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Faculty Senate Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

A favorite adage among philanthropically minded people holds that “it’s the people who matter,” that other concerns, whether politics or organizational structure or financing, may re-route the road to success or failure but that character and devotion ultimately determine outcomes. The notion that anyone with “heart” may succeed anywhere and under any circumstances may have a sentimental appeal, but even zeal and commitment must work in or against some sort of structure. Paradoxically, Louisiana decision-makers like the idea that clever people, especially youngsters, can break down any barrier even at the same time that they also adore structure—an affection demonstrated by lavish expenditures on the numerous legislative task forces that have attempted to reorganize our universities.



Kevin Cope

The last few years have abounded in structural change, whether the reorganization of the LSU and the Southern University Systems or the rapid expansion of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System or in the administrative turnover that has wracked several University of Louisiana System campuses. The common denominator among all these incremental revolutions is a kind of internal outsourcing in which the educational and research functions of the university end up as confined, isolated segments of a larger operation that includes everything from para-professional sports to government lobbying to trademark management. At LSU, the first institution to reconfigure itself, restructuring was initially sold as a way to strengthen the statewide academic effort. What it actually yielded is (on the good side) the possibility of consolidation and improvement of financial and administrative functions and (on the bad side) a curious state of affairs in which the academic project, including the gigantic main campus, functions as an idling turbine barely driving a flagship without a mission and a fleet with too many destinations. Somewhat neglected and on low throttle, the former “main” campus provides the economic and brand-name power to keep the system as a whole functioning while the equally neglected satellite campuses wonder what they are supposed to do (other than attract tuition). In the new LSU configuration, the academic segment of the on-campus academic administration toils in the overheated engine room of its own energies while an assortment of ensigns on the mainland Lakeshore headquarters punch at control buttons that they barely understand. In the Southern University System, a similar arrangement manifests itself is a disconnect between the Baton Rouge command center and an array of campuses where the faculty are all convinced of their irrelevance to some unknown project. The University of Louisiana System offers an upside-down version of this disorder, with the campus commanders calling out reports to a central administration that holds the power but that seems barely to exist.

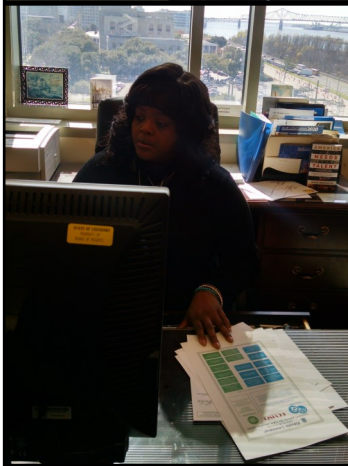
Although this “internal outsourcing” aims to create efficient mechanisms to support teaching and research, the result of this new form of centralization is the opposite. Once the central administration is charged with *supporting* educational “units” of which it itself is neither a cultural nor economic part, the support effort usurps attention from the project being supported. As the research and education project slips from the position of preeminent purpose to parasitic distraction, academic input diminishes, with academic officers receding into minority positions on committees comprised largely of technocrats. A look at any of the four system offices in Louisiana, for example, will reveal only a minimal academic presence in the command and control structure. Technocrats lack tenure and so depend on—obey—university “CEOs” rather than voicing dissenting or even creative ideas.

One solution to the loss of academic purpose that results from reliance on remote non-academic personnel involves truth in packaging. The modern-day university President performs almost no academic functions. Rather, he or she spends every day in one of three assignments: begging for money; lobbying politicians; or diffusing crises that might damage the institutional image. Such a university officer more closely resembles the nominal President of a nation with a parliamentary government in which the Prime Minister holds executive power. Revising the job description of the President to reflect actual duties would help to reduce executive power over the academic project, deferring it to academic professionals. After all, the Carolingian dynasty, a regime that filled the world with innovations, flourished only after Pepin the Short, a professional and a Prime Minister as much as a politician, absorbed the powers of the distracted king.

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Higher Education Headliner



Dr. Lisa S. Vosper



Lisa S. Vosper, Associate Commissioner for Workforce Education and Training at the Board of Regents, is a passionate and vivacious advocate for higher education in Louisiana. Although the whispers of impending budgetary doom have emanated from Huey Long's capitol building, which looms sentinel directly outside of Vosper's office window, her optimism is infectious. Vosper relates, "We're confident the numbers you're hearing are really the worst case scenario. They'll work something out before it's all said and done." In Vosper's world, there is no time for the politicians' shell games and hand-wringing. There is a feeling with Vosper that the work of coordinating each and every public postsecondary school in the state—which is the ambitious charge of the Board of Regents per the Louisiana State Constitution of 1974—has no time to wait on the caprice of state politics.

Although "an army brat," born in Frankfurt, Germany, Vosper considers herself a "Louisiana girl" through and through, as she was raised in Shreveport and received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Southern University in Baton Rouge. After leaving the state to teach English and serve as a Dropout Prevention Counselor at a middle school in Boca Raton, Florida, and later teaching at a community college in Houston, Texas, Vosper returned home to the Bayou State in order to pursue her PhD in Higher Education Administration at LSU. Armed with articles, data, and ideas about higher education administration, Vosper met with then-Commissioner of Higher Education, Joe Savoie, to share her thoughts. He was so impressed with her presentation and ideas that soon afterwards she received a phone call. Savoie had designed a new job just for her, and Vosper jumped at the offer and the possibility of staying "at home" and helping to shape the future of higher education in Louisiana. Toward this end, Vosper immediately got to work. Realizing an acute need for postsecondary technical programs and comprehensive community college programs, she had the opportunity to work behind the scenes with Commissioner Savoie, staff from the Administration and other Legislative leaders, including the current Commissioner of Administration, Jay Dardenne, who, as a Senator, submitted the legislation to create a new community and technical college system; this legislation was the realization of her doctoral work.

Vosper has been at the Board of Regents in her present job since 1997, and her infectious verve for public postsecondary education in Louisiana is strong. She is a firm believer in working across divisions internally and across agencies externally. The Workforce Innovation for a Stronger Economy (WISE) initiative is an example of both. She participated with individuals from various divisions within BOR and with partners from each Higher Ed Management System, Louisiana Economic Development (LED), the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) in some of the planning that went into the implementation of the WISE program. A stronger economy stems from skilled work-

ers, and Vosper recognizes the importance of postsecondary education for such a workforce. She enthusiastically remarks, "Higher Education is in fact Hire Education!"

She also sees the divisions within the Board of Regents as members of one big family in which everyone has a role, but in the end, everyone must work together for the greater good. This can be difficult with thirty-two public degree-granting universities, all with their own needs, but Vosper does not seem daunted by the numbers in the least. She is pleased with the work that the Board of Regents has done in the last decade and a half, but has one recommendation that would help give greater voice to higher education needs, and that is for the Commissioner of Higher Education to be part of the Governor's Cabinet.

