with a variety of mobile, even flying, houses, whether the seriously sanctified Holy House of Loretto, which angels flew from Israel to Italy, or the fictional house that, in *The Wizard of Oz*, did away with the first of the two wicked witches. It appears that Louisiana higher education now has its own volant house in the form of the former LSU Student Union barber shop, which is now re-opening as "Cutrone's" at 711 Jefferson Highway, deep in the upscale neighborhoods defined by Whole Foods Market, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, and an assortment of other mega-prosperous entities. Many loyal customers among the faculty had feared that the proprietor of the old on-campus barbershop might be dealt the "unkindest cut of all," as Shakespeare has it, but the spirit of altruism prevailed as Auxiliary Services chief Margot Carroll quietly (and laudably) facilitated a transition that has uplifted a long-serving employee. Everyone is now hoping that the next occupant of the vacated space at the LSU Student Union will emerge from local, possibly minority entrepreneurs, not from a national or junk-food chain.



Moving houses and striped poles lead to happy relocation in Tiger Town



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AGRICULTURE  
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## University College Seeks Nominations for Teaching Awards and Advisor of the Year

BATON ROUGE, LA – LSU University College is honored to accept nominations for the following notable awards.

**GEORGE H. DEER DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD** is open to any LSU faculty member who teaches courses for which University College students are enrolled, either the [Center for Freshman Year \(UCFY\)](#) or the [Center for Advising and Counseling \(UCAC\)](#). Nominations should be restricted to persons having taught University College students in three of the past four regular semesters including the semester in which the award is made.

**ALUMNI ASSOCIATION TEACHING ASSISTANT AWARD** is given in recognition of outstanding teaching ability and service to students. At the freshman level (1000- and 2000- level courses) teaching assistants make up a significant portion of the instructional program. The nominations are limited to graduate teaching assistants who have an academic or fiscal year appointment.

**Criteria for both awards:** Nominations should be made on the basis of excellence in teaching, genuine interest in students, outstanding relationships with colleagues, and demonstrated leadership in the promotion of improved instructional programs.

**ADVISOR OF THE YEAR AWARD** is based on the national criteria of the [National Academic Advising Association \(NACADA\)](#). The award is designed to honor individuals who are making significant contributions to the improvement of academic advising and to disseminate information about these contributions to other professionals in the field. Only one nominee will be selected. The nominee selected from the campus will become LSU's Advisor of the Year and his/her name will be submitted as LSU's representative for national competition as National Advisor of the Year. Any individual employed as an academic advisor at LSU may be nominated. The nominee need not be a NACADA member.

LSU has a rich history of award-winning counselors and advisors receiving this prestigious national honor, including numerous consecutive wins – Bridget Robicheaux in 2015, Robbie S. Bowen and Ashley Granger in 2014, Andrea L. Jones in 2013, Annette L. Yancy in 2012, Joyce Wakefield in 2009, Rachel L. Singleton in 2008, and Tim Fields in 2007.

**Criteria:** Nominations will be evaluated on the evidence of effective advising qualities and practices that distinguish the nominee as an outstanding academic advisor.

Complete nomination packets can be found at [www.uc.lsu.edu](http://www.uc.lsu.edu) at Scholarships & Awards, or directly [HERE](#).

Nominations for all awards must be submitted electronically no later Friday, January 8, 2016 to: Jacquelyn Schulz Craddock at [jcraddock@lsu.edu](mailto:jcraddock@lsu.edu).

Since 1933, [LSU University College](#) has served as the portal of entry for students enrolled at LSU. Academic and personal success is the hallmark of a well-rounded student, and University College provides a foundation of support services for students beginning their academic careers at LSU. University College has two enrollment divisions: [The Center for Freshman Year](#) and [The Center for Advising and Counseling](#). Additionally, University College offers retention-specific programs: [Student Support Services](#), [Ronald E. McNair Research Scholars](#), and [Summer Scholars](#). These academic support programs focus on particular student populations and are a significant part of the role and mission of University College.

For more information on LSU University College, visit [www.uc.lsu.edu](http://www.uc.lsu.edu) or follow the conversation at [www.facebook.com/LSU.UniversityCollege](https://www.facebook.com/LSU.UniversityCollege).

## FOLDER OF THE YEAR AWARD TO LSUA



Document folder from LSUA sets high design standard

The guys and gals in the graphics department at the *Newsletter* have conferred “folder of the year award.” The winner of that competition is no less than LSU of Alexandria, which has produced a remarkable document carrier that evidences all the features of good design, historical awareness, and forward-looking vision.

