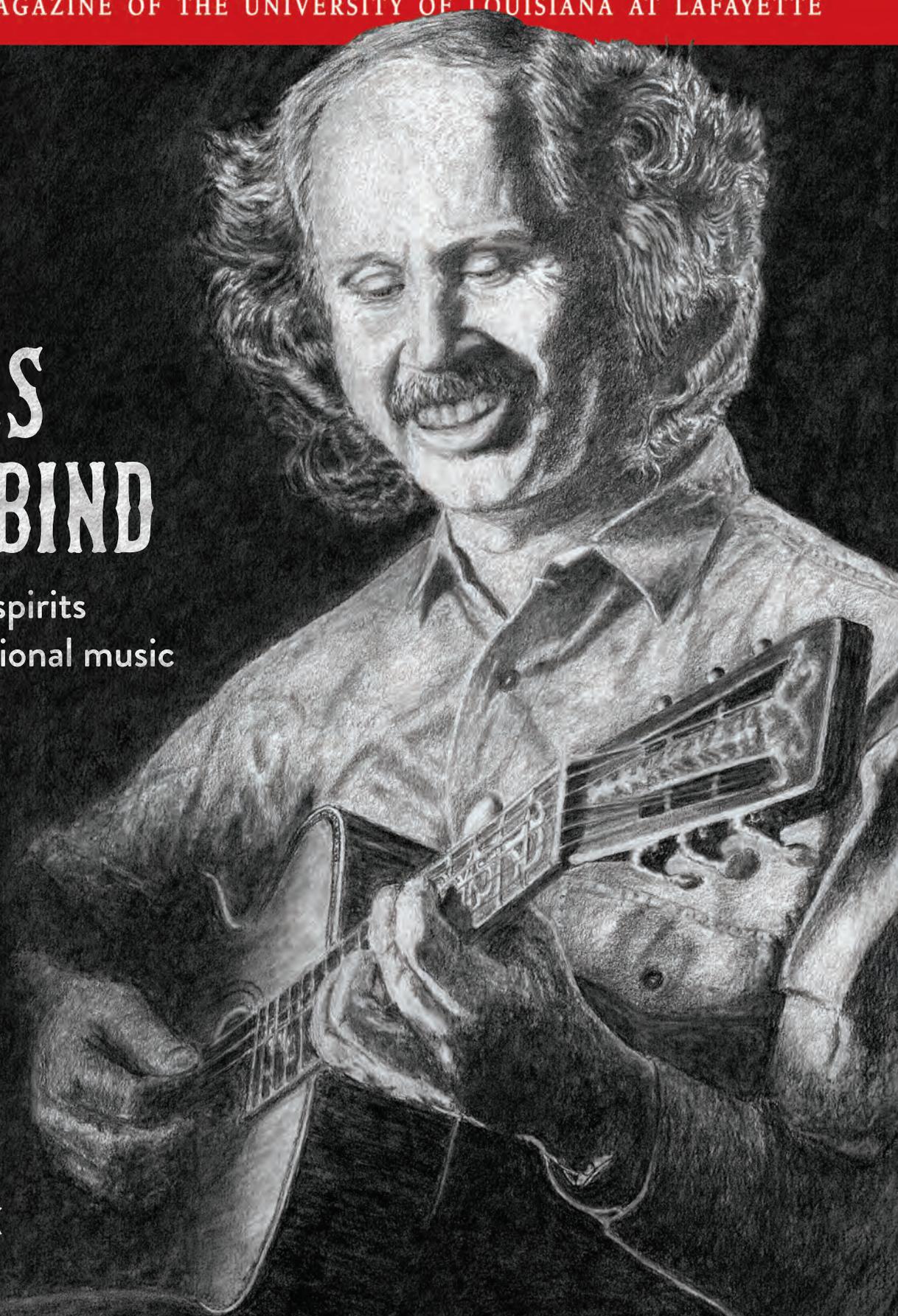


## TIES THAT BIND

Kindred spirits  
preserve traditional music



DR. TOMMY COMEAUX  
1952-1997



One of the toughest challenges is to convey the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's essence.

*La Louisiane* strives to do that, pulling aside the curtain in each issue to give its readers a peek at what's happening on campus. Taken collectively, the articles we publish provide insight.

But how do we describe how the University fits into the community? How do we show how it *reflects* a community?

The cover story of this issue, *Ties That Bind*, comes about as close as I've ever seen. It's written by James Savage, a former *La Louisiane* student editor who has returned to the University as a full-time writer.

*Ties That Bind* is about the University's impressive Traditional Music program, but it goes much deeper to show connections between people and connections with the University.

It's a story about the impact that one person can make. It's about the importance of each generation passing down something valuable to those who will follow. And, at the risk of sounding hokey, at its core, *Ties That Bind* is a love story.

A lot of other content in this issue also shows that the University is a remarkable place.

Researchers are working on brain sensors that can be used to move prosthetic limbs and sense pending seizures, for example. The Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns softball team has the best batter in the *nation*. A scientist is sending an experiment to the International Space Station that might determine whether radishes can someday grow on Mars.

And, Doug Dugas' stunning photography presents the University in a way that words simply can't.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *La Louisiane*.

– Kathleen Thames



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ON THE COVER: Tommy Comeaux, 1952-1997. Portrait, in charcoal and pencil, by Courtney Jeffries, based on a photo taken by Robin May

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## Mind Control

University researchers develop brain chips to move artificial limbs, detect seizures

The 1970s TV series “The Six Million Dollar Man” featured an astronaut so badly injured in an accident that surgeons could save his life only by “rebuilding” him. The character was repaired with machine-like components during an expensive experimental surgery that left him with superhuman powers.

Sound like science fiction? Maybe 40 years ago.

“There has always been a drive to come up with a computer that will emulate the smartest entity in the universe. What’s the smartest entity in the universe? The brain. We are at a point where that is possible,” said Dr. Magdy Bayoumi, head of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

Bayoumi is leading a group of researchers at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette who are developing a brain chip in the University’s Intelligent Cyberphysical Lab. It would enable a person to move an artificial limb via thought. A small chip in the brain – about one inch square – would let someone with a prosthetic limb move it as if it were flesh and bone.

How? Through brain-computer interface, or BCI, technology. As the name implies, brain-computer interface establishes a link between a brain “wired” with a computer chip, for instance, and a device that enables brain signals to direct external activity, such as moving an artificial limb.

“It’s basically integrating a brain with a system, to be able to read the brain or read what’s *inside* the brain,” Bayoumi explained.

Sensors inside the microchip, which would be surgically implanted in the brain, would detect biological processes that convert thought into action. Brain signals would be transmitted to a second chip in a prosthetic arm by way of a radio frequency signal. The virtual channel would enable brain impulses to prompt physical movement.

“It sounds like fantasy, but so did the smartphone. Not very many people envisioned a wireless device that would let you talk to anyone, anywhere in the world,” Bayoumi said.

University scientists are developing a second microchip



From left: Zag ElSayed, an adjunct professor; Nelly ElSayed, a doctoral student; and Dr. Magdy Bayoumi, head of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

that would give people suffering from epilepsy a warning that a seizure is imminent.

The chip would be placed inside a smartphone or wristwatch-like device and synchronized with sensors embedded in headgear similar to a swimmer’s cap. The chip would wirelessly predict epileptic seizures by monitoring brain signals with EEG, which stands for electroencephalography. An alert would be delivered in advance of a seizure.

Technology that can be used to predict epileptic seizures already exists. It only provides warning about eight seconds beforehand, though. Bayoumi said University researchers are hoping to produce a chip that would give a person ample notice before a seizure strikes.

“Specially-trained dogs can predict a seizure about 14 minutes before it happens, and that is our goal. We want to produce a chip that can compete with a dog, which would be a much more practical way to deliver a warning,” he explained.

A person suffering from epilepsy would have time to call for medical help or to stop his vehicle to reduce chances of a seizure-induced accident, said Nelly ElSayed, a graduate student working on the project. Alert devices could also be worn by a



DOUG DUGAS

University researchers are developing sensors for the brain, similar to the one shown.

relative, friend or caretaker who could assist a person suffering from epilepsy, call for help or remotely disable a vehicle.

ElSayed, who is pursuing a doctoral degree in computer engineering, said the technology would be advantageous for people who are unable to communicate in the event of a seizure, such as “infants or people in a coma who can’t explain what’s happening.

“The system could be programmed to call a hospital, and have GPS so an ambulance could come to the location of a person in danger. It could save lives.”

Bayoumi describes its significance this way: “There will be transformational impact – not an incremental one – on improving quality of life.”

Both projects are supported with grants awarded by the National Science Foundation and U.S. Department of Energy.

The idea of “reading minds” and thought-controlled movement has been fantasized about for decades. The origins of what today is called brain-computer interface began in the 1920s, when German psychiatrist Hans Berger measured and recorded human brain activity using EEG.

An EEG test can assist in the diagnosis of a range of conditions related to the brain, including epileptic seizures, concussions, and tumors. The test, however, involves placement of electrodes on the scalp, with results transferred by way of a conductor to costly and complex equipment. Such EEG tests can only be conducted in hospitals or labs by medical professionals.

In the case of thought-controlled movement, a big leap forward occurred in the 1970s when researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles were able to control a computer cursor by using EEG signals from the brain.

More recently, scientists and neurosurgeons have demonstrated that prosthetic limbs can be manipulated in a lab setting. Nerves in a torso, for example, are surgically reprogrammed to direct neural

commands to a prosthetic limb.

Many challenges remain. Much of today’s existing technology – including technology that has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration – is either dangerous or inconvenient for use by the average person. Cost is another drawback. A prosthetic limb capable of spurring limited thought-controlled movements, such as one developed in lab tests at Johns Hopkins University, would cost about \$500,000.

Brain surgery to implant chips and electrodes is risky. Research on wireless BCI systems is embryonic, and subject to hurdles such as noise interference and accuracy, and data speed and storage limitations.

“In the case of a chip to detect epilepsy, we have one that works, but we are constantly improving it. Right now, we are trying to improve accuracy. Our system is good, but sometimes it predicts a seizure will happen, and doesn’t. It has to be 100 percent for people to use it,” ElSayed said.

UL Lafayette researchers have been working to complete prototypes and fabricate models of each of the two chips. Once that happens, Bayoumi said the plan is to partner with a medical school or a private entity to conduct trials and explore the potential for commercialization.

As the technology continues to evolve, the possibilities for medical breakthroughs are far-reaching. Chips could be used to help people paralyzed by spinal cord injuries regain movement, or to monitor brain activity to aid diagnosis and treatment of dementia and mental illness.

“Diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems are very lagging compared with other areas of medicine. There are really no conclusive tests. For the body, you can do a blood test, or an MRI. So, to be able pick up a signal from the brain and analyze it for depression, for example, would present a fantastic breakthrough,” Bayoumi said.

# Could radishes thrive on the Red Planet?

A UL Lafayette biologist is intrigued by the potential to grow radishes on Mars. So is NASA.

The space agency recently awarded Dr. Karl Hasenstein a \$573,000 grant to assess the effects of space flight on the growth and metabolism of the nutritious little vegetable.

His experiment will take place aboard the International Space Station, 240 miles above Earth's surface. The long-term goal is to determine whether radishes and other plants can live on Mars – and beyond.

Earlier this year, NASA administrators discussed deploying a “magnetic shield” between Mars and the sun that would protect the Red Planet from solar particles.

That shield would consist of a closed electrical circuit, or dipole, that would be powerful enough to create an artificial magnetic field.

About 3.5 billion years ago, Mars was likely temperate and had surface water, but exposure to solar particles robbed the planet of its atmosphere. The proposed shield conceivably could restore environmental conditions where plants could grow and where people could live. That's where Hasenstein's experiment comes in.

NASA's goal of terraforming other planets to make them more like Earth hinges on whether nutritionally valuable food crops can be grown where reduced gravity exists. The Martian environment is one such place.

Hasenstein's previous experiments studied how plants in a weightless environment sensed gravity. His latest proposal examines how altered or reduced gravity affects plants' growth and metabolism.

A 2003 experiment aboard the doomed space shuttle Columbia yielded no data and Hasenstein waited more than a decade before his experiments could again take place in space. A 2014 experiment on the International Space Station determined that plant growth in space mirrored that in a controlled environment on Earth. That study examined *Brassica*, or field mustard plants, which are in the same family as radishes.

The radish seeds at the center of Hasenstein's most recent study will likely travel to and from the space station in the same way his 2014 experiment did – aboard an unmanned Dragon capsule propelled by a Falcon 9 rocket. Both were designed by SpaceX, a private company whose craft regularly resupply the station.