Two other elements that Vosper would like to see changed are the lack of predictability in funding from year to year for the system and more aid for students with the greatest needs; she would like to see greater predictability and support for both. With health care and higher education being the only items that may be cut per the state constitution, there is a systemic inability to predict future levels of funding, which leads to consternation. As a result, the monetary burden for funding higher education falls more and more on the shoulders of the students themselves in the form of rising tuition and fees. In a state where many incoming students qualify for financial aid, such as TOPS, shifting the burden to students whose families already have limited funds, creates a gap between students who can and cannot afford college. In addition, early exposure to higher education as a possibility, even for students with limited means, is an important part of outreach with K-12 schools.

Vosper, though, remains optimistic. She has tremendous faith in her colleagues and the amount of experience and knowledge that they contribute to such an enterprise as that undertaken by the Board of Regents. Vosper is also very excited to be working with the current Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr. Joseph C. Rallo, and the new governor, John Bel Edwards.

Vosper's job, as she sees it, is not mere expansion of higher education in Louisiana as a means to an end, but as a vehicle to improve lives, grow and strengthen the workforce, and for economic innovation and expansion. It is important work that she takes seriously, and in spite of her contagious optimism, the impending budget cuts, if they materialize, could put her work and that of all higher education in jeopardy. "The situation would be serious for all institutions," she says of the budget. "It could literally be the end of higher education in Louisiana as we currently know it." But again, she smiles and continues explaining the Board's future plan, known as "Elevate Louisiana!," which further expands the Board's positive influence on her home state. Beyond the state capitol building, the view from Dr. Vosper's office looks bright, but she would concede that more work still needs to be done.

— By Amy Catania and Nate Friedman

TIP OF THE MONTH: BLACK AND DECKER DIGITAL ADVANTAGE IRON

Down in the *Newsletter* laundry room, our experienced clothes-preparation professionals routinely review the latest tools for ensuring the smart look that befits smart university people. After considering the multitudinous irons available on a surprisingly hot pressing market, the verdict favored a mid-level entrant: the [Black and Decker Digital Advantage Iron](#). Other irons may offer more prestige—Germany's Rowenta features sole plates made of exotic heavy metals that stabilize and hold heat level while old-time international favorite Braun offers sleek design—but, dollar for dollar, the homespun Black and Decker Digital Advantage Iron offers better crease relief than any iron developed since Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle started her pressing business. For one, the digital control system on this otherwise modest iron offers precise temperature control as well as well-regulated top temperatures for linen wearable. The Black and Decker Digital Advantage Iron has also evidenced superior resistance to leaking, a virtue not found in many of the more expensive irons. True, an iron at this level (circa \$45.00) is likely to last only three to four years, but, pleat for pleat, it offers the best value among the many competitors.



NEVER-LOSING NATIONAL RIGHTS GROUPS TAKE BUCHANAN CASE

At once convinced that they are national leaders at the same time that they relish the seeming safety of sinecures in America's perpetually 50th-ranked, out-of-the-way state, the executive caste in the LSU System imagined that, once the fervor over the dismissal of tough-talking tenured professor Teresa Buchanan had faded from the headlines, their difficulties would end and their grip on the faculty would strengthen. On Thursday, January 21st, the swampy foundations of the LSU empire felt a temblor as the aforementioned ejected professor held a news conference in a swank hotel in downtown Baton Rouge, there announcing the filing of a federal lawsuit against LSU, LSU President King Alexander, Human Sciences and Education Dean Damon Andrew, and assorted "HRM" officials. In a setting worthy of a White house briefing, Buchanan stated her case and introduced a high-power team of civil rights attorneys and legal experts, including internationally renowned civil rights attorney [Bob Corn-Revere](#) and Washington attorney [Catherine Sevcenko](#). Professor Buchanan's case has been selected by the prestigious Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) for the next effort in its "Stand Up for Speech Litigation Project," a series of high-profile lawsuits in which FIRE now stands ten for ten with respect to its win-and-no-loss record. Readers who would like to review the contents of Professor Buchanan's lawsuit may visit a well-developed web page within the [FIRE web site](#), where the lawsuit itself, along with an array of evidence and documentation, is available for review. Also included in the FIRE web page is a link to the LSU A&M Faculty Senate resolution concerning the Buchanan case and another page celebrating the introduction of a resolution calling for establishment of a [free expression policy](#) on the LSU campus.



The rockets' red glare: embattled Professor Teresa Buchanan defends the Constitution against LSU elite

STUDY DEMONSTRATES GENDER BIAS IN STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF TEACHERS

In recent years, higher education experts have sounded the clarion call for the creation of "student-centered" universities in which the tastes, opinions, and preferences of students play a significant role in the formation of institutional culture and even in hiring decisions. A key ingredient in the "student-centered" recipe is a heavy admixture of student evaluations, especially of teachers. In Louisiana, more than a few institutions heavily emphasize student evaluations when it comes to promotion, tenure, and, occasionally, raise decisions. A new multi-population, cross-cultural study has now blasted student evaluations of teachers and has revealed decisive evidence of gender bias in those instruments. The co-authored paper by Philip Stark, a Professor of Statistics at the University of California Berkeley, and Anne Boring, a postdoctoral researcher in economics at the Paris Institute of political studies, discovers that the bias against female instructors transcends even the influence of grades as well as those of discipline and culture, with both high-achieving and low-achieving students from an assortment of disciplines in both America and France consistently favoring male instructors. The authors of the study predict a rash of discrimination lawsuits against institutions where student evaluations of teaching play an unsupportable role in compensation and advancement. The significant pay differentials for male and female professors in Louisiana universities may be a fertile field for further research. A summary of the [study](#) may be viewed online as may the [official abstract](#).



FACULTY GOVERNANCE SCORES VICTORY AS HOTELPLANNER FALLS

Readers of the *Newsletter* are familiar with the strange saga of HotelPlanner, the previously obscure online hotel booking service that, a year or so ago, emerged as the designated, presumably exclusive agent for accommodations used during state-funded travel. Traveling professors were surprised to learn that, suddenly, every hotel room had to be booked through a company that seemed to have emerged from the shadows. Early on anomalies in the seemingly statewide policy surfaced. LSU A&M and some of its campuses enjoyed a mysteriously obtained exemption from the HotelPlanner requirement; colleagues around the state began detecting evidence of apparent price-gouging. Under the leadership of Patrick O'Neal from Louisiana Tech; Vipin Menon from Mcneese State university; and Leslie Bary from the University of Louisiana Lafayette, Faculty governance officials around the state began a concentrated campaign against HotelPlanner, barraging state officials with both evidence-enhanced complaints. The Association of Louisiana Faculty Senates joined in the effort by issuing a resolution calling for cancellation of the HotelPlanner mandate. This siege has now succeeded. One day after taking office, Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne repealed the HotelPlanner rule, noting that, contrary to what faculty members had been told, "the contract with HotelPlanner.com specifically states that it is non-exclusive." Dardenne's letter to agency heads empowers state employees "to utilize the least expensive and most convenient option for arranging travel." Congratulations to O'Neal, Menon, and Bary for spearheading an effort that clearly demonstrates the power for faculty governance.