Through a color scheme that references LSU but, through subtle variation, distinguishes the Alexandria campus and through the vertical alignment of a series of vignettes showing aspects of campus life, the folder harkens back to the cinematic age (those boxes could be frames from a film) at the same time that it embraces the box-and-table design characteristic of the web page epoch. Positioning of those frames

on the edge of the folder, at its opening point, suggests the unveiling of the bright future of an educated person. The four frames respectively highlight academic accomplishment (graduation); the beautiful and surprisingly modern landscape design of the LSUA campus; the arts; and non-violent co-curricular sporting activity (no sweaty goons in football helmets). Tasteful, elegant, and useful, the folder epitomizes both LSUA and its evolving mission. Congratulations to Dan Howard and his design team for this masterpiece.

## COLLEAGUES CREATE NEW AWARD HONORING KEVIN L. COPE

Generous colleagues in the “Alexandria Summit” community have created an annual award in honor of



Presentation of the Dr. Kevin L. Cope Award by Mary Jorji Jarzabek and James Kirylo

faculty governance practitioner and higher education activist Kevin L. Cope. Dubbed the “Dr. Kevin L. Cope Award,” the honor recognizes extended contributions to higher education governance, especially by faculty members. The first recipient of the award was Cope himself, who was delighted to receive it from Mary “Jorji” Jarzabek and James Kirylo during the most recent Alexandria Summit meeting. The emergence of the Dr. Kevin L. Cope award demonstrates the good-heartedness of the colleagues who comprise the education community in Louisiana.

## ALFS MEETING ISSUES TWO RESOLUTIONS

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue of the *Newsletter*, the ALFS-sponsored Alexandria Summit Meeting of September 26<sup>th</sup> was unusually fruitful. ALFS delegates passed two resolutions, both of which were under the authorship of McNeese State University President Vipin Menon. The first of these resolutions seeks to set standards for communications between administrations and faculty governance bodies. It

recommends a two-day window for an initial acknowledgment of a proposal and a seven-day period for beginning the solution for or implementation of the item in question. The second resolution recommends the removal of burdensome travel requirements such as the mandatory use (on some campuses) of HotelPlanner for lodging reservations. With respect to the first resolution, ALFS Vice-President Kevin Cope has created a postal mailing list of all Louisiana campus and System presidents and chancellors so that, in early November, the resolution, along with an explanatory letter, may be delivered to all higher education CEOs; with respect to the second resolution, an ad hoc committee consisting of Patrick O’Neal (LaTech), Julie Rutledge (LaTech), Vipin Menon (McNeese State), Leslie Bary (ULL), and James Kirylo (Southeastern) has begun probing the line of command that is responsible for travel policy decisions and the activities of the University of Louisiana System Faculty Advisory Committee (in the hope that the statewide University of Louisiana faculty delegation may assist in addressing this issue). Thanks go out to Vipin Menon to his initial push on a ball that is now rolling at full speed, even in the uphill environment of Louisiana higher education management!



ALFS resolution author Vipin Menon

## RESEARCH SKI-LIFTER DURAN HOISTS COLLEAGUES UP GRENOBLE SLOPES

Those *Newsletter* readers who are old enough to remember ski ace Jean Claude-Killy gracefully but forcefully zooming down the Olympic slopes, plumes of snow flying behind him as his trademark red skin suit blazed into camera apertures, will surely remember beautiful Grenoble, home of the Olympiad that made this French downhiller an international celebrity. Now Randy Duran, a tireless innovator, has partnered with the wealthy ERASMUS program of the European Community (EU) to create a series of exchanges between LSU A&M faculty and their counterparts at the University of Grenoble (technically, Université Joseph Fourier—Grenoble—I, in the arcane French university nomenclature). Eight fully-funded travel and research awards are available for stays of circa twenty-two days; four awards will fund shorter, seven-day visits. Convivial Duran has also volunteered to help colleagues identify collaborators at “UJB.” Interested in learning and thinking in one of Europe’s most spectacular venues/ Contact Randy at [rduran@lsu.edu](mailto:rduran@lsu.edu).



Head for Grenoble now!