Once the seeds reach the station, astronauts will place them in an Advanced Plant Habitat, an enclosed, environmentally controlled growth facility with sensors inside



Dr. Karl Hasenstein

that constantly monitor light, moisture and temperature. The habitat is 18 inches square and enables plants to reach a height of 16 inches.

Two sets of radish seeds will be grown in the space station and two sets will be grown on the ground over 28 days. That's how long it takes for radishes to grow before they can be harvested. The seeds' growth then will be compared.

Radishes are an ideal subject to study in space, Hasenstein said. They're small, grow quickly and can be eaten in their entirety. “Even though most people would not eat the leaves, they are actually very good in a salad,” he observed.

When consumed on Earth, radishes are a source of vitamin C, dietary fibers, a slew of minerals, carbohydrates and folic acid. So, they have strong health benefits.

“What I am really interested in is the comparison between what happens with that tiny little plant when you grow it on Earth as opposed to in space. The big difference is gravity or the effects of gravity,” Hasenstein said. “There are also other factors. The wind blows over a field here and you have fresh air. These are not an option in space.”

He contends that researching the effects of growing plants in space “is important for the establishment of human colonies on the moon, Mars and farther outposts.”

He noted that some people believe that seeds, “because of their longevity and requirement of nothing, are the best biological vectors ... You can seed Mars with these seeds and hope that the experiment will work, that something will be able to establish itself there. Once it is established, it will convert carbon dioxide to oxygen and terraform Mars.

“But by no means does Mars have to be the final frontier. Why not think big?”

# Expert offers insight into crime coverage

BY CHARLIE BIER

**D**r. Michelle Jeanis teaches and researches topics that are often covered by media: missing persons, including kidnapping and murder victims, and young runaways.

A native of Church Point, Louisiana, she earned bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. After adding a doctorate in criminology from the University of South Florida, she returned to UL Lafayette this fall as an assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Justice.

Jeanis also partners with public safety officials and nonprofit organizations, offering analyses and suggestions to help prevent crime and solve cases.

In one recent study, she researched missing persons cases in Louisiana from 2009 to 2013 to ascertain which types were deemed most newsworthy.

She pored over almost 800 newspaper articles and newscast transcripts, mining the material for demographic factors, such as a missing person's gender, age, and race, and circumstances surrounding each case.

Jeanis studied and documented word counts, headlines, and the use of repeated words or phrases, including what she describes as emotional phrasing, such as "loving mother of three vanishes." Her objective was to discover which cases generated the most coverage.

She found that missing persons who were female, young and white were given the most coverage. Kidnappings by strangers received more coverage than those in which victims knew their abductors. Cases involving victims out alone at night – or with lifestyles or occupations commonly thought to put them at high risk – were often framed as "cautionary tales."

The media, Jeanis explained, is only partly responsible for what it reports. "It's a reflection of what viewers want. Crime would be covered differently if we didn't watch it or read it."

## **What sparked your interest in criminology?**

I have always been interested in offenders and the criminal mind. I originally thought I wanted to counsel them. And then I did an internship at a correctional facility, and I thought, 'This is not for me.' I wanted another way that I could still study crime and criminal behavior.

## **What about crime and psychology are so compelling to you?**

### **They seem related.**

They *are* related. I think about how one missing person affects an entire community. I think about families that are so desperate to bring loved ones home. But a missing person case is larger than that. It leaves a hole that can bring a community together.

Youth runaways add another aspect. When you start to dig into it, you see that runaway youth are often kind of neglected, put to the side, thought of as different. They receive less attention. There's this notion that they're bad kids, or disobedient, and so they're perceived differently.

## **Other than murder, missing persons cases seem to capture public interest more than many other crimes. Why?**

I think they're synonymous in some ways. We think of bad guys out there hunting. I think that's what people are thinking of when they hear "missing person" or "serial killer." It's intriguing. It keeps us fearful.



Dr. Michelle Jeanis

## **In some of your research, you allude to media stories that have an undercurrent that conveys that the victim is partly to blame and ends with crime prevention advice. Explain that dynamic.**

It's a tried-and-true method to scare people. And, to place blame on the victim, so that society doesn't have to make any changes or think about the way we're handling things. If we put blame on this one person, then we don't have to look at ourselves.

"Ideal victims" – our elderly, our children, our women – are most vulnerable and support our perceptions about crime.

## **Given the 24-hour news cycle, and seemingly endless coverage from a variety of outlets, haven't we – as a society – become somewhat desensitized? It just doesn't seem we're very easily shocked anymore by murder or missing persons.**

I think, in general, it takes a very compelling case now for a missing person to receive national attention for any long period of time. We think: Natalee Holloway. But, there haven't been many Natalee Holloways since Natalee Holloway. I think the media is moving on to different topics. In the nineties, we had a moral panic about predators and child molesters. That was getting people's attention. Now, I think we've moved on to mass shootings, terrorist attacks, those types of things.

## **You share your research with law enforcement. Are most agencies receptive?**

Law enforcement is generally very receptive.

The Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office has been very receptive. I recently partnered with it in its endeavor to bring awareness to missing persons cases. We're conducting a social media analysis of missing persons coverage. A graduate assistant and I are helping it identify best practices in using social media as a law enforcement tool.

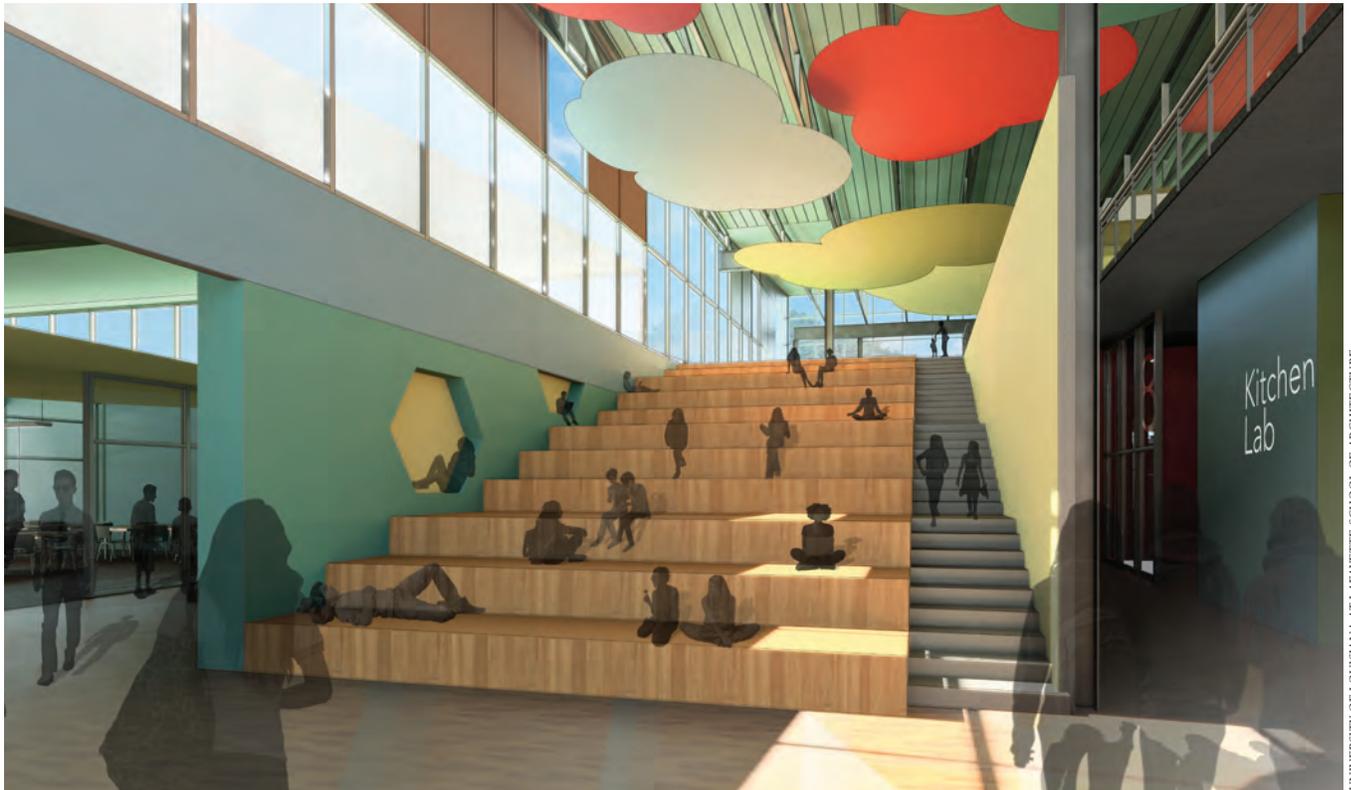
## **Do you have any other current or upcoming projects?**

I'll be working on a large national missing persons project involving advanced statistical analyses on 3,000 cases. So, I'm really excited about that. And, my plan is to start a research group with undergraduate and graduate students in the spring or next fall.

# on campus

## Lab school redux

Educators to focus on best practices, teacher preparation



UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

This preliminary architectural rendering shows a new lab school with a modern, open style.

**W**anted: land, followed by students and teachers.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette is forging ahead with plans for a laboratory school. The University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors approved the concept earlier this year.

Once property and state legislative approval are secured, the not-yet-named lab school will provide its students with an education that relies on model teaching methods and an innovative curriculum. Future teachers enrolled at the University will gain classroom experience there. Education-based research will be conducted and shared with school districts. Professional development workshops for educators will be held in

evenings and during summers.

The school will be “not only a great learning environment, but will benefit the entire region – and beyond – by serving as a hub for teaching practices and theory, research and collaboration,” said Dr. Nathan Roberts, dean of UL Lafayette’s College of Education.

Kindergarten through third-grade students will be taught at the school, at least initially. Proposals call for expanding through eighth grade during the first few years. Roberts envisions a high school at some point, based, in part, on early interest expressed by educators and parents. “Teachers have already inquired about how to obtain positions and I’ve already been asked, ‘How do I complete

an application for my child?’ ” he said.

The school will begin with two classes per grade, with 22-25 students per class. The application process hasn’t been finalized.

“We won’t be an elite school. The student body will fall in line with the number of students in Lafayette Parish who receive free or reduced-price lunches. About 60 percent will pay full tuition. Another 25 percent will pay a reduced amount and 15 percent will pay nothing,” Roberts explained.

Most, if not all, College of Education students preparing to become teachers will gain experience in lab school classrooms, said Aimee Barber, an instructor in the University’s

Department of Curriculum and Instruction and chair of the lab school project. She leads a committee of faculty and staff members overseeing establishment of the school. “Our hope is that every student who comes through our program will spend time in the lab school at some point,” she said.

Roberts said student-teachers are already required to gain field experience in local school systems. “One of the biggest concerns that surrounding school districts had was that they didn’t want all of our student-teachers at the lab school. So, we absolutely want to make sure student-teachers get full experiences everywhere.”

Many area school districts, leaders and community organizations have expressed support for the lab school. In a letter, Jerome Puyan, superintendent of Vermilion Parish Schools, stated: “All Acadiana schools would gain better teachers, more leaders, more professional development and more opportunities to learn new strategies and increase awareness of teacher needs.”

Classrooms will be managed by “lead” teachers who hold at least a master’s degree. They won’t, however, teach alone. “There could be three or four student teachers in a class at any given time. How ideal is that, to have 25 kids with four adults working with them?” Roberts said.

Student-teachers will be instructed in and out of the classroom. Innovative educational practices that promotes “learning by doing” will be an essential part of the curriculum, said Dr. Doug Williams. The professor, who directs the University’s Center for Innovative Learning and Advancement Technology, said students who are studying green energy, for example, might build wind turbines or travel to a solar farm.

“The idea is to empower students, show them that learning is demanding, but it is also fun, an adventure. It also underscores the relevance of learning. Solving real-world problems lets children understand why they’re doing science or math,” Williams said.

The new lab school won’t be the University’s first. The F.M. Hamilton Laboratory School, founded in 1939, was an on-campus elementary school where student-teachers honed their classroom skills. It closed in 1977. Roberts said that, at the time, there was “a trend away from lab schools, with the idea that they were not realistic sites for people to learn to teach. That thinking is old-fashioned.”



UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE ARCHIVES

This 1959 photo shows a classroom in F.M. Hamilton Laboratory School on campus.

The nation’s first lab school was founded at the University of Chicago in 1896. According to an article published in 2015 by *Education Week*, a national newspaper that covers K-12 education, the number of lab schools peaked at about 200 in the mid-1960s.

That number has dropped below 100. Post World War II attitudes were a key factor in the decline. Conventional education models replaced progressive ones. The shift was rooted in a common belief, largely influenced by federal policymakers, that traditional curriculums would better produce a workforce with the technical knowledge and skills to help the country combat nuclear threats from the Soviet Union and win the space race. Cold War anxiety left a lasting, but not permanent, impact on K-12 education, according to some scholars.