Plans Change for HotelPlanner

LITIGATOR OR LOSER? KING'S QUIXOTIC LEGAL QUESTS

Looking for a way to contain the costs of higher education and otherwise to promote that curious new modern educational value, affordability? Why not ask decision-makers to curb their legal costs by correcting their choice of causes? Consider the litigation record of the LSU System in the time of King Alexander. After having approved a contract comprised of largely blank pages, LSU entered into a legal battle with former LSU Supervisor John George's Biomedical Research Foundation, the result of which was a case dismissal (apparently the judge thought it difficult to breach a contract with no contents). Next, poor decisions by the LSU regime resulted in a major federal lawsuit by aggrieved former Professor Teresa Buchanan, whose case is now being championed by a national legal foundation with a perfect (10 wins, 0 losses) record. Third, the Alexander regime continues to side with the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL) in a costly legal fight against faculty seeking to stop the diversion of funds from retirement accounts; in that quest, LSU has already been dealt two negative decisions while running up a formidable legal bill, all in order to deprive faculty their due compensation. Given that roughly one-and-one-half million dollars will provide for a one percent raise for the entire LSU A&M campus, it seems that some poor choices are being made and that some faculty increments are going by the boards.





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 on sabbatical and should return for the February issue.

First Year Experience Survey!



LSU is working on a first year seminar pilot with a planned implementation of Fall 2016. As part of the seminar development, we are looking for feedback from faculty and staff regarding the instructor experience. Learn more about the first year seminar and share your feedback [here](#). The survey will be open until February 15, 2016. We appreciate your feedback! Any questions can be directed to Dr. Missy Korduner



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OUR GOALS:

- Securing regular, periodic raises for faculty
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CONTACT:

Mike Russo, 6923louis@gmail.com



LSU Workday Implementation Update

LSU is seven months away from completing its implementation of the LSU Workday Finance and Human Capital Management solution. The project is in the midst of its iterative Testing phase. LSU Workday will automate authorizations and transactions that previously required signatures and paperwork, provide access to detailed reports and Excel-ready data for custom reporting. This new system will involve changes to terminology and practices, and it features the flexibility to delegate tasks within the system as best works for your units. Training resources will be available in late spring/early summer before the implementation of the new system in July. Questions or concerns regarding the LSU Workday Implementation may be directed online to www.lsu.edu/wdfeedback. Additional information on LSU Workday may be found at www.lsu.edu/workday. LSU Workday will go live on July 1, 2016.

ANGRY ALUMNUS TRIES FACEBOOK SABOTAGE OF SUSLA CHANCELLOR SEARCH

During the two years in which reformer Sonya Hester has served as President of the Southern University Shreveport (SUSLA) Faculty Senate, not only SUSLA but the entire Southern University System has made huge strides forward, whether in the emergence of proper search procedures or in the engagement of Southern faculty representatives with statewide decision-making in the Regents' office or the establishment of committees to investigate and revise compensation policies. The latest advance of the Hester era was the introduction of an organized, regulation-driven, stakeholder-representing committee to search for the next Chancellor of the SUSLA campus—for the successor to Ray Belton, who ascended to the leadership position for the full Southern System. After a truly epic series of interviews, the search committee demonstrated the power of propriety by unveiling a top-notch slate of six candidates. Sad to say, members of the SUSLA alumni failed to appreciate the rule of law and immediately mounted a calumnious Facebook campaign attacking the committee and calling for the post hoc inclusion of an internal candidate and alumni favorite in the slate of finalists. It appears that the Southern System leadership has resisted this attack and has held to the original slate of candidates, but this story continues unfolding.



Sonya Hester holds the line for the rule of law

WEIGHTY (AND RISKY) DECISION BENEFIT FROM ECONOMY OF SCALE

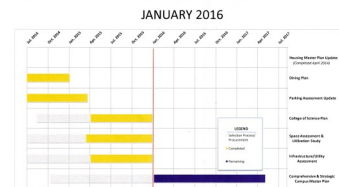
Although the LAGRAD Act may not have accomplished everything that its authors anticipated, it has conferred at least a few benefits on those institutions that have managed to make their retention and graduation targets. Granted, those metrics may be unfair; institutions that specialize in unusual students should not be held to the usual standards. However, those benefits that have come along have been welcome, and none more so than the transfer of risk management from the state to the campuses. Visionary LSU A&M leaders Dan Layzell and Brian Nichols have now created a System-wide committee on risk management. Bearing the ingenious acronymical name RISK (Risk Insurance Shared Knowledge [Committee]), the new statewide expertise syndicate will address the full range of risk management issues in an attempt to reap the benefits of large-scale cooperation and to maximize the value of knowledge that is presently dispersed across the campuses. Ovarions for Layzell and Nichols for their ingenuity and collegiality!



LSU MASTER PLANNER RELEASE UPDATED TIMELINE

The usually obscure world of Facility Services, construction supervision, and campus architecture slipped into the limelight in late January as the LSU administration somewhat tardily inked a contract with design firm [NBBJ](#) to develop a ten-year master plan for the somewhat clumsy would-be flagship campus. NBBJ took LSU by surprise by announcing an intention to begin operations immediately, an announcement that induced a whirlwind series of meetings with stakeholders from every corner of the campus as well as from the community. Although this input-gathering trip yielded no immediate output, the NBBJ ensemble did issue an updated timeline calling for completion of the master plan by May 2017. Stand by!

UPDATED TIMELINE



New timeline for the LSU master plan

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FREE EXPRESSION VIDEO NOW AVAILABLE FOR FREE

There may have been a tiny bit of irony in assessing a charge for the latest video on free expression: the new Voegelin Institute DVD featuring the November panel on freedom of expression, where Kevin Cope moderated a panel involving free speech experts Geoffrey Stone and Donald



Geoffrey Stone, Kevin Cope, and Donald Downs debate free expression on campuses

Downs and where a full audience peppered these scholar-activists with probing questions. Now Voegelin Institute Director James Stoner has arranged for the online posting of a free version of the same video production. View this enriching, stimulating production on your computer via a [convenient link](#)

FACULTY DEBUNK, DE-CERTIFY PRODUCTIVITY METRICS

One of the prerogatives of the leadership caste is the apparently harmless gathering of data. Unbeknownst to faculty members, those in the top offices routinely, as well as quietly, commission assorted services to measure institutional productivity. Among the most devious of these services is Academic Analytics, to which more than a few Louisiana institutions subscribe. Academic Analytics claims to provide “benchmarking” information that allows institutions to make certain “strategic” decisions. A visit to the [Academic Analytics web page](#) suggests what some of these decisions might be. There, a series of intensely lit and artfully staged photographs show gleeful colleagues asking such penetrating questions as “is our work being cited enough” (style is not an Academic Analytics strong suit) and “are we winning our share of federal grant dollars” (as if there were a pre-ordained entitlement). Most chilling is the question, “are we researching cutting edge topics,” a question clearly suggesting regulation of academic freedom. Fortunately, academe is offering some push-back against this superstitious deployment of dubious data for questionable purposes. The Rutgers faculty voted to approve a resolution calling for the banning of Academic Analytics after a faculty activist, upon filing public records requests, discovered errors in his own file and after faculty ascertained that the institution had dropped nearly one-half million dollars in pursuit of chimerical “[big data](#).” The next time that you chat with an administrator, ask whether your campus participates in this service—and ask how much has been spent to support the subscription.