Cheddar enthusiasts will delight in some of the better regional varieties from our own continent. King among American cheddars is surely that hailing from Vermont, undisputedly the cheddar capitol of America. Two versions of Vermont cheddar routinely appear on Louisiana shelves: the first, the mass-produced but still cooperative-oriented offerings from the [Cabot Creamery](#); the second, the occasional block directly from cheddar hotspot [Grafton Village](#). Cabot Creamery offers versions of Vermont cheddar and levels of sharpness for every taste, but buyers should be advised that even Cabot sometimes pushes sharpness over the threshold of bitterness. That problem also besets the splendid creamery at Grafton Village. Vermont cheddars are exquisite *in situ* but seem not to travel well. Ask your cheese vendor for a sample before buying a large quantity of a cheese that is sophisticated but that may not appeal to everyone. In recent years, Cabot Creamery has created an utterly wonderful semi-boutique offering called Catamount Hills Cheddar. Both sophisticated and transportable, this new Vermont development offers a very round, almost fruity flavor profile, as if it were mixing, à la Thanksgiving, chestnuts, turkey, cranberries, and maybe even a little citrus in one splendid package that seems to open over time and to create a narrative in the mouth that savors it. Also worthy of note are the competitor cheddars that come from upstate New York. What is billed as New York Sharp Cheddar is fairly straightforward: sharp, a bit of flint, and



background salt. Often enough, however, that minimalist ensemble can prove pleasing. Another simple cheese from the upstaters, Mammoth Cheddar, will never insult anyone and will add a nice, slightly sharp accent to a potato or sandwich without undoing other flavors.

Our journey through the little world of Louisiana-accessible cheeses concludes with three novelty products: two from England and one from New Mexico. Emerging from cheesy Somerset, Applewood Smoked Cheddar delivers a very tart but cautiously smoky flavor, all wrapped in a Sienna-colored rind that indicates exposure to paprika. Applewood Smoked Cheddar, in its mildness, is a natural partner for a turkey sandwich. It must be eaten fresh; otherwise, the components in the flavor profile start to separate from one another. In another corner of the English coast, the Barber family seems to enjoy slow but steady success with its unique [Barber's 1833](#) cheese, which it bills as suitable for "the ultimate cheese toastie." Barber's 1833 challenges the roundedness of cheddar by juxtaposing a deep, almost bitter onset against a lively fruity follow-up, all to unexpectedly pleasing effect. Finally, New Mexico, the "Land of Enchantment," offers, albeit only seasonally, its alluring Hatch Pepper Cheddar. Although the base of this cheese is at best a simple and somewhat overly tart workaday cheddar, the infusion of aromatic Hatch chili makes it unforgettable, if best during its season.

With upscale markets burgeoning in Louisiana townships, now is the halcyon day of cheese experimentation. Grab a cracker and try something new!

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Nov. 12th,	12:30 - 4:30p.m.	• Workshop: Improving Your Online Course

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## MAJOR UPTICK IN COMMITTEE ACTIVITY AT LSU A&M

One of the most heartening features of academic life in Louisiana is the readiness with which colleagues never stop trying to better their lot and improve their institutions. Often enough, such efforts seem like those of a scarab rolling dung through a wasteland, but, equally often, those enterprises bear fruit. In the month of October alone, no less than six new or re-turning committees have accepted charges and challenges. Pursuant to LSU Faculty Senate Resolution 15–16, a new committee on the interaction of the LSU A&M campus with its physical and social environments has already commenced operation. Indeed, that committee will confer with NBBJ, the design firm developing LSU’s master plan, in early November. Under the able stewardship of Chair George Cochran, the LSU Budget and Planning Advisory Committee will soon begin an effort to put the budget in workable, interpretable form by way of educating colleagues and promoting more faculty input into budgetary decisions. Owing to the wise leadership of interim Provost Richard Koubek, Associate Dean Malcolm Richardson has been commissioned to represent the faculty on a new committee to create an online memorial area for deceased faculty as well as to create a personal data input point for faculty who want to ensure that announcements concerning their achievements include accurate information. Auxiliary Services Associate Vice-President Margot Carroll has asked for and received a newly staffed Dining Committee (to review food service on the campus) and also a newly staffed Bookstore Committee (to continue improvements to the bookstore and to promote an academic environment in that venue). Finally, Fabio Del Piero has volunteered to join the campus-wide committee to identify the winner of the SEC faculty award, an award which includes the right to compete for SEC Professor of the year. Applause in abundance for the multitudinous colleagues who have offered their time and expertise for these worthy efforts.