Progressive education models, and the need for lab schools, have returned. Some universities and colleges in North Carolina, for instance, will form lab schools to collaborate with public school systems after a directive from state lawmakers last year. “Eight lab schools will be started on campuses in the University of North Carolina System,” Barber said.

UL Lafayette’s lab school will rely on a blend of state funds and tuition money, similar to ones at LSU and Southern University.

Roberts anticipates an advisory council to be established to assist with functions such as developing and implementing curriculum and with making program and policy recommendations. Curriculum at the lab school also will be shaped by research gleaned from classrooms.

“Methodology research, trying out different programs and seeing how the kids respond and how well they do, will be integral,” Roberts said.

Roberts foresees area school districts sending teachers to share their knowledge and learn from other educators. Those teachers should return to their schools with fresh ideas and concepts to share. “So, it’s not just students in the school who will benefit. There will be a ripple effect.”

Pluses for the University will extend beyond the College of Education. The lab school will provide an outlet for learning and practical experience for UL Lafayette students, professors and researchers from many colleges, departments and centers.

“The School of Kinesiology, for example, will be able to work with students on health care and nutrition. The Counseling and Testing Center and the College of Nursing and Allied Health Professions are two others that will have many opportunities to work with young students,” Roberts said.

To follow the progress of this project, visit [education.louisiana.edu/labschool](http://education.louisiana.edu/labschool)



## New Online Options

General studies and MBA programs make it easier to earn degrees

**T**wo new degree programs are aimed at working professionals who need the convenience and flexibility that online learning offers.

Former students who didn't graduate now have a chance to earn a bachelor's degree in general studies online, while an accelerated MBA can be obtained online in as few as 15 months.

### General Studies

The online format enables students to take classes at their own pace while balancing jobs or family obligations, said Dr. Bobbie B. DeCuir, dean of University College, which administers UL Lafayette's general studies program.

It provides "an avenue for those adult students who have 'stopped out' of higher education. The online venue provides an opportunity that is affordable, flexible and student-centered," she said.

To enroll, returning students must have completed at least 45 credit hours and maintained a minimum 2.0 GPA.

Three concentrations are offered: arts and humanities, behavioral science and applied sciences. A range of online courses are available from most of the University's academic departments, helping students customize their class schedules with the help of academic advisers.

Graduates with an interdisciplinary academic foundation are attractive to many prospective employers, DeCuir said. Also, earning a general studies degree may enable graduates to advance in their careers. "There is a need for graduates who are broadly trained to think analytically and critically, while also demonstrating effective communication skills," DeCuir said.

The University will continue to offer a bachelor's degree in general studies in a traditional classroom setting.

Visit [onlinedegrees.louisiana.edu](http://onlinedegrees.louisiana.edu) for more information.

### MBA

The MBA program now available online enables people to obtain the same quality education as students who complete the program on UL Lafayette's campus.

*CEO Magazine* has cited UL Lafayette's traditional MBA program among the top 68 in North America. That MBA program also was included in the 2016 edition of Princeton Review's *Best 295 Business Schools*.

The online MBA program emphasizes nine areas – health care administration, human resources, finance, project management, global management, entrepreneurship, sales leadership, general business and hospitality management.

The college selected these concentrations after an 11-month market analysis of a six-state region revealed a steadily growing need among employers for professionals whose business skills align with these areas.

"Market research indicated growth in a number of vacant positions requiring an MBA," said Dr. Luke Dowden, director of the UL Lafayette Office of Distance Learning, which sponsored the study. "The online MBA positions the University to be competitive in the online learning market while supporting economic and workforce development."

The program's courses are offered in five, eight-week terms; a traditional semester lasts 16 weeks. Students can enter the program at the start of any of the five terms and can take up to two courses per term.

All students will complete a set of core business courses that include topics such as accounting, economics and finance. Additional topics will be customized for each concentration.

For more information, call (877) 588-2429 or visit [degree.louisiana.edu](http://degree.louisiana.edu).

## New master's degree focuses on informatics

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette will offer the state's first master's degree in informatics for the Spring 2018 semester.

"It is designed to provide advanced education and research in information sciences and information technology. It focuses on training graduate students in computing applied to multiple disciplines," said Dr. Azmy S. Ackleh, dean of the Ray P. Authement College of Sciences. That college encompasses the School of Computing and Informatics.

Informatics examines how people interact with and share information. Informatics students learn to design and adapt information systems to solve problems.

Students with a bachelor's degree in a related scientific or engineering field can apply for admission into the program. The 33-hour curriculum includes thesis and non-thesis options. A full-time student can complete a degree in four regular semesters or about 24 months.

Informatics graduate students can take courses in business, interactive media technology, system administration and web development, among others.

Dr. Michael W. Totaro, an associate professor in the School of Computing and Informatics, said UL Lafayette's program will emphasize enterprise computing, which will enable its graduates to assess an institution's needs comprehensively. Those skills can help businesses and government agencies run more efficiently.

"Enterprise computing includes the analytics, reporting, database management and other software solutions systems that span the entire organization," Totaro said. "One of the most exciting aspects of our new master of science in informatics program is the fact that it is truly interdisciplinary, as information technology is used today in virtually every area."

Dr. Xindong Wu, director of the School of Computing and Informatics, said the new program arrives at a promising time for Louisiana and Lafayette. Over the past five years, several information technology companies either relocated to the state or expanded existing operations in Louisiana.

For more information email [informatics@louisiana.edu](mailto:informatics@louisiana.edu) or visit [cmix.louisiana.edu](http://cmix.louisiana.edu).

# New app adds spirit to texts, social media posts

It's now easier to express your Ragin' Cajun spirit and pride via social media and texting.

UL Lafayette's new Ragin' Cajuns Emojis & Filters app is available to anyone with an Android or iOS device. The free app provides an assortment of Ragin' Cajuns-themed emojis and GIFs, and Louisiana-branded filters and stickers, that can be used in a phone's messaging app.

GIFs and emojis are used to convey emotions, ideas or thoughts in electronic communication. GIFs are short animations that loop continuously. The app's filters graphically frame photos taken by the user.

Dozens of University-related emojis and GIFs can be inserted into texts and shared on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp and many other social media platforms.

The app offers depictions of Cajun Field, Martin Hall, the University's Welcome Wall, game day GIFs of fans and players, University logos and a series of emojis clad in Ragin' Cajuns sports uniforms.

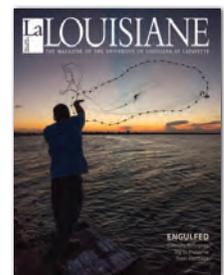
The Ragin' Cajuns Emojis & Filters app can be downloaded from the App Store and is available on Google Play.



# La LOUISIANE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE

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Contact [LaLouisiane@louisiana.edu](mailto:LaLouisiane@louisiana.edu) or call 337-482-6397

# Water Ways

Floating docks provide ports for Bayou Teche paddlers

The Bayou Teche Paddle Trail is a little more kayak and canoe friendly, thanks to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's Center for Louisiana Studies.

The center steered a project to place four floating docks on the paddle trail, which stretches along most of Bayou Teche's roughly 130 miles, from Port Barre to near Berwick. It winds through 13 parishes, and 15 towns and communities.

Created in 2012, the paddle trail is managed by the TECHE Project. TECHE stands for Teche Ecology, Culture, and History Education. The nonprofit organization established the paddle trail to improve Bayou Teche for boaters, kayakers, canoeists and swimmers. The bayou is on the Environmental Protection Agency's federal list of impaired waterways because of runoff and sewage pollution that harms fish and wildlife.

The TECHE Project began with a small group of volunteers who plucked litter and debris from the bayou. It has ballooned to about 200 members and partners with local civic leaders, governments and businesses to coordinate public cleanups. Those efforts enlist the help of boat, kayak and canoe owners, who clear Bayou Teche of everything from discarded appliances to clumps of water hyacinths, an invasive, fast-growing species that clogs the bayou with thick mats of vegetation anchored to a dense network of roots.

Volunteers, however, need spots to launch and dock small watercraft. Tourists need places where they can go ashore at towns along the trail for a meal or duck into a local attraction, such as a museum. Places along Bayou Teche with launches for bigger, motorized boats lack entry spots for kayakers and canoeists.

Jennifer Ritter Guidry, assistant director of programming and special projects at the Center for Louisiana Studies, was a member of the original group that established the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail. She is principal investigator of an \$83,000 federal grant secured by the University for placement of four docks and gangways in each parish along the trail.

Docks were placed in Loreauville and Charenton in June. The others were installed in Port Barre and St. Martinville in July.

The four spots were chosen for a variety of reasons,



The dock's design makes it easy for paddlers to get in and out of kayaks and canoes.

DOUG DUGAS

including need and availability of viable property. They were also chosen for proximity to attractions along the banks. The dock in St. Martinville, for instance, sits at Evangeline Oak Park, which holds the fabled tree named for the heroine of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem.

"Paddlers can disembark at the park, and the downtown district is right there, with plenty of things for tourists to do. There are several museums, lots of restaurants, and an opera house," Ritter Guidry said.

The Federal Highway Administration awarded the grant as part of its Recreational Trails Program. The Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism administered the funds. The Floating Dock Shop of Baton Rouge provided and installed the docks. Each cost about \$20,000.

The four docks are the first of a total of 15 that the TECHE Project will install with the help of partnerships, such as the one with the Center for Louisiana Studies.

Because of such efforts, the Bayou Teche Trail is a National Water Trail, 21 waterways recognized by the National Park Service for local endeavors to keep them clean and sustainable. It's the only National Water Trail in Louisiana.

Each of the four docks will become property of their respective cities or, in the case of the dock in Charenton, the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana. The dock in the small community sits on the tribe's reservation. Each of the four communities will be responsible for managing and maintaining their respective docks.

Learn more about the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail at [techeproject.org](http://techeproject.org)

La

# National Ranking

Brookings Institution cites University for research, social mobility

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette was cited earlier this year for conducting valuable research and fostering social mobility.

The Brookings Institution, a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, D.C., included the University in its recognition of four-year, public universities that “manage to simultaneously produce important research while extending social opportunity to students from underprivileged backgrounds.”

The institution ranked UL Lafayette the ninth-best four-year, public university in the United States for promoting social mobility.

For the report – “Ladders, labs, or laggards? Which public universities contribute most” – the Brookings Institution evaluated 342 schools with selective admissions. Private universities, historically black colleges and universities, military institutions,



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liberal arts colleges and others with specialized missions weren't included in the report.

The institution used tax data from the Equality of Opportunity Project at Stanford University to assess mobility and the Carnegie Foundation's independent ranking to determine research activity.

“We're especially proud of this national ranking because it shows we're making a substantial, measurable difference in people's lives.

Through research, we inform intellectual curiosity and foster

economic growth in the state. In the classroom, we are enhancing the future workforce and equalizing opportunities,” said UL Lafayette President Dr. Joseph Savoie.

The University of New Orleans ranked third in the nation for equal access to higher education. It was the only other Louisiana university in the Brookings Institution's Top 10.

## Dupré Library features presidential portraits

The walls lining the main corridor of Edith Garland Dupré Library's first floor now feature portraits of UL Lafayette's five former presidents.

On display are likenesses of Dr. Edwin L. Stephens, 1900-1938; Lether E. Frazar, 1938-1940; Dr. Joel L. Fletcher, 1941-1965; Dr. Clyde L. Rougeou, 1966-1974; and Dr. Ray P. Authement, 1974-2008.

Dr. Joseph Savoie, who succeeded Authement as UL Lafayette's president in 2008, recognized his predecessors' accomplishments during a portrait unveiling ceremony held in September.

“Each of these leaders rose to the challenges of their day and positioned the University for continued success. As the current steward of the University, I remind myself often that I stand on the shoulders of giants and I try to emulate their example,” he said.

“Thanks to them, the University grew from what was not much more than a big high school when it opened, to a nationally-recognized research and teaching institution.”

Artist Janine Collins of Lafayette painted the portraits, which were commissioned by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Foundation. The paintings hang above display cases that feature artifacts from the tenures of each of the presidents.

Collins had painted a portrait earlier of University library namesake Edith Garland Dupré. It hangs near the library's main entrance. Dupré, a professor of English, was a member of the eight-member faculty when Southwestern Louisiana Industrial Institute opened in 1901.

Collins' representation of Dr. Ray Authement pleased the president emeritus and the only living former president. “I think it's a fine piece of work. I'm humbled,” Authement said during the unveiling ceremony.