Benchmarking services purchased by Louisiana universities hammer at academic

“IN MEMORIAM” WEB SITE BEGINS NEW AGE OF FACULTY RESPECT, APPRECIATION

Although we hear a great deal about the rich cultural heritage of the people of Louisiana, all too often we find that memory in state institutions remains shorter than a genuflecting Lilliputian. A team in the LSU Office of Academic Affairs has now taken steps to honor the memory of colleagues who have served the university and who, in many cases, have devoted substantial segments of their lives to the advancement of knowledge, culture, Louisiana, and higher education. A team headed by LSU Office of Academic Affairs communications leader Heather Herman, LSU College of Humanities and Social Sciences Associate Dean Malcolm Richardson, and Faculty Senate President Kevin L. Cope has completed the first of a two-step commemoration project by launching the LSU “[In Memoriam](#)” web site, where biographical tributes to deceased colleagues may be viewed. The second step: When the LSU Workday business enterprise system begins operations in July, a new database of (voluntarily submitted) biographical information will be created which will provide information both for press releases on those occasions when colleagues perform significant feats of scholarship and also for the aforementioned “In Memoriam” site. Congratulations to Heather Herman and the Office of Academic Affairs team for providing so apt a vehicle for the preservation of the collective LSU legacy.



LSU AND TRSL CONTINUE FIGHT FOR POOR RETIREMENT

Visit the [TRSL](#) (Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana) web site, and you will see pictures of happy former teachers and professors of every race, creed, and economic standing relishing happy retirements in premium locations; visit an LSU Board of Supervisors meeting, and you will hear endless chatter about the merits of life at LSU and about the recruitment and retention of faculty. Sadly, all of that image-making is undone by the continual assault by these public agencies on the well-known lawsuit against the retirement program: a lawsuit seeking to expose the diversion of funds due to employee retirement accounts into other areas of the state budget. The last *Newsletter* reported that a full panel of the 19th Judicial Court had determined that the aforementioned lawsuit had merit and should proceed to trial. Now, LSU and TRSL have again wasted money and shown their true attitude toward employees by producing a lengthy response to this judgment, a response that consists mostly of shrill denials. Nearly identical, the [TRSL response](#) and the [LSU response](#) depend primarily on pure assertion: on overweening claims that what the court has decided is not true. Perhaps LSU and TRSL should recognize that faculty form part of the citizenry for which they presumably work and should take a more constructive approach to solving the retirement problem.



SWIM COACH BOASTS ABOUT FIRST-CLASS CHARTER TRAVEL

Eyes were popping around Louisiana higher education when LSU Swimming and Diving Coach Chase Kreitler earned a varsity letter in poor judgment by “[tweeting](#)” about the “LSU Coaching Staff rolling First Class on the chartered plane to Lexington [@LSUSwimDive #thestandard](#)”

Apparently forgetting that faculty must travel in cramped steerage-class seats after fighting for partial reimbursement from depleted budgets, Kreitler dazzled the world with images of a lightly-filled airplane handsomely appointed with spacious, plush seats and reveling athletic trainers. On seeing this “tweet,” one distinguished but aggrieved faculty member exclaimed, “in times when the University is most likely to see its most severe cuts in history in the next year, I cannot believe that we have athletic programs flaunting the excessive expenditure of money.” Those who are looking for better travel arrangements might apply at the LSU Athletic Administration Building.

LSU Coaching Staff rolling First Class on the chartered plane to Lexington [@LSUSwimDive #thestandard](#)



Swimming coach brags about luxury travel

Lifestyle Feature

YOUR FRIEND THE EGG

If marketplace statistics are credible and if trends really do endure, it appears that, despite the abundance of cookbooks on the shelves and the profusion of upscale grocery stores, only a few decades remain before the vast majority of people in affluent nations will receive the majority of their food in ready-made form. Even those detesting junk food are purchasing increasing amounts of admittedly high-quality food in partially processed or prepared conditions. Unfortunately, the cultural leadership caste that inhabits the universities seems less than immune to the belief that cooking creates hassles and that packaging pampers. By way of countering this trend toward culinary outsourcing, and by way of inviting readers back into that homey place known as the kitchen, the guys and gals in the *Newsletter* test kitchens would like to reintroduce readers to the ease and pleasure of working with fundamental ingredients. First in this occasional series of features will be this offering on the humble egg, which, being the beginning point of life for our friends in the chicken coop, also represents a beginning point for novice chefs. For this feature, our chefs have cited six easy applications of an almost universally available ingredient that will help to dress up any meal, enhance any table, and acquaint even raw beginners with the foundations of cookery.

Surely the most obvious of eggy attributes is stickiness. Few natural, liquid, or gelatinous substances hold to surfaces more readily or securely than to raw eggs. Its easygoing adhesiveness nominates the egg for aesthetically pleasing duty as a glaze. Should you happen to pop some breadstuffs—even the read-made, take-and-bake variety—into the oven, think about whisking an egg together with a bit of water or milk and then brushing it atop whatever is entering your oven. If adventurous, take advantage of all the mucilage to sprinkle on a few poppy or sesame seeds for both artistic and textural effect. When your food comes out of the oven, it will be wearing a shiny new coats, maybe with all sorts of lively polka dots on it!

The second application of the adorable egg derives from the first, from its adhesiveness. Most anyone can toss a bit of chicken, pork, or fish cutlet into the pan, but seared proteins ascend to the proverbial “next level” when breaded and appropriately seasoned. In this breading and seasoning process, the egg provides the mortar that holds together all those layers that make for a good *schnitzel*. Begin by dusting your piece or pieces of protein in ordinary flour mixed with salt and pepper; next, whirl an egg together with milk and dip your meat bits into the resulting thick liquid; then, finally, drag the damp delight through a mix of bread crumbs or panko. Toss this multiplexed little wonder in an oil or buttered pan and prepare for a taste delight!

Application number three for the ever-available egg also takes advantage of what might be called its extended adhesive properties. More than a few non-initiates have wondered whether those lively meatballs that spill from Italian kitchens require hours of preparation. In truth, various orbicular renderings of chopped meat, whether meatballs, hamburgers, or frikadeller, are among the quickest and easiest main-course components to confect, with the egg being the accelerator in the race to a fine quick meal. Take about half a pound of your favorite minced meat or mixture (try beef and pork together), add in about half a cup of bread crumbs, fling in some herbs, endow the mix with a few ounces of grated

cheese, season with salt and pepper, and then, without hesitation, crack in a handy egg. Knead it together, form small balls or patties, and bake for twenty-five minutes or fry in a heavy skillet. It’s wonderful and it’s marvelous and it’s all thanks to that egg holding things together!