## GOVERNOR APPOINTS SANDWICH GUY TO REGENTS

In yet another attempt to show the world what he thinks of higher education, Louisiana’s governor has appointed the proprietor of Marty J’s PoBoy shops to the Board of Regents, which oversees the entire university project of Louisiana, from VoTech mini-campuses to top-level research and graduate education. Need any more be said?



Latest research from the Board of Regents

## FACULTY CALL FOR CONDENSING OF MANDATED TRAINING

The wonderful virtue of the English language is that it can carry so many meanings at once yet remain perfectly understandable. Thus it is that one can be arrested by *gendarmes* or one can be arrested by something that grabs and holds one’s attention. The latter variety of arrest without warrant or cause is routinely practiced in Louisiana, where faculty members are subject to at least two and often three time-consuming sessions of state-mandated training each year. Despite there being no evidence of rampant abuse, colleagues must complete an online ethics course (something of a joke given that the LSU Board of Supervisors is suing one of its own former members for corrupt practices); a sexual harassment course; and, now, a student payroll course for those who employ student workers. Worse, these courses must be repeated every year, apparently owing to lack of faith in faculty memory. Estimating that there are six thousand faculty members taking three hours of training, a minimum of 18,000 man- or woman-hours of highly valuable professional time vanish every year into a miasma of symbolic gestures. To counter this expense of spirit in a waste of shame, faculty activists have requested that the LSU Office of Academic Affairs look into the possibility of condensing this training effort, perhaps by creating a single omnibus course or requesting that the training occur only once unless evidence of wrongdoing appears. Interim Provost Rick Koubek has the request under analysis.



Too much training can lead to aberrant results

## ALDP DOES IT AGAIN

The *Newsletter* has frequently commented on the evolution of the “ALDP,” the Academic Leadership Development Program sponsored by the Southeastern Conference. That program was conceived both to improve the profile of this big-money sports league with respect to academics and to develop “new” administrative talent. The SEC has announced the [selectees for the 2015–2016](#) version of this program. Lo and behold, not a single designee is not already in an administrative position! Could it be that the ALDP events have become an administrative perk? How will this system ever encourage change?



## ALLEVA AND ALEXANDER BAG EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEES WHILE CONTINGENT FACULTY HOVER

Although it is commonly believed that the AAUP censure against LSU persists owing to academic freedom violations, the major obstacle to the removal of that odium is not LSU's checkered history but, rather, its poor attitude toward the employment security that makes the exercise of academic freedom possible. While hundreds if not thousands of institutions manage to stay off the censure list, LSU refuses to allow even due process to those instructors with seven or more years of service who may face termination. LSU continues to argue that providing proper hearings to such loyal employees amounts to granting them tenure—a specious argument comparable to asserting that going to trial is identical with achieving an acquittal. The LSU position has been rendered all the more shrill by two recent actions of the LSU Board of Supervisors: the extension of the contract of President F. King Alexander and the extension of the contract of Athletic Director Joe Alleva. With an extension to 2020, Alexander now arrives at that seven-year term that seems so elusive to instructors who earn one-sixth (or less) of his salary, while Athletic Director Alleva now persists well beyond the security guarantees of the kind (and highly trained) folks who educate Louisiana's offspring. The Alexander extension is rendered all the more problematic by its emergence from an unannounced, closed-door discussion among the Supervisors, who conducted their review without the slightest input from faculty. Given that SACSCOC docked LSU, in its latest accreditation review, for the inadequacy of its procedure for evaluating its President, it might be a good idea for Alexander to request the withdrawal of the extension until a proper evaluation can occur and until the university complies with the spirit of the SACSCOC recommendations.



Medieval rendering of the story of Dives and Lazarus may apply to LSU

## KOUBEK AND MASSÉ PARTNER TO REVIVE GRADUATE STUDENT COMMUNITY

One of the greatest innovations of the year comes out of the workshop of interim LSU Provost Rick Koubek and LSU Graduate School Dean Michelle Massé. Massé and Koubek have created a new series, "Conversations and Camaraderie," in which faculty and graduate students will come together to hear presentations and talk about topics of research interest. Not since Abraham Cowley proposed an academy to implement Sir Francis Bacon's call for the advancement of learning have we seen so energetically helpful a plan. Bravo to Koubek and Massé for their efforts to acculturate graduate students into the fraternity-sorority of educated men and women.