DOUG DUGAS

Dr. Edwin L. Stephens

# students

## Tiny House

Philanthropy drives architecture students' creation

Photography by Doug Dugas

**O**n an overcast morning in late August, architecture graduate student Ana Azizi stood in an exterior courtyard at Fletcher Hall. She and her classmates were putting the final touches on MODESTEhouse, the School of Architecture and Design's 216-square-foot "tiny house."

Occasionally, the sun broke through the clouds, reheating an already balmy day. Its rays bounced off MODESTEhouse's corrugated metal siding and roof.

Azizi was in a reflective mood. When construction began in March, she helped assemble each of the 15 ribs that offer support inside the curved, stressed skin that serves as MODESTEhouse's primary wall and roof.

The structure is anchored on one end to a 24-foot wheeled trailer and bracketed on the other to a 10-foot wall that features 70 storage cubbies. Its exterior is glazed with a translucent insulative polycarbonate developed by NASA for use on its space shuttles.

"Look at it. It's beautiful," she said.

More than 50 UL Lafayette architecture, interior design and industrial design students worked on MODESTEhouse over 10 months that spanned three semesters. Planning began in January and construction concluded in early October.

The average American home has 2,600 square feet. The maximum size of most tiny homes is 500 square feet. Many of the petite structures are built on trailers, which makes them easy to move.

Architecture professor Geoff Gjertson, who directs the UL Lafayette Building Institute and oversaw the project, did not want MODESTEhouse to be an as-seen-on TV project. That's

why he and the students chose the name MODESTEhouse. The French word "modeste" means unassuming or humble.

"We had a responsibility to produce something innovative and experimental. We could throw together a tiny house like you see on HGTV without even designing it. We could just start building it. It's not that they aren't good. They are just very conventional and very traditional," Gjertson said.

In one key area, however, MODESTEhouse is typical of most "tiny houses" – its emphasis is on sustainability. Its composting toilet, for example, does away with wastewater sent into sewage systems.

Solar panels mounted on its roof provide power to its full kitchen and LED lighting, which during the day is almost unnecessary, thanks to the translucent exterior wall.

Other features include rigid and spray-on foam insulation.

Two factors set MODESTEhouse apart: its appearance and its purpose.

The house was built in conjunction with Lafayette Habitat for Humanity. In October, during a ceremony at Fletcher Hall, MODESTEhouse's keys were turned over to a New Iberia, Louisiana, resident who lost his mobile home during the August 2016 floods. He is purchasing the house for \$25,000.

For Azizi and fellow graduate student Blair Begnaud, MODESTEhouse – and the reason behind its construction – offered catharsis. Begnaud's home took on three feet of water when an extension of the Vermilion River overflowed its banks. The Azizi home was a total loss when the river inundated two retention ponds in her neighborhood, holding the water in place for nearly a week.

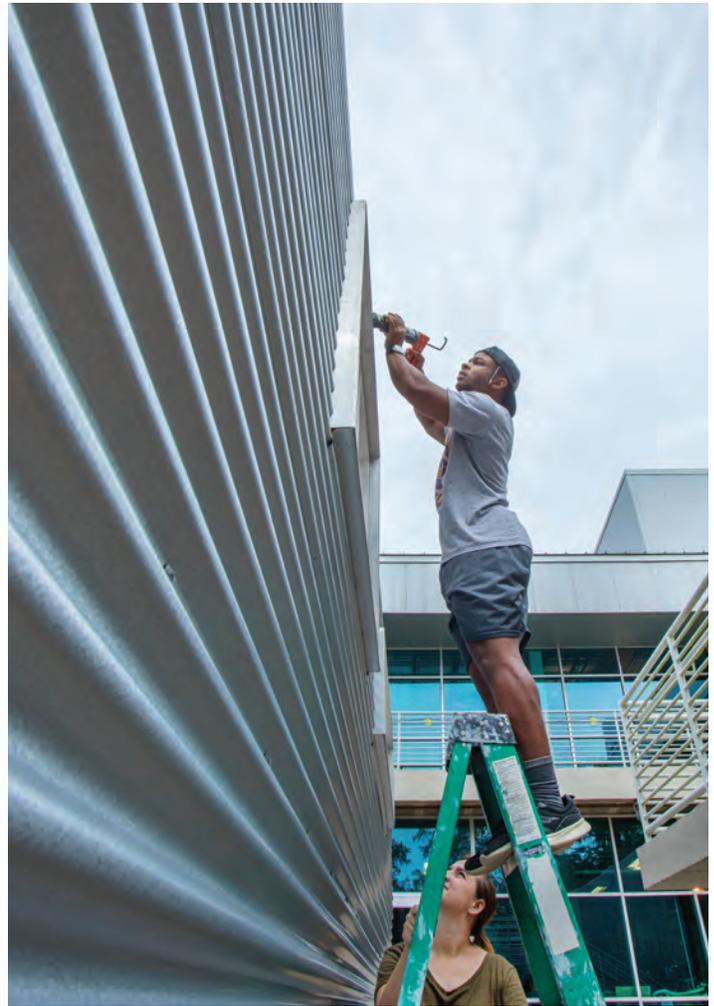




From left: David Hebert, Alexandra Carr, Professor Geoff Gjertson and Francisco Ferrara



David Hebert



Darrell Landry, on ladder, and Blair Begnaud



Cassandra Gatlin

“When something like that happens, you lose your sense of safety,” Azizi said. “It made me feel a lot more vulnerable because I thought my house could protect me – and it couldn’t.”

She used her architectural training to help her family design their new home, which is elevated five feet. The design includes a half basement that opens into a pool area and faces the Vermilion.

It might look like a welcoming space to loll away a summer’s afternoon, but it actually serves as a catchment. Should water flood beneath the house, it will be funneled into several drains.

It’s been tested already. “Our property flooded again during the building process. It flooded two feet. It drew water away from our garage, which is usually the first thing to flood. All we had to do was wash down the concrete and that was it,” Azizi recalled.

The rebuilding process for Begnaud’s family wasn’t as extensive. Lower cabinets required restoring. They replaced baseboards, the floor and some of the walls.

“We were super lucky,” Begnaud said. “Not everybody was.”

As MODESTEhouse was being designed, and during the early stages of construction, Begnaud accompanied Gjertson to Habitat for Humanity meetings, where its board of directors studied case files of potential homeowners. Gjertson is president of Habitat’s board.

Begnaud considered all their stories. She could empathize with their need for housing.

“It would be nice to help all of Lafayette and any other area but you can only do small bits for everyone. MODESTEhouse feels like we are doing a big bit for one person,” she said.

## New student editor to learn about publishing

*La Louisiane's* newest student editor is a sophomore majoring in political science who has strong writing skills.

Rachel Lautigar graduated from Bastrop High School in Bastrop, Louisiana, before enrolling at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette as a freshman.

"For her young age, Rachel has already gained a lot of valuable experience through jobs and campus activities. As student editor, she will participate in almost all aspects of the magazine's production," said Kathleen Thames, *La Louisiane's* editor.

Lautigar's duties will include conducting interviews, writing and proofreading. The student editor is also a liaison between the magazine and UL Lafayette student body.



Rachel Lautigar

While attending high school, Lautigar was a page in the Louisiana House of Representatives before serving as a student intern in the office of Louisiana Rep. Katrina Jackson of Monroe, Louisiana. She was also a member of the school's yearbook staff.

Lautigar earned 40 college credit hours and was a member of Junior ROTC at Bastrop High. She was ultimately ranked No. 1 among 285 members of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps there. Junior ROTC is a leadership program sponsored by the U.S. armed services.

During her senior year, she was a part-time teller at Marion State Bank in Farmerville, Louisiana.

Lautigar was valedictorian of her senior class.

At UL Lafayette, she is a member of the Speech and Debate Team. She earned the team's Distinguished Leader Award this year. She is also a deputy chief justice with the Student Government Association and active with Pulse Campus Ministry.

Lautigar has worked as an assistant office manager for Classic Petroleum in Lafayette since February.

She plans to pursue an MBA and attend law school after earning a bachelor's degree from UL Lafayette.

## ESPN commercial features UL Lafayette students

Students are stars of a commercial produced by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette that is running on the ESPN sports channel.

About 40 students and student-athletes participated in the spot's creation as actors and extras. Auditions were held to recruit participants.

ESPN provides time during its broadcasts of Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns games for the University to promote itself. The new commercial made its debut during ESPN3's coverage of the Herbert Heymann Football Classic, the first game of the Ragin' Cajuns football season. It will run during other Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns games to be aired on the network throughout the year.

Sofiyat Ibrahim, a pre-law and public relations double major, donned a lifejacket and paddled in a canoe to the center of Cypress Lake for her part. Destiny Fordis, a recent business management graduate, was seated at the stern.

After the shoot was complete, Ibrahim mentioned that although she can swim, she's uncomfortable on the water. "I didn't think I was going to be rowing in Cypress Lake ... But it was for UL," she said, explaining her motivation.

She described her canoe ride as a "once-in-a-lifetime thing. Never again."

Even for UL Lafayette?

A smile spread across her face. "Well, maybe."

Another actor, Devin Helms, was drafted as a last-minute replacement for someone who couldn't make the shoot. He



From left, Sofiyat Ibrahim and Destiny Fordis

spent a morning kneeling in the dirt, pretending to plant a magnolia tree along Boucher Street in a scene that highlighted student volunteerism.

He practiced his line about a dozen times before filming began and then spoke it a dozen more times on camera. "I wasn't really nervous. I just wanted to make sure I delivered it well enough that they could use it," said Helms, a management major.

The 60-second ESPN spot rocks to a tune written and performed by the University's zydeco ensemble. The Zydeco Ragin' Steppers, which is affiliated with the University's Traditional Music program, recorded a piece band members wrote to accompany the spot's dialogue.

It can also be viewed on YouTube. Search for: UL Lafayette: Something Unexpected.

# Cell Phone Study

Students help researchers examine what distracts drivers

Two UL Lafayette psychology majors have gained a greater perspective of the potential consequences of using cell phones while driving.

Lauren Short, a junior, and Stevie Breaux, a senior, are helping Dr. T. Scott Smith with his continuing research on cell phones. An educational and cognitive psychologist, Smith is an assistant professor of psychology at the University. He

has examined the wide-ranging implications of communication technology in vehicles and elsewhere.

Cell phone use behind the wheel is dangerous, safety experts say. The National Safety Council, a nonprofit advocacy group, reported that cell phone use while driving leads to 1.6 million crashes annually. About 3,500 fatalities are “distraction-related.” Texting and driving causes a quarter of all car accidents in the United States, injuring about 330,000 people every year.

Cell phones represent cognitive, visual and physical distractions, according to Smith. Texting while driving adds a consequential complication.

Short is helping Smith road test his “trifecta theory” about the implications of cell phone use behind the wheel. They placed dashboard cameras in the cars of a total of 46 student volunteers. Each camera remained in a volunteer’s vehicle for two days.

The volunteers self-reported their behind-the-wheel activities during those two days. They were asked whether they used their cell phone to listen to music, call others, text or check e-mail or the Internet. Their answers will be compared to the dashboard videos.

By early October, 10 participants’ videos had been reviewed.

Short said those volunteers initially appeared self-conscious and regularly looked over at the cameras. As time passed, they forgot they were being observed. “They would sing. They would text. They would do all the behaviors they normally would do,” she said.

Preliminary results showed that of the 10 participants, 85 percent never touched their phones while driving. About 3 percent talked on the phone, and another 2 percent texted.

Twelve percent checked their phones at some point for texts or missed calls. But nearly 92 percent used their phone to search or play music, countering an oft-cited perception that it’s texting behind the wheel that endangers drivers the most.

The “manipulation of music may represent a primary form of distraction, although Internet, texting and voice communication often



represent the main focus of studies and litigation,” Smith said.

While the results show relatively low incidences of cell phone use, vigilance is still needed, Smith cautions. “It only takes one distracted task to cause an accident.”

The preliminary results are based on visual observations of the recorded videos. Breaux helped Smith and Short find facial-recognition technology that could help detect drivers’ eye

movements in the videos and better gauge how often they engaged in distracting behavior.

Breaux said the distraction research “opened my eyes to how dangerous texting can be. A lot of the studies I looked up had videos that went along with them. It was camera footage of a person texting. It was kind of scary to watch these people. You see how long they are not looking at the road. You look down for a *second* and something could happen.”

When a driver sends or reads a text, his eyes are off the road for five seconds, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Association. The NHTSA website notes that when a vehicle is traveling at 55 mph, “that’s like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.”

Smith plans to use the videos of volunteer student drivers in future research that will include other car-based distractions.

He and Dr. Xiaoduan Sun, a UL Lafayette civil engineering professor, have teamed up to examine how technology in today’s vehicles is compounding the problem of driving while inattentive.