Our fourth experiment with the oval assistant from the hen’s undercarriage is that ever-handy condiment, mayonnaise (and its sibling, aioli). No foodstuff has suffered from more myth-making than has poor old mayonnaise, which kitchen duffers believe to require advanced skills and which paranoids think is always on the edge of spoliation. Few foods are simpler, thanks to that good old egg, which can hold together almost any emulsion with its loads of lecithin! To make mayonnaise the easy and reliable way, pull out your good old blender (in the *Newsletter* test kitchen, we use a Vitamix, but the good old Osterizer or Hamilton-Beach will do). Drop in one egg plus one egg yolk, a couple of shots of cayenne pepper, a heaping teaspoon of Dijon mustard, and a few dashes of salt. Turn that hard-working blender on at a slow speed and then slowly pour in, in alternate spurts, circa one cup of fine oil (perhaps a mix of olive oil and safflower oil) and circa one-quarter cup of mixed lemon and red wine vinegar. Keep the blender spinning, slowly accelerating it until it runs just ahead of medium speed. In a flash, you will have the most delicious,

unctuous mayonnaise you can imagine! Better, you can combine your new mayonnaise with whatever herbs or seasoning you like to create spectacular dressings, dips, or aiolis (think about dripping your crusty bread in it). Mighty egg, we owe you so much for delivering such delights!

Rendition number five in this set of easy egg instructions takes us into the world of fire and ice—of heating and refrigeration. Probably no food seems less accessible or more mysterious than ice cream, yet it is our friend the egg that does all the work. Ice cream is nothing but a frozen custard; custard is among the easiest dishes to compose. Grab your under-used double boiler and crack in four to six egg yolks. Add about two cups of heavy cream, one and one-half cups of whole milk, and circa

three-quarters cup of sugar. Whisk this base mix thoroughly and also toss in a pinch of salt if you like. Introduce your flavoring agents—perhaps the scrapings from a vanilla bean?—and then cook the custard, whisking continuously, until the mixture reaches nearly 185 degree Fahrenheit. Whisk nonstop so that the eggs never curdle or cook independently of the custard liquid! If you are using an ice cream machine without a compressor, allow the custard to chill in the refrigerator and then pour it into your machine; if you belong to the lucky group that has a genuine compressor-endowed ice cream machine, dump in the mixture. Churn and freeze the ice cream according to the machine directions and you’re done!

The sixth easy egg item also involves heat. Few dishes provide so much nutrition and so much variety for so little effort as does the egg-enobling quiche. Simply mix together four eggs and two egg yolks, a quarter cup of cream, a few dashes of salt, a couple of shots of Tabasco sauce, and whatever you would like to add as a filler, whether cheese, blanched broccoli, onions, ham, or tomatoes (you name it!). Pour this uncooked custard into a savory pie crust (a future lifestyle feature will offer instructions in the easy preparation of crusts), and toss the whole into a 350-degree oven for thirty-five minutes. When that quiche emerges from the oven, you will have earned your *cordon bleu* and will qualify as a French chef!

Of all the blessings of nature, the egg is surely very near the top of the hierarchy. It makes cooking easy and effects its magical transformations with almost no help from the nervous chef. Cook and enjoy!



TOP TEN POSITION FOR A LAST-PLACE REASON

Louisiana has at last made it into a top-ten position, albeit for reasons from the bottom of the barrel. The wags at [The Wall Street Journal](#) have used standard business evaluation methods to ascertain the market worth of major collegiate football programs. Not unexpectedly, LSU grabbed a top-ten spot, coming in at number nine, with a valuation of \$612,300,000.00. When we consider that LSU football began as did most other college programs, with a pile of rag-tag equipment composed mostly of leather caps and dusty old shoes, we see that the current valuation results from many years of disproportionate investment, often shielded behind quasi-private entities such as the Tiger Athletic Foundation. Given that this history of excessive investment has already occurred, the best course might be the sale of the football program to a private entity, an entity, which could among other services, provide fair payments for players. Would that not be a fine example of the privatization that Louisiana management boards have so vigorously endorsed?



SNUG AS BUGS IN A RUG: THE GEOGRAPHY OF CEO RESIDENCES

An age-old axiom of political geography, cultural studies, and even marketing holds that geographical proximity says something about similarity of temperament and comparability of values. Consultants for mail order and e-marketing firms, for example, often use both zip codes and street addresses to profile populations and determine where to send their catalogues. A revelation within the aforementioned disciplines occurred when the [Baton Rouge newspaper reported](#) that outgoing governor Bobby Jindal had purchased a home only steps away from the residence of LSU President King Alexander—a home aptly positioned in that monument to *nouveau riche* and *arriviste* bombast, the “University Club” (an apt name given that Louisiana government and Louisiana higher education management have converted the open ideology of public education into the exclusionary *club* of the administrative oligarchy). For years, we have seen the top level of LSU officialdom shaking its head in disbelief at the conduct of Louisiana politicians and otherwise trying to distance itself from the Jindal regime. What, then, are we to make of this synonymy of tastes between two old-guard CEOs? (Amusingly, the *Advocate* report shows the somewhat paranoid sign at the entrance to this lowland club, which sign reads “24 hour video surveillance”—so do form your opinions from afar and do remember that big brother is watching).



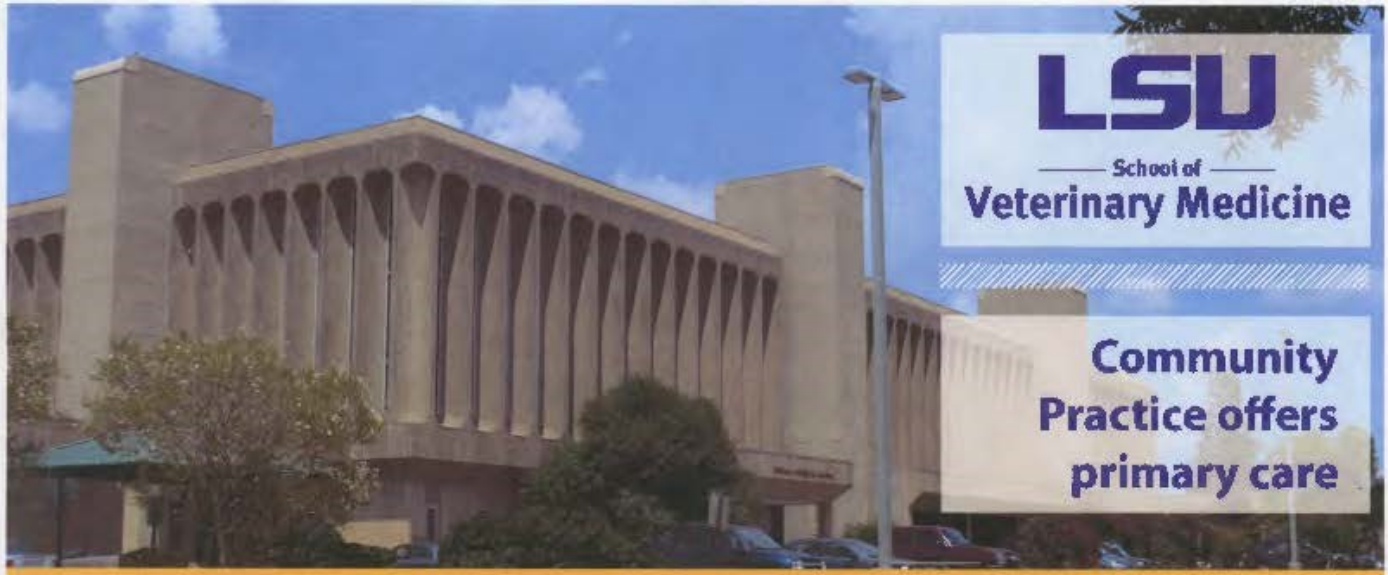
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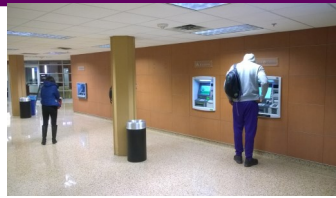
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CAPITAL ONE WITHDRAWS ATM