## The LSU Faculty Senate Presents:

### A Series of Forums Highlighting the Academic Work of Deans

*1st Forum: Tuesday, November 17, 2015*

*3:00 pm*

*The Vieux Carré Room, LSU Student Union*

*Speaker: Dean Christopher D'Elia*

*School of Coast and Environment*

*Title of Talk: "The Limits of Sustainability"*

*Refreshments Provided*

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# MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

*Show Me a Hero* (HBO, 2015)

—Reviewed by Carl Freedman

“Show me a hero,” wrote F. Scott Fitzgerald in his notebook, “and I’ll write you a tragedy.” His own most famous work certainly exemplifies this maxim; and that may not be the least important reason that *The Great Gatsby* (1925) continues to attract a combination of mass popularity and critical respect to a degree probably unmatched by any other American novel since *Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Jay Gatsby is manifestly a hero, as the title of the book proclaims. He is as deeply flawed as the heroes of Greek or Shakespearian tragedy, and his doom is, perhaps, just as sad as theirs.

Nick Wasicsko—who grew up in the working class of Yonkers, New York; who rose to become mayor of the city; and who aspired, vainly, to rise much higher in the political firmament—may not seem, at least at first glance, to bear much resemblance to Gatsby, or Lear, or Oedipus. Yet American drama has often specialized in finding heroism and tragedy in unlikely places. Arthur Miller’s *Willy Loman*—arguably the central figure of American tragedy—is, after all, an undistinguished and not particularly admirable salesman who fails both in his chosen line of work and as a husband and father. Nonetheless, by the end of *Death of a Salesman* (1949), as Willy’s brother-in-law Charlie delivers his graveside eulogy, we are bound to recognize that Willy, if not exactly a hero, harbored heroic strivings, and that his death deserves more commemoration than his very sparsely attended funeral suggests. Nick Wasicsko—as David Simon, the guiding spirit behind this six-part miniseries, re-creates him from the historical record—is less glittering than Jay Gatsby but more substantial than Willy Loman. A bright, energetic local politician, he wants pretty much what most young men want: a successful career and a happy relationship with an attractive, sympathetic woman. He achieves the latter, but the former proves more elusive, as he confronts a complex socio-historical situation that sometimes brings out his worst instincts, sometimes his best, and that ultimately destroys him.

Simon, the creator of *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) and *Treme* (HBO, 2010-2013), possesses a stature in American television drama that towers above that of all conceivable rivals except his semi-namesake, David Chase of *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007). His specialty is delineating America’s urban environments, particularly the environments of US cities that suffer from massive economic problems and are torn by fierce socio-cultural divisions (it is a little difficult to imagine Simon making a series set in, say, Portland, Oregon). Above all, Simon is concerned to show that America’s central, enduring, and perhaps insoluble agony remains what it has been since before the US existed as a political unit: race, and specifically the gulf between black and white. *The Wire* explores in meticulous detail life in the decaying, de-industrializing Baltimore in which Simon himself worked as a journalist. *Treme* tackles, more briefly and in somewhat less downbeat tones, New Orleans just after the enormous devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Simon’s characters often exemplify the resilience and resourcefulness of which human beings are capable in even the most discouraging situations. But Simon’s work seldom evinces optimism that much good will happen for those at the bottom, or even in the middle, of an increasingly neo-liberal national economy in which the public sphere is being shredded and wealth is being redistributed from the mass of the population to the several million richest Americans.

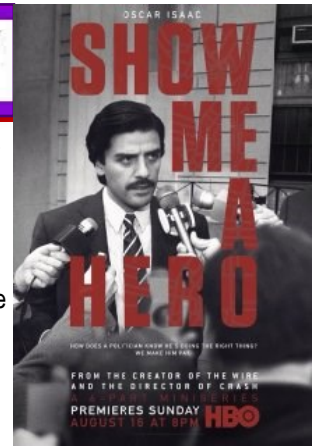
*Show Me a Hero* differs from Simon’s two great prior series in a few ways. It is much shorter, and is set back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the devastating inequalities of neo-liberalism, though certainly in view, were not so insistently present as they were to become. It is also set in a place less well-known than Baltimore or New Orleans. Yonkers has never been celebrated for anything (a quick check of Wik-

ipedia suggests the prizefighter Floyd Patterson, the comedian Sid Caesar, and the “Son of Sam” serial killer David Berkowitz to be its most famous or infamous native sons), though its name, which you can hardly pronounce without sounding as though you have a cold, has always suggested a vaguely comical connotation. It is the fourth largest city in New York State (after New York City, Buffalo, and Rochester), with a population, during the Reagan-Bush years, of something under 200,000. It is a predominantly white city, though with significant black and Hispanic minorities. It is also—and this is crucial to Simon’s portrayal—very much a blue-collar city; those with serious money tend to be found in the swankier sections of Westchester County. As the series presents them, the solid citizens of Yonkers are classically petty-bourgeois in both income and attitude: white homeowners who feel that they have worked hard for a very modest share of middle-class comfort, and who are terribly anxious that it could all be lost at any time. Politics in Yonkers consists, on one level, of the usual American boxing and shadowboxing between Democrats and Republicans. But partisan organizations are weak, and party labels count for much less than personal, neighborhood, ethnic, and—above all—racial loyalties.