Smith said “cell phone distraction” is becoming an antiquated term. “You might put your cell phone down, but in a lot of cars now, everything you can do on your cell phone is on the monitor. It’s the same thing.”

Sun’s previous research focused on the effect of roadway designs on traffic accidents. Her collaboration with Smith is the first time she’s examined psychological factors that might contribute as well.

“We can’t forget human factors. We have to recognize that no one’s perfect – to err is human,” she said. “Drivers, vehicles, infrastructure – it all works together. We have to recognize human factors, what we can and cannot do physically and mentally.”

Smith added: “Cell phones represent technology that, if used improperly at the wrong time, can have serious implications. Research is needed to identify how safety may be improved when incorporating technology into our daily lives.



# WILDFLOWERS IN WAITING

BY JAMES SAVAGE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOUG DUGAS

Possibility speckled the palm of Mark Simon's hand. "That's all seed," he said, looking through the circular lens of a magnifying lamp to examine the flecks up close. They resemble freshly ground black pepper. "It's so fine, birds aren't going to find it."

"There's so much potential waiting to come out. It's ready to sprout."

Once bloomed, the *coreopsis tinctoria* seeds he held will yield a wildflower species commonly known as plains tickseed. It's one of two native Louisiana plants cultivated, processed and stored in the recently completed Wildflower Seed Bank at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Experimental Farm near Cade, Louisiana. *Rudbeckia amplexicaulis*, or clasping leaf coneflower, is the other.

Simon is the 600-acre farm's operations manager. He has watched as construction over the past year doubled the size of its former dairy barn to create a 10,000-square-foot seed bank. When fully operational in 2018, the new facility will provide the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development with wildflower seeds to plant along interstates and highways, and at state parks and welcome centers.

But the beautification initiative is about more than adding vibrant yellow flowers to the roadside. It's also about keeping some greenbacks in the state's coffers.

Ryan Duhon, LaDOTD's roadside development manager, said the department's work crews mow 937 miles of interstate multiple times a year; that number does not include state highways also under the department's purview.

Growing wildflowers that reseed themselves will reduce mowing times and frequency, fuel costs, and carbon emissions from tractors and other equipment.

"It's an attempt to save money. A secondary aspect of it is that people like flowers. It's nice to drive by and see flowers on the side of the road," said Duhon, who graduated from UL Lafayette in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in environmental and sustainable resources.

That's the same year the University partnered with Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana, and the University of Louisiana at Monroe, and secured a \$1.7 million federal highway beautification grant administered by the LaDOTD. ULM and SLU split \$500,000 to collect, propagate and store seeds from the northern and southeastern parts of the state, respectively.

Mary Courville, former president of Louisiana Project Wildflower, was among flower enthusiasts who sought the grant. Flowers and plants were an ever-present aspect of her childhood in Lafayette. Her father, John Lynch, was a research biologist. Her mother, Zoe, was a horticulturalist and owned Orchid Gardens nursery in Lafayette for more than a half century. "I tell people we had chlorophyll in our veins," she said, with a laugh. "I was indoctrinated at an early age."

Courville realized that Louisiana wasn't taking advantage of its native wildflowers in the same way other states were. For example, Texas draws about 1 million tourists each year who travel there to view its 3,000 varieties of wildflowers. Planting the wildflowers along highways has added environmental benefits. They curtail



Mark Simon shows off seeds that have been harvested for planting along highways, state parks and welcome centers in Louisiana.

erosion and filter roadway pollutants from entering bayous, rivers and other water sources.

Courville; Dr. Linda Vincent, dean of UL Lafayette's now defunct College of Applied Life Sciences; Dr. Durga Poudel, a UL Lafayette environmental science professor; and other UL Lafayette researchers began to explore the idea of creating a centralized wildflower seed bank for Louisiana. Over three years, they toured similar facilities in Texas, Iowa, Mississippi and West Virginia.

"We did pretty extensive homework," Poudel observed.

A familiar refrain greeted them wherever they went: preserve and propagate native wildflower species. It was a process they had already started. Volunteers across the state had scoured railway beds, cemeteries, roadsides, and public and private lands to find specimens.

They identified eight varieties in the northern region of the state covered by ULM: lance leaf tickseed; purple, grey-head and rough coneflowers; blanket flower; prairie blazing star; beard tongue; and wild black-eyed Susan. The southeastern region covered by SLU, like UL Lafayette's southern region, had plains tickseed. The other two varieties in the southern region were clasping leaf coneflower and wild petunia.

"We learned that Louisiana was blessed with certain types of

seeds," Courville said. "Bringing seeds from other states doesn't work. If they are Louisiana grown, they're going to come back, come hell or high water, as they say.

"The native Louisiana seed was much more productive. It was almost guaranteed to come back. Why spend money on seed that's not going to come back? That's when we realized we needed a seed bank."

The bulk of the LaDOTD grant, about \$940,000, went to add 5,000 square feet to the former dairy barn at UL Lafayette's Cade farm to create the centralized bank. Seed cultivation began shortly after the grant was awarded in 2005, even before the remaining \$350,000 was expended on specialized equipment for seed cultivation, processing and storage.

"We produced 2,000 pounds of seed under the crudest conditions you could imagine," Simon recalled while standing in the newly completed facility. "We dried the seeds out in the old dairy barn that wasn't dehumidified. We were harvesting with seed sweepers and string trimmers, then screening the seeds on top of a window screen" to separate seeds from chaff.

"We did that for 10 years."

Today, the results of those early days are stored in one of two walk-in coolers that can keep the seeds, encased within breathable cotton bags, viable for up to a decade. The coolers are the last home

**'Bringing seeds from other states doesn't work. If they are Louisiana grown, they're going to come back, come hell or high water, as they say.'**

*Mary Courville*



for the specimens before they will be given to LaDOTD for planting along roadways.

Fall is ideal for planting wildflowers. When they are ready for cultivation in July, Simon runs the seed harvester over the 20 acres the farm has set aside for wildflower cultivation and picks up 150 pounds of seed per acre.

Here's where the math becomes amazing. A pound of the clasping leaf coneflower can contain up to 750,000 seeds. A pound of plains tickseed? About 1.2 million seeds.

Along with all those seeds, the harvester picks up stems, leaves and other plant material. Much of the bulk plant matter is removed by using a mechanical seed cleaner. When operational, it makes a noise that's a cross between a wheezing jalopy and two trashcan lids banging together. A blower spits lightweight, lower-quality seeds onto the ground. They'll be vacuumed up later and returned to the seed plots as mulch. The best





seeds drop into a 55-gallon blue plastic drum. This process can produce about 60 pounds of seed in an afternoon, Simon said.

Remnants of any stems and leaves are further filtered out using handheld sieves. That process occurs after the plant material is allowed to dry in two dehumidified rooms.

Drying the seed material completely is essential. Moist seeds might germinate during storage. The entire front-end process – from removing stems and leaves to drying and storage – eases planting, Simon said. A poorly processed seed might jam the specialized drills LaDOTD use to seed roadside tracts.

“If it gets stopped up in the drill on a 100-mile stretch of highway, you are in trouble. That seed has to fall down with precision the whole way.

“Once you plant the seeds, they are going to come back every year. They are going to reseed themselves. It’s a management thing after that. So we get the DOTD personnel out here, train them, explain that to them,” Simon continued.

The facility also includes two labs where researchers can study germination rates, moisture needs and seed quality to increase the seeds’ viability once planted.

Duhon said LaDOTD has planted, so far, 12-15 miles of wildflowers along the state’s highways. The seed bank ensures more miles are ahead. “It’s still a very new thing to us, but beautification is going to be a bigger and bigger issue, along with reduced mowing.”

To make sure crews don’t have to replant the same ground twice, placement is important, both for safety and viability reasons.

Plains tickseed grows to a height of between 2-4 feet. Clasping leaf coneflower can reach 5 feet. Tickseed requires more moisture than coneflower, so crews have to take the plants’ needs into account when seeding roadways.

“The area where we are going to allow these wildflowers to grow can’t be a boulevard or median area that is elevated to where you are going to cause sight obstructions,” Duhon said. “It’s going to be more of a rural area where there are fields and farmland around. The traffic is faster. You’re not going to get people who are going to be passing and expecting a high level of maintenance. You’re going fast and it’s far off the roadway where it doesn’t look as tall. It’s going to get tall.”

Want to see how tall? Take a look at University Research Park.

This fall, UL Lafayette populated a 10-acre tract between CGI and the National Wetlands Research Center with plains tickseed and clasping leaf coneflower from the wildflower seed bank to create an urban prairiescape.

The goal is similar to that set by LaDOTD: to mow less.

UL Lafayette’s Sustainability Strategic Plan calls for a 10 percent reduction in mowing across the University’s multiple campuses over the next three years.

Poudel notes that wildflowers have lived up to the billing they received over a decade ago.

“Wildflowers are very functional. They are hardy. They are drought resistant. They are pretty. They are the real thing,” he said.

“We have a long way to go, but now that the seed bank is here, this is not the end. It is just a beginning.”



# TIES THAT BIND

Kindred spirits preserve traditional music

CATHERINE GUIDRY

By James Savage

LeeAnn Law stepped to the microphone and pulled a bow across her fiddle's strings. Until that moment, about a hundred people had been milling around the Blue Moon Saloon & Guest House's stage and patio in downtown Lafayette. It was a Wednesday night in April and they were awaiting the start of Ragin' Roots Night, a showcase of the student ensembles affiliated with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's Traditional Music program.

As the sun tucked itself into the horizon beyond downtown and the neon of the nearby Borden's Ice Cream Shoppe flickered to life, many members of the crowd looked up at the sound the UL Lafayette student laid down.

The remaining members of the Angelle Aces joined in. Ailee Pardi and Gracie Babineaux's dual fiddles enriched the overture. Guitarists Devin Sonnier and Roddie Romero flanked the trio. Sonnier is also a UL Lafayette student. Romero, however, is a veteran musician and the group's then-instructor. He's a three-time Grammy nominee, but on this night, he stood in profile, slightly out of the spotlight. It was time for his apprentices to shine.

Blue Moon is an unusual concert venue for the student ensembles. They are more likely to perform under a canopy of live oak branches behind Edith Garland Dupré Library, at Homecoming festivities, or on stage at the University's Angelle Hall.

But this concert wasn't only about demonstrating the performance skills they'd honed in those on-campus spots. It was about showing the community that its musical heritage was in capable hands.

The Aces began "La Reel de Joie," a tune with a long lineage in the Cajun music songbook. Dancers chose partners and soon boots, sandals and sneakers began to glide along the worn wooden floor. Two other student ensembles, the Zydeco Ragin' Steppers and the Ragin' Blues Band, rounded out the musical bill of fare that night.

An impressive thread of grassroots philanthropy ties these student performances to a concert two decades ago. The cradle of UL Lafayette's Traditional Music program is less than a mile away, at Grant Street Dancehall. Twenty years ago, that music and dancing venue provided a space for celebration and healing.

Dr. Tommy Comeaux, a Lafayette pathologist and musician who played with bands such as Coteau, BeauSoleil and the Basin Brothers, had died seven weeks earlier, on Nov. 8, 1997. He was cycling near Broussard, Louisiana, when a vehicle struck and killed him. He was 45.

Comeaux's mastery of the dobro, mandolin, guitar, organ,

bass and pedal steel guitar made him one of the region's most-sought-after musicians and earned him four Grammy nominations. But off stage, his generous nature and modest demeanor were equally magnetic. "When you met him, you liked him – and you wanted to meet him again. You wanted him to be your best friend," said Coteau's Gary Newman.

"He was a treasure. Tommy Comeaux was a treasure we all had. When you lose something as valuable as his friendship was to all of us, and his brotherhood, and his generosity, and his goodness, it strikes you hard. But when that happened, we all said, 'We have to do something. We have to do something to keep his spirit alive.'"

As the shock of Comeaux's death lessened, his friends began to discuss how to memorialize him permanently. It had to be something that would last forever, that would outlive them.

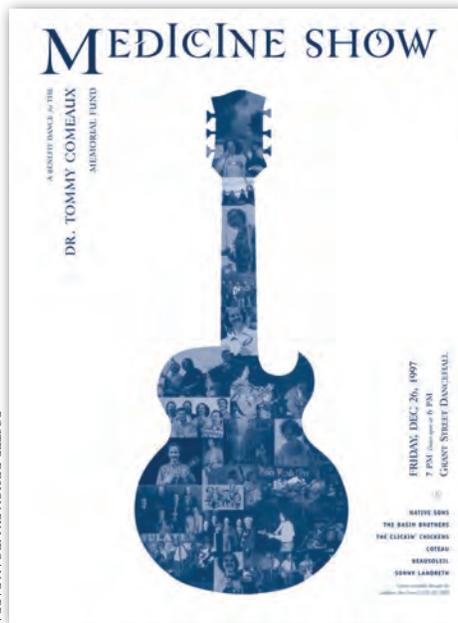
An eclectic committee convened in late November at the Acadiana Arts Council building in downtown Lafayette. The roster of musicians, physicians, lawyers and artists reflected the disparate worlds Comeaux had navigated with ease.