Could it be the end of the cash economy or could it be the lack of stimulating options and vendors in student common spaces? As the accompanying photograph illustrates, the population of ATM machines on the “wall of cash” at the LSU Student Union seems to be diminishing, with the latest migration being the departure of the Capitol One Bank automat. For a short time, an abysmal dark gash remained in the wall, but, at LSU, gone is indeed forgotten, and the gash has quickly healed, presumably with the aid of carpenters. The slippage in the physical cash flow in the LSU Student Union symptomatizes the decline in the novelty value of Student Unions. If all that one finds in such a building is a collection of franchises, why bother to visit and why not spend money elsewhere? Student center directors statewide, please come up with some signature attractions!

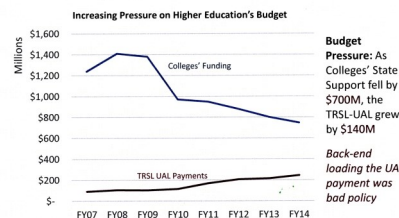


Capital One Withdraws ATM

DE-CLASSIFIED GRAPH SHOWS BUDGET IMPACT OF RETIREMENT PLAN DEBACLE

In a warm climate such as Louisiana, spies coming in from the cold happens primarily in the winter. So it is that, in the midst of the Christmas break, the *Newsletter* obtained, from a deeply-placed source in a high university office, a new chart showing how the increasing diversion of higher education funds into the “unfunded accrued liability” or “UAL” (the excess costs to the retirement system arising from the under-funding of K-12 teacher pensions) is amplifying the effects of statewide budget reductions. In dazzling graphic form, the chart reveals a roughly 100% increase in UAL contributions coupled with dramatic decreases in state funding for higher education. What would have been an already drastic \$700,000,000.00 reduction thus rose to a whopping \$840,000,000.00 diminution in available funds. Viewed another way, that \$140,000,000.00 per year amounts to an annual salary increment of about \$17,500.00, a sum that, for some colleagues at the lower end of the pay scale, would amount to a thirty percent or greater salary increase.

Pension Costs and Competitive Disadvantage



Retirement debacle amplifies effects of budget cuts

MANN COLUMN CONTRASTS LIBRARY TO ATHLETIC FACILITIES

Devastatingly witty and daringly constructive columnist Bob Mann is at it again, this time earning the *Newsletter* award of high merit for the best informative embarrassment of the year. Clever Mann recently published a [column](#) in which he systematically compares an assortment of facilities related to athletes and the athletic program at LSU to the main library at LSU, the Middleton. Mann included in his incisive column a series of photographs that, with a sort of tearful comedy, illustrate the stark contrast between the rubble that is Louisiana’s leading library and the palatial spaces in which athletes study and receive tutoring and other favors. A link to Mann’s blog leads the astounded viewer to even more remarkable photos such as the image of three



volumes from the Congressional Record that have been soaked, twisted, and distorted by mysterious odious fluids oozing from the library walls. Congratulations to columnist Mann for revealing the true state of the temple of knowledge that is the University library and for exposing the claim that all students are treated equally.



THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY DIVERSIFIES NEWSLETTER SELECTION

Since the *Faculty Senate Newsletter* began publication (in the face of some skepticism and more than a bit of gentle ribbing) in early 2010, the linkage between imitation and flattery has been repeatedly confirmed by a proliferation of newsletters on every campus and in dozens of departments and “units.” Apparently the *Newsletter* sent a clear and simple message, to wit, that folks have much that they would like to communicate. The latest entrant in the specialized newsletter derby comes from LSU A&M Office of Diversity. Curiously, the new *Office of Diversity eNewsletter* seems not to exist in an online format, but perhaps that will come along in due course. Congratulations to Dereck Rovaris on the enhancement of campus communication.



New e-newsletter from the LSU Office of Diversity

THE LATEST SPECIAL OFFER FROM SHORTS TRAVEL: HIGHER FARES!

Traveling faculty members know well the shortcomings of Shorts Travel, the state-



mandated travel agency. Elsewhere in this issue, the *Newsletter* reports the repeal of the mandate to use HotelPlanner.com for hotel reservations, but the requirement to book travel itself on Shorts remains. A few years ago, under extreme pressure from faculty groups, Shorts deployed a new utility called “FindIt” that would automatically locate presumably equal or better fares to those discovered on an assortment of open-market booking sites. For example, a traveler who found a fare on the American Airlines web site would automatically receive an invitation to activate FindIt, which would then send an equivalent of better fare from the Shorts database. The latest twist on a utility which was not such a bad idea at the outset is the offering of *higher* fares. Recently, a *Newsletter* secret shopped sought price quotes for an assortment of travel itineraries. The result: an abundance of offers for fares at *higher* prices!

MONTHLY MOVIE REVIEW

A BORROWED IDENTITY (Eran Riklis and Sayed Kashua, 2014)

Reviewed by Carl Freedman

Cinema (like everything else) in Israel is indelibly marked by the separation between Jew and Arab. Most international coverage of Arab/Jewish conflict focuses on the plight of the (effectively stateless) Arab Palestinians who reside in the Occupied Territories; but it is often forgotten that about twenty percent of the people in Israel proper are Arabs too. These Arab Israelis are citizens of the Israeli state and hence considerably privileged in comparison to their ethnic compatriots in Gaza and the West Bank. But Israel formally designates itself a Jewish state, and Arab Israelis do not enjoy equal status with Jewish Israelis even in a technical, legal sense (notably insofar as land and immigration policy are concerned); and they are even further from enjoying substantive social equality. Many Arab Israelis live their lives almost entirely among their own people, in relatively menial, low-paying jobs. Still, they do enjoy much greater freedom of movement than any other Arabs under Israeli rule, and it is not impossible for Arab Israelis to attain some degree of prestige and affluence—as a newscaster, say, or a sports star, or a popular actor—in the larger, predominantly Jewish society. Successful Arabs in Israel tend to speak fluent Hebrew (a language closely related to Arabic, after all), sometimes so well that they are visibly and audibly indistinguishable from Jews.