This is the scene in which Nick Wasicsko’s drama plays out; and yet another difference between this series and Simon’s earlier work is that here the focus is relentlessly on a single protagonist, in contrast to the de-centered ensemble casts of *The Wire* and *Treme*. As we meet Nick (Oscar Isaac, hitherto best known as the folksinging title character of the Coen Brothers’ *Inside Llewyn Davis* [2013]), he is a 28-year-old ex-cop who, desiring more power and prestige than that provided by his service revolver (which he nonetheless still keeps with him), has earned a law degree and used it not to practice law but to go into politics. He is a popular Democratic member of the Yonkers City Council, with career dreams that seem already to be set in Albany and Washington, DC. He decides to run for Mayor, challenging the entrenched six-term Republican incumbent, Angelo Martinelli (James Belushi). But there is a problem. Despite being of nominally opposed parties, Nick and Angelo have been allies on almost all important issues. How, then, can Nick attack Angelo’s administration and advocate its replacement without seeming, at the same time, to be repudiating his own voting record? He finds a way.

The overwhelmingly dominant concern in Yonkers is an order by a federal court that the city build 200 units of low-income rental housing, scattered throughout the city’s nearly all-white middle-class neighborhoods. The mayor and the other council members are all white, and all are opposed to the court order. But some are more furiously opposed than others. At one point in the recent past, Mayor Martinelli—seeing that the city’s appeal of the court order was costing huge legal fees while offering virtually no hope of success—voted to end the appellate process. Councilman Wasicsko voted to continue the appeal. Nick makes this difference the centerpiece of his campaign. He presents himself to the voters as one determined to fight the public housing vociferously, as the mayor, Nick maintains, has been unwilling to do. White homeowners terrified that poor black or Hispanic renters might move in next door sweep Nick into office. He becomes the youngest mayor of any American city with a population over 150,000, and hence someone whom state and even national Democrats begin to view as a possible rising star of the party.

—Continued on page 20



# 2nd Higher Education Forum



Special Guest: Melvin 'Kip' Holden

**Friday, November 6, 2015  
6:00 - 8:00 pm**

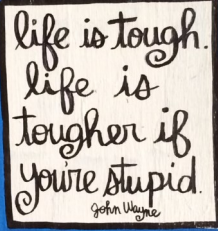
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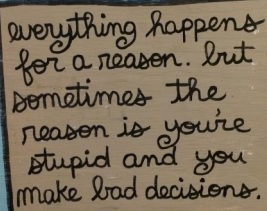
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## SECRET NORTH LOUISIANA INFORMANT DISCOVERS PRO-EDUCATION MESSAGES IN TAVERN

In the clandestine world of academic administration, it is often wise to remain anonymous, especially when bringing a smile to faces that should be grimacing with commitment and expressive of obedience. So it is that a secret informant high up on the Matterhorn of north Louisiana academic administration has discovered pro-education messages in the renowned [Not Your Mama's Tavern in Livonia](#). Delivered by a courier, covertly snapped images of these drywall-engraved communications are reproduced herewith.



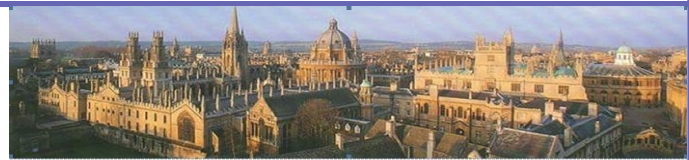
life is tough.  
life is  
tougher if  
you're stupid.  
John Wayne



everything happens  
for a reason. but  
sometimes the  
reason is you're  
stupid and you  
make bad decisions.