Lafayette chef Patrick Mould was among them. He met Comeaux in the 1980s after a BeauSoleil concert at Mulate's, the storied restaurant in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana.

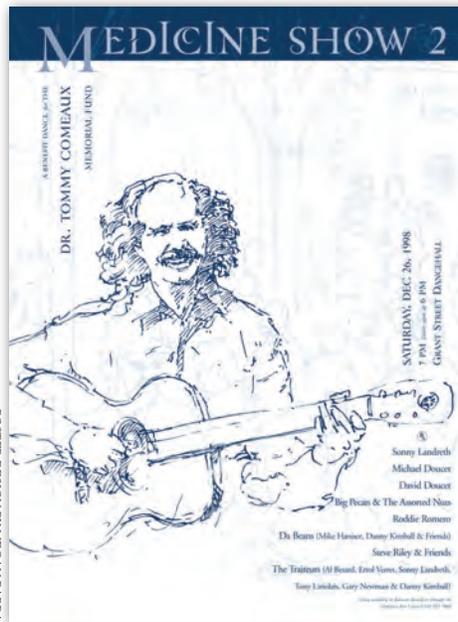
"After he died, we were all trying to figure out what we needed to do, and in what area, music or medicine. All the medical guys kept saying, do music. All the artistic types were saying, do something in medicine," Mould said. "Ultimately, music won out."

The group approached the UL Lafayette Foundation about what it would take to endow a chair in traditional music. The answer: \$600,000, which would then be matched by \$400,000 in state funds to create a \$1 million endowment.

The Comeauxtians, as members called the group, wasted no time. The first Medicine Show took place about a month later, on the day after Christmas 1997 at Grant Street. Newman and Coteau were on stage that night, as were bands and artists with whom Comeaux had collaborated over a 30-year period – the French music mainstay BeauSoleil, the bluegrass-broiled Clickin' Chickens, the Creole-infused Basin Brothers, and blues guitar virtuoso Sonny Landreth.



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The group could not know it then, but it would take 10 more years of Medicine Shows and other fundraisers to reach its goal.

BeauSoleil played in Boston in 1989. On stage with the venerable French band that night at Harvard University's Sanders Theatre was Comeaux. In the audience was Mark F. DeWitt, a graduate student at the New England Conservatory of Music.

Although they never met, today DeWitt is the inaugural holder of the Dr. Tommy Comeaux Chair in Traditional Music.

Commemorative posters from most of the Medicine Shows hang in DeWitt's Angelle Hall office, including one from the second fundraiser in 1998. It features an ink drawing of the program's namesake. Autographs from the musicians who played that night surround the illustration.

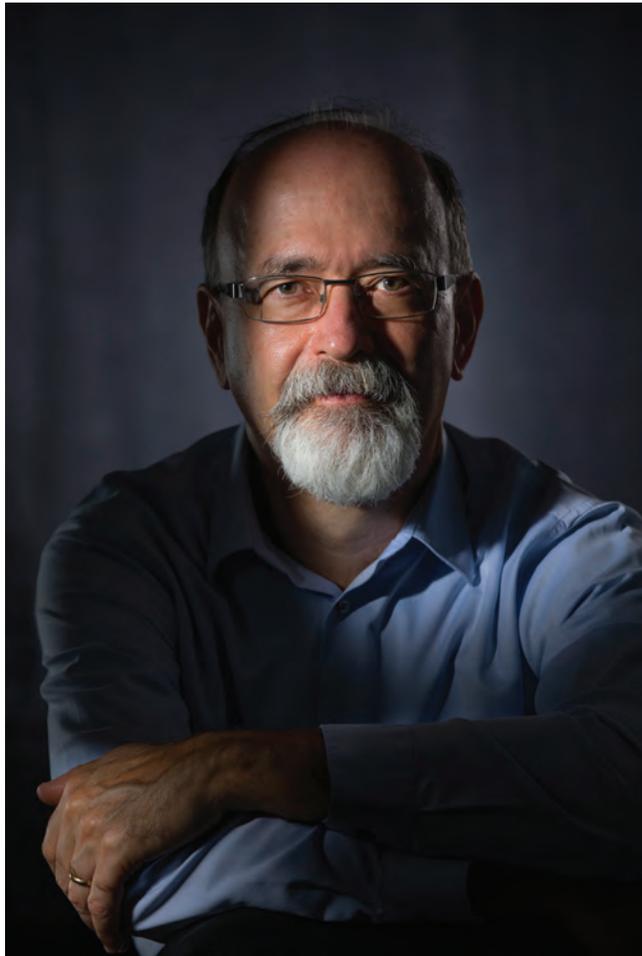
Age has faded it slightly, but the poster is a vibrant reminder: a grassroots, community effort made the Traditional Music program possible and sustains it. That's fitting, since the Cajun, zydeco, blues and bluegrass it preserves are communal musical genres, passed down from master musicians to apprentices in a patient dance of demonstration and imitation that took place on front porches, at house parties and in dancehalls for generations.

The Traditional Music program brought the front porch to campus.

Regional musicians form the core of the program's faculty and provide instruction on stage and in the classroom, infusing contemporary musical education with an abiding teaching method based on oral tradition.

"Community is at the center of what we are doing," DeWitt said. "This has always been community-based music. People have always learned by ear. They have always learned organically. This music bubbled up from the community."

UL Lafayette is among more than two dozen North American colleges and universities with traditional music curriculums. Texas State University in San Marcos features a mariachi ensemble as part of its Latin Music Studies program, for example. Students at Chicago's Columbia College participate in blues and gospel ensembles, while schools in Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee feature



DOUG DUGAS

Dr. Mark F. DeWitt

bluegrass, country and old-time musical groups. Most programs include a degree option.

In 2010, the Louisiana Board of Regents approved a bachelor of arts degree concentration in traditional music. Before, UL Lafayette only awarded bachelor of music degrees, which emphasize, much like a conservatory would, musical structure, theory and performance technique.

Traditional music students take those courses, too, but not as many. Their prior musical instruction usually has not been as intensive as other music majors; for instance, their notation reading might not be as strong. The majority of traditional music classes place music within a wider cultural context. Courses are more closely aligned with the liberal arts: communication, anthropology, behavioral sciences, history and folklore.

The program builds a cross-campus connection between the School of Music and other disciplines. Students enrolled in other concentrations can pursue a minor in traditional music or audition for one of the performance ensembles under the program's umbrella.

Five music ensembles have emerged as its public face: the Angelle Aces; Zydeco Ragin' Steppers; Ragin' Blues Band; McKinley Street Merry-makers, a second Cajun group that started in the Fall 2017 semester; and Vermilion Express, a bluegrass band.

"Many people see the ensembles and think they *are* the Traditional Music program," said Dr. Jonathan Kulp, director of the School of Music and Performing Arts. "But there's also coursework where students learn the history of this music and write research papers. They dig in archives and listen to recordings and study them. They're getting a much richer understanding of the cultures that support the music as a result. The ensembles are the applied part of it."



DOUG DUGAS

Members of the bluegrass ensemble Vermilion Express are, from left, Celebrindal Roberts, Lakeyn Schultz, Alex Goodrich and Benjamin Richey.



In the past, universities and colleges didn't define traditional music as Cajun, zydeco, bluegrass or the blues. The term meant western, or classical, art music taught in a conservatory style.

At its most basic level, the distinction between traditional music – the kind that DeWitt teaches – and the Beethoven or Mozart customarily taught in music schools, is the difference between the ear and the eye. Unlike classical music, roots music such as Cajun and zydeco is rarely written down. Students studying it can't rely on sheet music readings as classical musicians might.

As a result, roots music is more unrestrained and improvisational. Student Celebrindal Roberts plays mandolin in the bluegrass band Vermilion Express. She's also a classically trained violinist and puts those instrumental skills to use as the band's occasional fiddle player.

In classical music, "You're told how to interpret a composer's markings," she said. "You're told how to watch a conductor. You're told what you are supposed to do.

"In bluegrass, it's like: Here are some guidelines. Now, be better and do something with it. Emotionally, it's exciting. It's paralyzing. It's awesome. It feels empowering when you can do it, more empowering, I think, than playing a perfect line of a Shostakovich piece."

Unlike classical, roots music depends on aural transmission alone. Students learn to play and sing "by ear" through instruction, imitation and critique, which impart technical



DOUG DUGAS

Megan Brown, guitarist for the band T'Monde, was among students in the Traditional Music program's first ensemble course in 2010.

ability but also invite innovation.

"Did you play telephone when you were a kid?" DeWitt asked in a recent interview. "A kid would whisper a sentence to the next one until it went through the whole class and came out the other end.

"Well, think about humming a tune to somebody. And then you have that person hum it to the next one and so forth. What will that sound like at the end?"

"What you are going to end up with is something that might have sounded like the first one, but it's not going to be the same. As long as it's not written down, there's a living quality to the tradition. It's always changing and growing. Members of the same family don't always look alike, do they? But they're all family."

The Archives of Cajun and Creole Folklore is the family's musical scrapbook.

Its holdings are the cornerstone of the Center for Louisiana Studies' archival collection and contain 74,000 historical images and 17,000 video files. Its 44,000 audio files contain oral histories and musical performances. They give the past a voice, and that was the allure for Megan Brown.

Brown was majoring in French at the University when she first examined the repository's musical holdings for a class assignment. Today, she uses songs culled from the archives on her radio show, "Encore," broadcast from UL Lafayette's KRVS, Radio Acadie – an NPR affiliate.

She's also the guitarist for local band T'Monde and teaches a traditional music course in singing Cajun and Creole French ballads. She was among the students who took the program's first music ensemble course in 2010.

The archival recordings she uses on her radio show, and plays for her students as an instructor, connect listeners to an historical moment when music disseminated through face-to-face interactions between musicians and initiates. The Traditional Music program is "a different setting" that recreates those cultural and musical exchanges, she said.

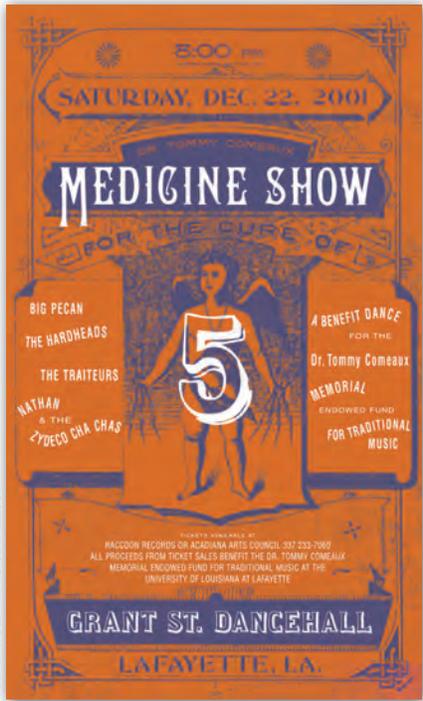
"The way people used to learn Cajun music, they would just show up on people's porches and knock. 'Hey, I heard you play fiddle. Can I listen to you?'"

"You can't just knock on someone's door," today, Brown continued. Traditional music students "get to learn from people who they might not otherwise have a connection to."

One of those instructors is Nathan Williams Jr., leader of his own band, Lil' Nate and the Zydeco Big Timers. He conveys his intensity when he instructs the Zydeco Ragin' Steppers ensemble.

"When you get on stage, do it 100 percent, man. Do it as if it's your last performance," Williams tells the students.

Most students in the ensemble groups won't go on to work as musicians, but many envision careers as music teachers,



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CATHERINE GUIDRI

BeauSoleil founder Michael Doucet, right, and then-student Forest Huval during a 2012 jam session



DOUG DUGAS

Nathan Williams Jr. performs during 2016 Homecoming activities.

behind-the-scenes in music production or business, or in cultural tourism. Their performances give them additional professional heft in a line of work where time on the stage and connections to a network of other musicians are currency.

Over the past seven years, the Traditional Music program has recruited a veritable Who's Who of regional performers as its ensemble coaches and classroom instructors. They're adjuncts, which means they aren't full-time faculty. That enables them to continue to perform in addition to their work with the program.

The first three instructors DeWitt hired were Grammy-winning accordionist Wilson Savoy of the Pine Leaf Boys; David Greely, a Cajun fiddle player and founding member of Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys; and the late Al Berard, a founder of the Basin Brothers, with whom Tommy Comeaux once performed.