That Israel, in its society and culture, is both Jewish *and* Arab is a point that *A Borrowed Identity* makes even before the film has introduced any characters or dramatic situations. The major opening credits are trilingual, being given in Arabic, Hebrew, and English—the last of which is not only an obvious convenience for the international audience but probably the closest thing to a “neutral” mode of communication between Israeli Arabs and Jews. There is a trilingual epigraph from the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, rendered into English as “Identity is our legacy and not our inheritance, our invention and not our memory.” We are also informed by a trilingual slide that the twenty percent of Israel’s population who are Arab amount to more than 1.6 million people. Most important of all, we learn the identities of the screenwriter and the director. The former is Sayed Kashua, a prominent Israeli Arab author known for his fiction, journalism, and television scripts; the screenplay of this film is based on Kashua’s own heavily autobiographical novel. The director, Eran Riklis, is a well-known Israeli Jewish filmmaker; among his most internationally celebrated movies are *The Syrian Bride* (2004), a seriocomic story of an arranged marriage and the bureaucratic obstructions to it, and *Lemon Tree* (2008), about an Arab widow who must defend her precious lemon grove against her new next-door neighbor, who happens to be the Israeli Defense Minister. It is difficult to imagine more intimate artistic collaboration between Arab and Jew than is on offer in this film. At the same time, it is worth noting that the hierarchy that exists within filmmaking—where, generally, the screenwriter, however important and well rewarded, is in the end a hired hand who must take orders from the director—here reproduces the power relations between Arab and Jew in Israeli society as a whole.

A Borrowed Identity tells the story of a young Israeli Arab named Eyad (Razi Gabareen as a little boy, Tawfeek Barhom as a teenager). A generation before the time present of the film, Eyad’s beloved father Salah (Ali Suliman) was a talented university student who seemed poised to achieve considerable upward mobility. But his involvement in the politics of Palestinian nationalism led to his being imprisoned by the Israeli authorities (even though he was never charged with any actual crime); and, by the time he was released, any chance of a successful

career was shattered. He has spent his life as a fruit-picker. Though Salah’s political views have not fundamentally changed, his expectations have grown more modest. He no longer dreams of the defeat of the Israeli state but simply wishes it would allow its Arab citizens to live in dignity and decency. Above all, he hopes that his son, who has inherited his own intellectual brilliance, will be able to gain some of the advantages denied to him.

So Salah is delighted when Eyad receives the opportunity to enroll at the most prestigious high school in the country: the Jerusalem Arts and Sciences Academy, a diploma from which will open many doors in Israeli society. The student body is of course overwhelmingly Jewish, and, in fact, we never actually see or hear of a single Arab student other than Eyad himself. Eyad predictably encounters a certain amount of Jewish bigotry and bullying, though more, it seems, in the neighborhood around the school than within its walls; and, in general, things go better for him than one might have expected. His academic excellence and good looks give him a certain prestige, and Eyad becomes increasingly self-confident (and increasingly fluent in Hebrew). Once, in a literature class, he delivers a passionate, detailed account of what an assigned text looks like from his Arab point of view. It is clearly not what was expected by the teacher—who had insisted that Eyad share his views, refusing his request to be allowed to remain silent on the assigned reading—but his Jewish classmates, while surprised, seem generally to respect his lucidity and courage.

Best of all, Eyad acquires a beautiful Jewish girlfriend named Naomi (Danielle Kitsis)—like him one of the smartest kids in the school—and they both enjoy the Romeo-and-Juliet way that intense teenage sexual love can almost always trump (for a while) the differences that adults consider important. Still, Eyad is never really allowed to forget the disadvantages that come with being Arab in a Jewish world. Though Naomi herself seems genuinely free from prejudice, she reports that her mother has told her that, though she (the mother) could tolerate learning that her daughter was a lesbian, or had become a drug dealer, or had contracted cancer, the one thing she would find absolutely unacceptable was learning that Naomi was going with an Arab boyfriend. At one point Eyad takes a job in a restaurant, where he notices that all the kitchen staff are Arab, while all the (much better paid) waiters are Jewish. The standing bitter joke in the kitchen is that there is only one way for an Arab to become a waiter: to die as a martyr and then to ask Allah to send you back to earth as a Jew.

Indeed, as time passes the weight of anti-Arab discrimination becomes more and more evident, and Eyad’s success in the classroom can do less and less to mitigate it. Even his relationship with Naomi comes to an end. Though her personal feelings do not seem to alter, it gradually becomes clear to her that being a Jewish woman attached to an Arab man will, in adult Israeli society, exact a higher price than she is willing to pay. Specifically, as the time for Naomi’s compulsory military service approaches, she hopes to gain admittance to one of the elite intelligence units of the Israel Defense Forces—an ambition made feasible by her considerable intellectual abilities. But such service would surely be excluded by having an Arab lover or husband (especially, one presumes, given the political background of Eyad’s father).

—Continued on p. 13



GRAMBLING PROFESSOR UNCOVERS DATA ON FLAGSHIP DIVERSITY

From an anonymous but admittedly well-known colleague at Grambling comes word of a new survey that once again calls into question the real diversity of the theoretically ultra-diverse Louisiana. A new report in the *Huffington Post* looks at the success of state flagship universities in the recruitment of black students. Warning that “black students are being shut out of top public colleges,” the investigators measured the gap between the percentage of black high school graduates in a state and the percentage of black students enrolled in the state flagship institution. LSU A&M came in second with regard to the capaciousness of the gap (i.e., second worst owing to the biggest disparity between available high school graduates and students enrolled), second only to perennial loser Mississippi. Given that the average black enrollment at Flagship institutions ran around five percent, LSU may win on raw numbers, with its ten-plus percent black enrollment, yet the gap between practice and possibility remains formidable.



RALLO JAZZES UP CHRISTMAS, EARNS “GALA OF THE YEAR” AWARD

The *Newsletter* never ceases to be surprised at the inventiveness of Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Rallo. This year, again going where no Commissioner has dared to wander before, Rallo jazzed up Christmas by treating an assortment of higher education leaders to a splendidly intercultural evening event that featured the best catering in Louisiana academe and that fronted no less than a genuine jazz combo. Unafraid to take Santa down Bourbon Street, the innovative Rallo partnered with Southern University leadership to create a veritable manger-scene of an event in a brilliantly lit, snowy-looking pavilion that combined the tropical with the wintery in a wonderland of entertainment and conversation. Rallo, a former Colonel who understands the officers’ club as well as he understands team development, performed a great service by bringing Southern University back into the social orbit of higher education leadership and, better, doing that service in an entertaining fashion. Bravo to Commissioner Rallo for letting the Grinch of budget crisis know that the beat (perhaps of Rudolph’s hooves) goes on!



The Commissioner Combo enlivens Christmas at Southern

KIRYLO SHOWS LINK BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND K-12 PRIVATIZATION

Well-known faculty activist and Southeastern Louisiana University Professor James Kirylo has launched another column that is drawing rave reviews far and wide. In his latest contribution to the *Vamboozled* [blog](#)—a renowned vehicle for the critique of education policy—Kirylo dissects a range of programs and concepts, all of which turn on a common axis, that of privatization of public education. With a genial combination of erudition, outrage, and charmingly exasperated wit, Kirylo deconstructs such terms and concepts as the distinction between master, mentor, and career teachers; “VAM” or value-added models; and performance-based rewarding of pedagogues. Read long, read carefully, and read intently, for Kirylo has something, nay, a whole lot, to say!



A blog about teacher evaluation, accountability, and value-added models (VAMs).