## SENATE MAIL CHUTE OR PANDORA'S BOX? LETTER RECEIVED FROM THE OXFORD ROUND TABLE

One never knows what will next appear in an email box. Only last week, a compliment-strewn invitation from the Oxford Roundtable arrived, declaring in boldface that it would like to invite a newsletter staffer to participate in a prestigious symposium on "Women and Education" to be held at Oxford University in merry old England. The *Newsletter* staff includes in its number a few old Oxonians who expressed surprise at the invitation, noting that the Oxford Round Table sported, on its web page, an unexplained coat of arms and that its relation with Oxford University seemed questionable. What a Pandora's box this epistle turned out to be! Further investigation revealed a link with the family of LSU President King Alexander, Alexander's father Kern Alexander, and an assortment of Alexanders who had come and gone from this "roundtable" over the years. Further inquiries exposed a history of corporate dissolutions as well as litigation, whether an attempt by the real University of Oxford to force the Alexander-sponsored Round Table to back away from use of the Oxford brand or whether an attempt, in United States District Court, to silence by [lawsuit](#) a critic who had posted adverse comments on a [Chronicle of Higher Education blog](#). Certainly that legal maneuver raises questions as to whether the commitment to academic freedom that is mentioned in the LSU Strategic Communications response to the Faculty Senate censure is something indigenous to the Alexander academic dynasty.



Graphic attached to Oxford Roundtable invitation insinuating endorsement by the University of Oxford

## TIP OF THE MONTH: LOUISIANA AGRICULTURE MAGAZINE

Nowadays, almost every academic unit, alumni association, or foundation publishes a glossy, colorful magazine. Unfortunately, most of these are awash either with stereotypes (grey-haired men in rental tuxedos sipping champagne with women in evening gowns while holding up a big donation check) or laden with images of relentless partying allegedly in support of academic causes. Not so with *Louisiana Agriculture* magazine, where every page shows the sprouts of innovation under the care of mature professionals and not children, but inquirers of all ages. In these endlessly fascinating folios—themselves an agricultural product—one may learn about everything from termites to hybrid cellulose materials to medical applications of vegetable materials to the burning of sugar cane. All is presented in a lucid, intelligent style that can inform the novice while celebrating the savant. Free online subscriptions are available through an [online](#) interface; paper subscriptions can be had by request over email to Editor Linda Benedict at [lbenedict@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:lbenedict@agcenter.lsu.edu).



LSU Agriculture magazine

## MCNEESE-LSU FOOTBALL MATCH IGNITES LIGHTNING CONTROVERSY

Of the many items that end up on the Faculty Senate blotter, one that is sure to generate plenty of buzz, is a complaint lodged by a member of the general public who noticed that, during the rained out and lightning plagued LSU-McNeese football game, the LSU marching band remained in the exposed stands, brandishing electrically conductive instruments, long after the players had cleared the field and long after the fans had retreated to protected areas under the superstructure. A inquiry as to who made decisions concerning the evacuation of the band brought the following response from a highly-placed band official: "During the weather delay, we were in constant contact with the Athletic Department via radio communication. We remained in our seats until instructed to depart." This response leaves open several questions. When did the Athletic Department acquire authority over students in a music program? What level of meteorological expertise can the Athletic claim? Why were the players not called upon to demonstrate equal hardiness by staying on the field until their student peers found shelter?



## SHREVEPORT'S DUBOSE DEVELOPS TEMPLATE LETTER TO LEGISLATORS

Many colleagues have expressed concern that academic style is not the right one to use when contacting legislators, who love abbreviation and shun elaboration. By way of helping colleagues learn to communicate with decision makers, LSUS professor and faculty governance contributor Thomas DuBose has created a template letter that will help colleagues deliver their points effectively and concisely to anyone in elective or appointive office. The letter, in MSWord format, may be accessed via the ["Text and Report Archive"](#) on the LSU Faculty Senate web site, where it is currently the first link. Thanks to Tom for this kind service



—Continued from page 17

But Mayor Wasicsko is soon overtaken by inevitable—indeed, one might say Greek—irony. He has no more power to defy or evade the court order than his predecessor did, and the controversy heats up on both sides. As the federal judge becomes increasingly impatient with the city's refusal to co-operate, opposition to the housing becomes even fiercer on the City Council and among the white citizenry of Yonkers at large. Things come to a head when the judge threatens contempt-of-court fines that will bankrupt Yonkers within days, putting an end to all municipal services, including police and fire protection; even the city's taps will run dry, as the water company is forced to close down. At this point Nick makes a decision that will later earn him a nomination for a John F. Kennedy Profiles in Courage Award. Knowing that he will infuriate precisely the voters who put him into office, Nick insists that the city must obey the court order and build the housing; and he uses all his considerable political skills to engineer a City Council vote that brings Yonkers into sufficient compliance to avoid disaster and begin the housing construction. The most intransigent opponent of the housing on the Council—one Hank Spallone, brilliantly portrayed by the much underrated Alfred Molina—is now poised to do to Nick exactly what Nick did to Angelo Martinelli; and Nick loses his re-election bid by a landslide.