**T**he Fall 2017 faculty roster is equally impressive. Kristi Guillory is a Grammy-nominated member of Bonsoir, Catin. She replaced Roddie Romero, a triple Grammy nominee, as the Angelle Aces' instructor. Joining Romero at this year's Grammys was



DAVID SIMPSON

The Pine Leaf Boys' Wilson Savoy was among the Traditional Music program's first instructors in 2010.



DAVID SIMPSON

Yvette Landry was among artists-in-residence in 2012 who taught songwriting.



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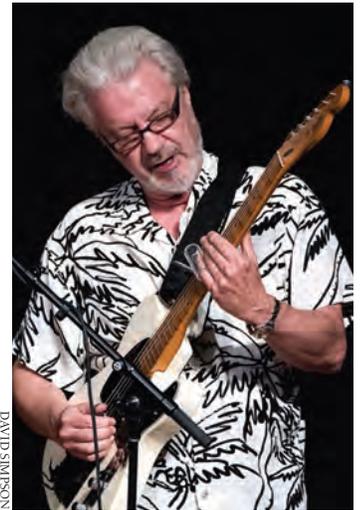
Bonsoir, Catin's Kristi Guillory instructs the Angelle Aces, a Cajun music band.



Accordianist Corey Ledet instructs the Ragin' Blues ensemble.



Triple Grammy nominee Roddie Romero coached the Angelle Aces.



Sam Broussard lends his talents to songwriting courses.



The late Al Berard, founder of the Basin Brothers, taught some of the program's first courses in 2010.



The late David Egan offered songwriting insights as a 2012 artist-in-residence.



Former instructor David Greely is a founding member of Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys.

Sam Broussard, who was nominated for a music and poetry CD he co-wrote with retired UL Lafayette folklorist Dr. Barry Ancelet. Broussard teaches songwriting in the spring semester.

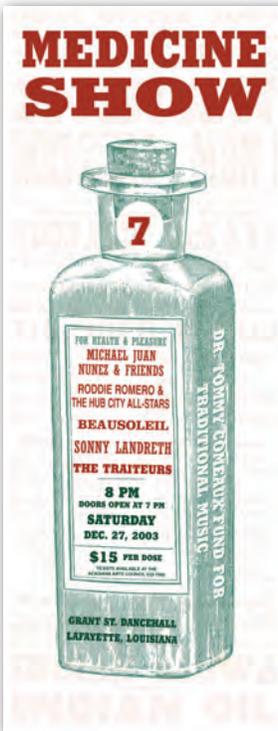
Zydeco accordionist Corey Ledet is the instructor for the Ragin' Blues Band. He's a Grammy nominee, too.

In addition to their classroom and ensemble instructors, students gain access to musical talent through one-on-one master classes in instrumentation and appearances by guest musicians.

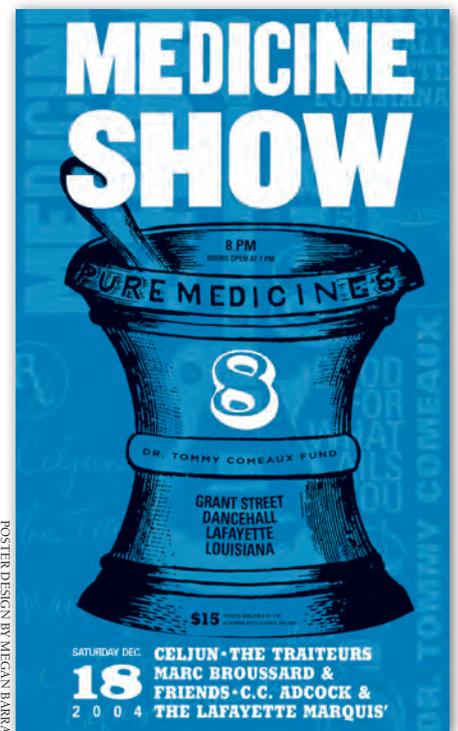
The program invites at least one artist or band for an annual residency. Past artists-in-residence have included jazz trumpeter Irvin Mayfield; folklorist and public radio host Nick Spitzer; and songwriters Yvette Landry and the late David Egan.

The first, in 2010-2011, was Michael Doucet and BeauSoleil. The band's residency included a concert performance with the University's Symphony Orchestra. It also visited classes and coached ensembles during a week-long campus stay. Doucet returned solo for a week of class appearances, as well.

Doucet, like all the performers who are affiliated with the Traditional Music program, imparts a musical heredity to students. He studied fiddle with such masters as the late Varise Conner, Canray Fontenot and Dennis McGee. Kevin Wimmer, a fiddle player with Steve Riley, who previously taught in the



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DAVID SIMPSON

Kevin Wimmer's musical pedigree includes tutelage from the late Dewey Balfa.

program, honed his craft with Dewey Balfa. Savoy's mother and father, Ann and Marc, are musicians and cultural ambassadors who performed with McGee, Balfa and the late D.L. Menard, also a Grammy Award winner.

Pedigrees are important in academic and musical circles, Dr. Jonathan Kulp said. "Who you studied with is a big part of who you are. It gives an *a priori*



DOUG DUGAS

Nationally syndicated radio host Nick Spitzer was an artist-in-residence.

legitimacy to your work."

Nathan Williams Jr. learned from Nathan Williams Sr., who played with Stanley Dural, better known as Buckwheat Zydeco. Dural once backed Clifton Chenier, the most-influential zydeco artist of the 20th century who's considered the "king" of the musical genre.

"We have the great-grandson of Clifton teaching here – musically, not



GETTY IMAGES/EVERETT ROBERTS

The Irvin Mayfield Quintet was 2015's artist-in-residence in a program sponsored with the Ernest J. Gaines Center.

genetically," DeWitt observed.

Williams uncle, Sid Williams, runs El Sido's Zydeco and Blues Club in Lafayette. As an upcoming musician, the younger Williams rubbed shoulders with veteran players such as Alton Rubin, better known as Rockin' Dopsie, and Beau Jocques, the stage name of Andrus J. Espre.

Williams watched and imitated their



DOUG DUGAS

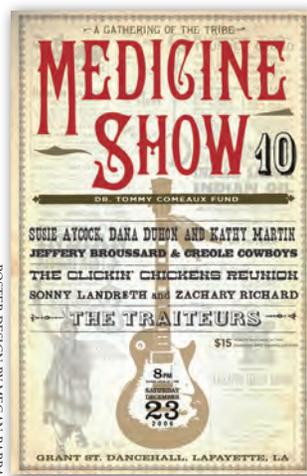
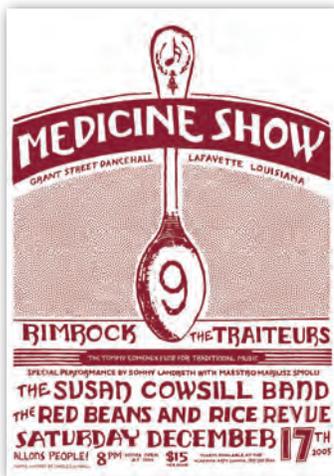
From left, Devin Sonnier, LeeAnn Law, Ailee Pardi and Gracie Babineaux perform as the Angelle Aces earlier this year with then-instructor Roddie Romero.

stage personas – how they interacted with audiences, their confidence and charisma. He brings those lessons into his classroom. “Knowing where those guys came from, then passing it on to me, I feel confident that these students are taking from me is somewhat authentic,” Williams said.

Seated around a patio table behind Blue Moon Saloon before their mid-April concert, the Ragin’ Steppers recited a list of Lil’ Nate’s on-stage no-nos – standing stiffly or slouching, noodling on their instruments between songs, not smiling, not looking at the audience, looking at cellphones, not keeping tempo, and failing to inject into performances what he calls, “a pep in the step.”

Williams delivers criticism directly, said Jesse DelGizzi, a graduate student who plays electric bass in the band. “He’s very to the point.” DelGizzi’s voice drops in imitation. “All right, cool. That was the worst guitar solo I ever heard.’ That’s a word-for-word quote.

“But, there are few people who are as talented and as successful as Nate is, so to have someone of that stature with us at



every rehearsal, telling us what’s good and what’s not ...”

Later that evening, Williams stood near Blue Moon’s control panel. His eyes rarely left the stage as his students performed. He occasionally threw one finger in the air. It’s unclear whether it was a criticism or an encouragement to keep doing what they were doing: adding a zydeco pep to some surprising tunes – the swamp pop standard “Mathilda” and Fats Domino’s “My Girl Josephine.”

Vocalist Marie-Laure Boudreau announced the evening’s last song, Chris Ardoin’s “Push It,” and at the first intonation of her accordion, Williams and a partner found a spot on the still-crowded dance floor. His work for the evening was done.

The song’s last notes brought cheers from the audience, and band member Kylie Veazey removed her *frottoir*, or washboard. She stepped down from the stage and approached Williams. “I saw you dancing,” she said. “I guess that means I got an A.”

Williams only smiled.



The Zydeco Ragin’ Steppers perform during 2017’s Festival International de Louisiane. Members are, from left, Jeremy Domangue, Jesse DelGizzi, Kylie Veazey, Marie-Laure Boudreau, Fabian Bernard and instructor Nathan Williams Jr.

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# ‘THE PROGRAM IS TOMMY’

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Many of Tommy Comeaux’s closest friends remember little about the days following the cycling accident that took his life two decades ago. It’s as if the telephone calls relaying the tragedy that clear day in November 1997 suspended time. They can recount who delivered the news, but much of what occurred subsequently was lost in a fog of shock and grief.

They recall that as the fog lifted, a quest for healing began.

“There was a collective response among Tommy’s friends to continue to keep his spirit present by creating something that would touch people’s lives as he did,” said Megan Barra, a Lafayette graphic artist. She met Comeaux in the early 1980s when he was a member of BeauSoleil.

“Tommy was interested in playing a wide range of American music. The mission of the committee was to establish a program that would teach the music he loved to generations of musicians to come.”

“The committee” is a formal reference to an informal group who quickly dubbed themselves the Comeauxtians, an apt label that denoted sustained movement toward an ambitious goal: a \$1 million endowed chair in traditional music at UL Lafayette.

Then as now, the University was home to an established School of Music and Performing Arts. It regularly offered courses in regional music history. So, it provided an ideal spot. UL Lafayette houses cultural resources in the Center for Louisiana Studies’ Archives of Cajun and Creole Folklore, and Special Collections’ Cajun and Creole Music Collection. Both enable students to harvest sounds from the area’s musical past and conduct academic research about its history.

“This is where it needed to be done,” said Gary Newman, who had played with Comeaux in Coteau, Clickin’ Chickens and Native Sons. “Although Tommy did not attend the University, Lafayette is the center of traditional music in South Louisiana.

“This is a special place that we all love. And Tommy loved it, too.”

The Comeauxtians were an assortment of physicians, lawyers, clothiers, photographers, politicians, musicians and artists that reflected the diverse circle of friends Comeaux had acquired during his 45-year life.

Author Todd Mouton said membership fluctuated throughout the years, but a stalwart core remained. “We didn’t have any rules, and we didn’t take any votes. We were a bizarre cross-section of people who probably would never have been together except for Tommy Comeaux. It was about Tommy.”

The Comeauxtians set their inaugural fundraiser, a concert, for the day after Christmas 1997, seven weeks after Comeaux’s death. They called it Medicine Show.

Like the Comeauxtians moniker, the concert’s branding was evocative. In the late 19th century, before federal regulation of medicine, peddlers traveled to corners of the country, selling elixirs that promised to cure a variety of ailments.

The Comeauxtians’ Medicine Show had a similar curative premise, but its power was genuine. “It was a healing,” Newman said. “Tommy was a healer in a lot of different ways.”

The group extended that theme with the formation of The Traiteurs. The Cajun jam band took its name from traditional faith healers who use herbs, prayers and folk remedies to tend to patients in remote sections of South Louisiana. Traiteurs refuse payment for services.



Like their namesakes, The Traiteurs deposited concert proceeds into the fund.

Every bit helped. To create the endowed chair, the Comeauxtians first had to raise \$600,000, which would be matched by \$400,000 from the Louisiana Board of Regents Support Fund. The UL Lafayette Foundation would administer the \$1 million endowment. The principal would never be touched; earned income would help pay for instructors and professors, artist residencies, and program development.

“They didn’t let up,” said Dr. Walter Comeaux, Tommy Comeaux’s father. “This is a miracle program. Not one of us – me included – ever thought it would materialize. Every year, they came back. They made it happen.”

Although the group reached its fundraising mark in 2007, just before the 11th Medicine Show, they buttressed the endowment fund further with four subsequent concerts.