Never bamboozled, Kirylo stars in new Vamboozled commentary

SALVATORE MOVES NOT MOUNTAINS, BUT, AS IT WERE, PORTABLE VOLCANOS

Those who have been wringing their hands lamenting that faculty cannot accomplish anything in highly politicized Louisiana have looked on with confused wonder at the achievements of Brian Salvatore, a leader of the north Louisiana movement to regulate the incineration of obsolete explosive at Camp Minden. Salvatore and his colleagues have, against all the odds, kept the mighty American military at bay and have succeeded in reducing what would have been an open pyre of hazardous chemical waste into a controlled and environmentally sound disposal process. It may not be quite true that Salvatore and his band have moved mountains, but they have moved a kind of portable volcano in the form of the world’s largest contained burn tank. Catch the video of the moving sort-of-mountain [online](#) and be sure to catch Salvatore’s explanatory posting on [Facebook](#).



LEADERSHIP TURMOIL RIPS LSUHSC-S CAMPUS

Obsessive behavior is nothing new to Louisiana higher education leadership. More than once, for example, management boards have proceeded in the single-minded pursuit of a favorite candidate despite overwhelming criticism from the press, the people, and ethical principle. The latest obsession centers on the medical campus in Shreveport, LSUHSC-S. After the departure of Chancellor Barish for the University of Chicago hospital system, LSU leadership ignored a series of recommendations from the LSUHSC-S faculty with regard to the choice of an interim Chancellor. Faculty letters containing suggestions went unanswered; surveys never occurred; such town halls as occurred were declarative in nature (“I’m here to inform you that this is what is going to happen”) or chastising in tone (“you’re burning through three million per month and that can’t continue”). The latest turn in this crucible of contemptuous, command-style leadership by the LSU top brass is a preoccupation with a candidate whose connection to the LSU oligarchy remains obscure, but whose hypnotic influence over the LSU leadership suggests that the relationship is more than that typical of an over-the-transom application. Chief among the qualifications of this candidate, who lacks a doctoral degree but offers instead what he calls an “executive profile,” is service as a strategic planner for “population health development” under “the Ministry of the Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” a nation that, in keeping with the LSU System’s astounding sense of timing, only a few weeks ago demonstrated its commitment to academic freedom by publicly executing forty-seven dissident intellectuals. Further review of the candidate’s CV shows his deployment, in a New York jurisdiction, of “a new legal entity” that could “hire community physicians as non-state employees.” Translation: experience as a union-buster and as an instrument in the depression of professional wages. As we read on, we discover that the candidate is also a privatization enthusiast. Wasn’t it privatization that led LSU into a gigantic, failed lawsuit against Shreveport health care syndicates?



It appears that this self-styled “change agent” and “teambuilding” specialist may be somewhat less than a friend of faculty. Considering that one wag at Shreveport declared that it would be odd to hire a Chancellor who lacked the qualifications even to apply for a post as an assistant professor, one can only assume that the principal qualification is the suggestion of willingness to obey and to follow orders.

—Continued from page 11

In the meantime, however, Eyad has made another close Jewish friend, one nearly as important to him as Naomi: the schoolboy Yonatan (Michael Moshonov). The two boys share an interest in music, and Yonatan’s dream is to become a rock guitarist. But this dream is foreclosed by the terrible degenerative disease—muscular dystrophy—from which Yonatan suffers. As Yonatan’s health declines further and further, Eyad becomes closer and closer to him: and also to Yonatan’s widowed mother Edna (Yael Abecassis), who comes to see Eyad as a kind of second son and who eventually invites the Arab boy to move in with her and Yonatan.

When Yonatan dies, Eyad makes a fateful decision. He has already “borrowed” Yonatan’s name in a few small ways—in order to secure a job as a waiter, and in order to open a bank account where he can cash his paychecks—but now, with the full support and active cooperation of Edna, he determines to adopt Yonatan’s identity full-time and permanently. Yonatan’s body is given an Islamic burial under Eyad’s name: a crucial tactical move in Eyad’s scheme but also, of course, the symbolic burial of his own history and identity as an Arab Palestinian. From now on, he will be the Jew Yonatan: and, with all the relevant papers in order and with Yonatan’s own mother agreeing, who is likely to cast doubt on his new identity? Besides, in addition to Eyad’s perfect fluency in Hebrew and his inside knowledge of Jewish society, he happens, by a fortunate co-incidence, to bear some physical resemblance to his dead friend.

So *A Borrowed Identity* is ultimately a film about passing: or rather, about the decision to pass, since we see nothing of Eyad’s future life as a full-time Jew. Passing is a familiar phenomenon here in America, where there is a long history of light-skinned blacks passing as white and of Jews without stereotypically Semitic features passing as Gentile (see Philip Roth’s fine novel *The Human Stain* [2000] and Robert Benton’s 2003 filming of it for recent literary and cinematic treatments of the theme in the US). Passing has always been intensely controversial, and it is not entirely easy to say what the attitude of this Jewish/Arab film is to its narrative of an Arab passing as Jewish. Overtly, Riklis and Kashua seem to set themselves against the knee-jerk essentialism which holds that one’s true or “authentic” identity is determined by accident of birth, and that there is something false or even shameful in at-

tempting to alter it. Pragmatically, after all, Eyad’s decision makes excellent sense: Yonatan had a perfectly good Jewish identity in a society where Jewish identity brings great privilege, and since, once in the grave, he can use it no further, why should his best friend not make use of it himself? Then too, the film, with exquisite irony, seems to invoke the authority of the pre-eminent national poet of Arab Palestine in support of its hero’s decision to abandon his identity as an Arab Palestinian: If, as Darwish insists, identity cannot be inherited but must be invented, then why should Eyad not invent, or re-invent, himself as a Jew? But certain formal elements of the film perhaps qualify, or even undermine, this eminently reasonable position. For it is in the earlier parts of *A Borrowed Identity*, when we see Eyad in the context of his extended Arab family, and also when, a bit later, we see him forming intense personal relationships with Naomi and Yonatan across the lines of ethnicity and culture, that the film feels most vibrant and robust: The visuals are crisp and interesting, the character development complex and convincing. Towards the end, as Eyad becomes—or should that be “becomes”?—a Jew, there is a waning of cinematic energy and even a (perhaps semi-schizophrenic) waning of affect; the film becomes less interesting, less gripping, on nearly every level. It is almost as though *A Borrowed Identity* does not, at heart, truly believe its own evident anti-essentialist and commonsense pragmatism.

In any case, the fact that Eyad must assume Yonatan’s identity in order to lead the life he wants implies nothing but deep pessimism about the prospects for Israeli Arabs, for the vast majority of whom passing is not an option. True, this pessimism might appear to be contradicted by the fact of the Arab/Jewish collaboration that produced the film as well as by Sayed Kashua’s whole career as a highly successful Israeli Arab writer who attended a boarding school much like the one portrayed in the film, who continued his studies (in philosophy and sociology) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and who lived with his wife and children in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood of Jerusalem. Alas, things are not so simple, or hopeful. For in 2014 Kashua moved to the United States, announced he would not return to Jerusalem, and flatly declared in a newspaper column, “Jewish-Arab co-existence has failed.” In some ways, he is perhaps closer to his autobiographical character Eyad now than he was when he wrote the script for this intriguing film.