Of course, Mayor Spallone can't stop the housing either. While never displaying any of Nick's forthrightness or bravery, he nonetheless becomes so unpopular by the end of his term that he doesn't even bother to run again. The housing goes ahead, and, if things don't go as well as the feel-good norms of Hollywood sentimentality would mandate, they go better than might have been feared. White resistance continues for a while, and its expressions range from hateful stares and the shouting of racist epithets to the explosion of a bomb at one of the (uninhabited) housing sites. But the nonwhite tenants move into their new homes—attractive single-family townhouses that are vastly preferable to the crime-infested high-rise public housing where most of them had resided before—and the formerly all-white neighborhoods eventually manage to adjust. One bright spot in the process is provided by a white middle-aged housewife named Mary Dorman (very nicely played by Catherine Keener). Initially an outspoken, prominent Spallone supporter and housing opponent, Mary begins to doubt the point of continued intransigence. She becomes involved with a program designed to help established white homeowners and new nonwhite renters get to know one another in constructive ways; and Mary gradually becomes an advocate for many of the tenants' concerns. She remains in the home where she has lived for decades, friendly with her African-American neighbors.

Nick, however, never recovers from his election defeat. Political office is like an addictive drug—a comparison that *Show Me a Hero* explicitly makes—and Nick goes off the rails like a junkie de-

prived of his fix. Though he manages (barely) to regain his old City Council seat, he soon loses it again, and, in general, his once keen political abilities seem to desert him. He makes one stupid, self-destructive move after another, at one point inadvertently getting his wife fired from her own job in city government, at another deliberately launching a bitter feud with the woman (played by Winona Ryder) who had been his closest friend and ally in Yonkers politics. The final straw comes when an official investigation begins into corruption at a city agency of which Nick, when mayor, had been *ex officio* head. Though no one suggests that Nick was personally guilty of wrongdoing, he fears the worst. Despite having a solid (if not always untroubled) marriage, and the love and support of his mother and brother, Nick feels his increasing political isolation as the end of all his hopes and dreams. He drives to his late father's grave (where he is accustomed to talk "to" his father about the major events of his life), and, with his old .38 police service revolver, fires a bullet through the roof of his mouth. He is buried on (appropriately) Election Day, at the age of 34.

Some have complained that *Show Me a Hero* is a bit "slow": a complaint that is almost bound to be made about any extended drama that deals intelligently with the American political process, since so much that is important about the latter is also gradual, low-key, and unglamorous. But it seems to me that this series, if much smaller in scope than Simon's greatest achievements, is a worthy successor to them. Nick Wasicsko is probably the most complex and interesting single character that Simon has yet delineated: a tragic hero in a deeply classic way, a man of great ambitions, great strengths, and great—indeed fatal—weaknesses. Watching the series, one can easily imagine that, if things had gone differently, American history might include a Governor Wasicsko, a Senator Wasicsko, even—why not?—a President Wasicsko. But the fact that things did not go differently is due—only in part, to be sure, but in highly significant part—to the flaws in Nick's own character.

At the same time, Simon's Nick Wasicsko is not a hero in the Carlylean sense of one who operates above and apart from the masses. He is deeply rooted in his time and place: not only the electoral politics of Yonkers during the Reagan-Bush era, but the larger white blue-collar culture out of which that politics grows. There are, to be sure, some stories in the series that focus on the nonwhite tenants of public housing, but these are fairly marginal to the main interest of *Show Me a Hero*; Simon seems less concerned here than in *The Wire* and *Treme* to strike a balance between black and white narrative strands. *Show Me a Hero* is the story of Nick Wasicsko and of his people: people who are sometimes characterized by hard work, courage, and decency, sometimes by bigotry, fear, paranoia, and unreason. Nick displays all these qualities. The high point of his life comes when he is nominated (evidently by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan) for the Kennedy Award. But it is a high that—in the traditional way of the tragic hero—cannot compensate for the terrible depths to which he ultimately plunges.