All together, there were 40 fundraisers, and many individual donations. Three CDs collections were created from Medicine Show performances and sold. Barra designed commemorative concert posters that became prized décor around town.

A ticket for the inaugural Medicine Show was \$15. A crowd of 700 packed into Grant Street Dancehall in downtown Lafayette. The show featured six acts. It was seven hours long. Few people left early.

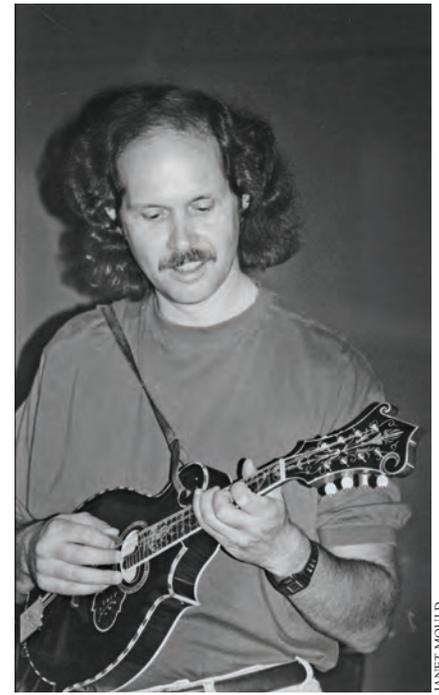
The Native Sons opened the show with an original tribute, “Quiet Man.” Band members Danny Kimball and Mike Hanisee wrote the musical eulogy. Comeaux had performed with Native Sons the night before his death. “He was a quiet man,” Hanisee remarked at the song’s conclusion, “but he left one hell of a footprint.”

Twenty years later, Hanisee reflected on his off-the-cuff remark. “Tommy was a doctor – a good doctor. He was a musician – a good musician. He was a humanitarian – an outstanding humanitarian. He was a lover of life, a force. Anytime he walked in a room, you felt him. That’s what I meant by that.”

By day, Comeaux was head of the Pathology Department at Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center. Pathologists analyze



The Clickin' Chickens, from left: Phil Schneider, Carl Brown, Steve Schneider, Tommy Comeaux, Ben Shank, and Gary Newman



Tommy Comeaux playing mandolin

JANET MOULD

blood and tissue samples for abnormalities. Comeaux saw irregularities with an uncommon precision. When a former med school professor developed cancer, he sent the pathology reports to Comeaux to examine. Comeaux's father, a general surgeon, sometimes asked his son to look at patients' test results.

Today, musician friends remember Comeaux's regular offers of free medical care, but there were more-private acts of compassion as well. In the 1980s, when the AIDS epidemic began in United States, Lourdes purchased a home near the hospital for the care of patients with the disease. At the time, the causes of AIDS and how it spread remained supposition. Hospital physicians were asked to volunteer to help make the patients comfortable; some declined. Comeaux ministered to the patients without hesitation.

"Medicine was never beautiful," Walter Comeaux said. "You do a lot of great things for people, but you also see a lot of bad things. You've got to learn to live with that."

Tommy Comeaux found solace in music, friends said.

Walter and Dorinne Comeaux gave their son his first guitar when he was 8.

While a student at Cathedral Elementary School, now Cathedral-Carmel School, in Lafayette, Comeaux met Michael Doucet, who was a year older. By age 12, the two budding musicians were playing music together in the attic of the Comeaux family home on Beverly Drive.

Doucet and Comeaux's collaborations continued as members of Coteau and BeauSoleil. Both bands were integral in the 1970s Acadian renaissance, a period of renewed pride in the region's French heritage.

Another regular collaborator was slide guitarist Sonny Landreth. They were classmates at Lafayette High School who jammed together as teenagers in a band called The Null Set.

The night before Comeaux died, he stopped at Landreth's house on his way to a double-bill, benefit concert with Clickin' Chickens and Native Sons. Comeaux sat down and began noodling with a guitar Landreth had left leaning against the couch. "It was one I really liked, but was torn about keeping because it rattled so much," Landreth

remembered. "It didn't bother him at all. He said, 'Cool! Sounds like a built in fuzz!' That was the last time I saw him and the last time I heard him play." Landreth kept the guitar.

In 2007, at Medicine Show 11, the Comeauxtians announced they had surpassed the \$600,000 goal.

The following year, at the UL Lafayette Foundation's donor appreciation banquet, the group received a symbol of their dogged commitment: a rocking chair. Comeaux's rocking chair, encased in Plexiglas, sits in the lobby of Angelle Hall. A replica is in the office of Dr. Mark F. DeWitt, the Comeaux chair's inaugural holder.

It appeared on stage at Medicine Show 12, held Dec. 26, 2008.

Dr. Joseph Savoie, the University's president, stood near the chair as he paid tribute to the Comeauxtians. "You all did it. Now, you can say a lot about Tommy Comeaux – a humanitarian, a healer, a musician, an artist. But what better can you say about a man than who his friends are? His friends have stayed with his memory for 11 years and they've endowed a fund so his memory will live forever."

Today, there's a sense of satisfaction among the Comeauxtians. But there's also an impulse to keep working. Barra is designing a coffee table book that will feature more than 100 classic guitars, mandolins, dobros and basses Comeaux owned.

After Comeaux's death, and per his wishes, his estate sold the 250-piece collection that included some of the prized names in American instrument manufacturing. Proceeds from the book's sales will go into the endowment.

Other Comeauxtians continue to give as well. Landreth has visited classes and has played occasionally with the Ragin' Blues Band. Doucet and BeauSoleil were the program's first artists-in-residence. Comeauxtian Len Springer instructs Vermilion Express, the bluegrass band.

"To think we did it – a bunch of artists, hippies, musicians got together and said, 'We are going to raise a million dollars, no matter how long it takes us to do it.' And we did it," Newman said.

"The Comeauxtians loved Tommy. He's not here. But the program is Tommy. It's what he would want."

# Magnificent

Once her team's worst hitter, Sanders blasts her way to the top of college softball

By Charlie Bier Photography by Doug Dugas

Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns shortstop DJ Sanders is the best hitter in college softball. Pretty impressive considering she was once the worst hitter on her team.

As a freshman, Sanders' fielding skill earned her a starting spot. Her .290 batting average, though, ranked last among starters.

Those days are long gone for DJ, which is short for Doni Jenee.

After her junior season in 2017, the 21-year-old was one of 10 finalists for this year's USA Collegiate Softball Player of the Year Award, the sport's most prestigious honor. That award went to Kelly Barnhill, an extraordinary pitcher at the University of Florida. The Florida Gators competed in the Women's College World Series championship game this year.

Sanders was also one of four finalists for the annual Honda Sport Award given to the top female athlete in each of 12 NCAA sports. That award went to Barnhill, too. Previous Honda Sport Award recipients include basketball superstars Maya Moore and Candace Parker, track and field's Jackie Joyner-Kersey, and soccer standout Mia Hamm.

Earlier this year, Sanders was also named first-team All-American and Sun Belt Conference Player of the Year.

Her accolades and lofty company rest on the strength of masterful hitting that produced "video game numbers" as Ragin' Cajuns baseball player Steven Sensley told a newspaper reporter last season when asked about her performance at the plate.

National media took notice, too. In April, *Excelle Sports*, a website that covers women's athletics, published an article titled "How DJ Sanders went from unknown recruit to college softball's best hitter."

By the close of the 2017 season, the slugger had cemented that status. She led the nation in several major statistical categories – home runs (29), runs batted in (82), and slugging percentage (1.013). She had at least one hit in 42 of 55 games, and belted six grand slams, tying an NCAA record she shares with former Ragin' Cajun Christi Orgeron.

How phenomenal was Sanders? Consider this eye-popping

stat: four of her six grand slams came over a seven-day, five-game stretch. In the lone game she failed to register a grand slam during that span, Sanders hit a two-run homer. The Ragin' Cajuns won all five games by a whopping total of 55-10.

True to her nature, the modest, affable Sanders attributed much of her success to her teammates, a lineup that propelled the Ragin' Cajuns to a 47-8 record, and the team's 19th straight postseason appearance.

Outfielder Aleah Craighton joined Sanders as a first-team All-American. It marks the seventh season in a row the Ragin' Cajuns have landed more than one player on the All-America team.

Ragin' Cajuns dominated the Sun Belt All-Conference Team, too. Six players landed on the first team. No other school in the 10-team conference had more than two players among the 15 first-teamers.

Sanders also credited mentoring she's received as a Ragin' Cajun as a key factor in her hitting prowess. "I don't think things would have turned out the way they have for me had I gone to any other school. I needed a whole makeover and that's what I got here," she explained.

Former head coach Michael Lotief and assistant coaches, for instance, helped her adjust her batting stance and instructed her how to use her legs to generate more power. "When I first got to UL Lafayette, I was all arms and shoulders," she recalled in an interview with *La Louisiane*.

Lotief described Sanders as an amazing athlete with "incredible hand-eye coordination" and the ability to "take every experience, positive or negative, and turn it into a learning experience."

Sanders will own up to one trait that has aided her development: how she responds to failure.

"What helped me most is my freshman year. I feel like if I had done OK, I would have been just a little bit better my sophomore year, and a little bit better than that my junior year. But because it was so bad, I didn't want to be there again. It made me focus."





BRAD KEMP

These days, her hitting strategy is simple.

“The way I work at the plate is expecting a pitcher to throw what I couldn’t hit the previous at bat. Usually the pitch I hit is the one I swung at and missed the last time up. So, it might take me two swings, but that’s why you get three strikes,” she said.

Despite her achievements, Sanders often gets so anxious when she steps into the batter’s box that her teeth literally chatter. “I may end up doing really well, but I’m still very nervous. I’m not sure why. It’s different in the field. I never feel pressure out there.”

A defensive wizard, Sanders was nevertheless so lightly recruited coming out of New Hope High School in Columbus, Mississippi, that she considered playing college basketball. UL Lafayette was the only major school that offered her a shot on the diamond.

One visit to Lamson Park for a Ragin’ Cajuns softball game convinced her that she belonged at the University.

“I said to myself, ‘Oh, my gosh. This is where I need to be.’ I think that the atmosphere, the fans, the game itself, is what really sold me. This is home.”

Sanders’ decision paid off for player and school.

She takes much of the attention in stride. She isn’t fond of talking about her accomplishments or, for that matter, even reading about them. Months after the *Excellence* article touted her as college softball’s best hitter, Sanders had yet to read it.

Sanders’ competitive streak runs in the family.

DJ’s older sister, DeShuni, was a two-year starter as an outfielder at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. She played at that university for two seasons, in 2011-12 as a junior and in 2012-13 as a senior. DeShuni transferred to the school from East Mississippi Community College, where she played for two seasons.

When the siblings talk shop and the conversation turns to who

the better player is, neither will concede. The sisters have reached an understanding: they are each the best – at their respective positions and at their different hitting styles.

DJ is a power hitter; DeShuni is a slapper, or a hitter who moves toward the ball, as it is traveling to the plate, to “slap” it into a hole in the defense and get a head start to first base.

“The only thing we agree on is that I’m better at what I do, and she’s better at what she does,” DJ said. “She will not admit to this day that I’m a better softball player.”

Athletic ability is in the genes of the Sanders sisters, including Kennedy, the middle sister, who was a track and field standout in high school.

Dad Donnie, a multi-sport high school star, ran track at Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi. Mom Renee competed in the same sport at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi.

More than heredity, however, accounts for Sanders’ love of softball. As a toddler, she would hound her dad to play pitch and catch after watching DeShuni’s Little League games.

“Ever since I can remember, it’s been a part of our lives. It was the norm, to play softball,” she said.

So, what does Sanders do for an encore as a senior in 2018? How does she think her senior season will unfold? She isn’t sure, except on one count: she isn’t feeling much pressure.

“I won’t say I’ve accomplished my goals, but I’ve already done a lot of what I expected of myself,” she said modestly.

A lot, but not quite everything.

“One of my biggest goals, my greatest wish for my senior season, is obviously a goal I share with my teammates, something that just about every college softball player dreams of – winning a national championship.”

# 2017

*Batting average* .388

*Home runs* 29

*Grand slams* 6

An NCAA record, tied with former  
Ragin' Cajun Christi Orgeron

*Runs batted in* 82

*Fielding percentage* .955

Honda Award for Softball Nominee

Top 10 Finalist for USA Softball  
Player of the Year

Louisiana Sports Writers Association  
Hitter of the Year

All-Louisiana First Team

'The way I work at the plate is expecting a pitcher to throw what I couldn't hit the previous at bat. Usually the pitch I hit is the one I swung at and missed the last time up. So, it might take me two swings, but that's why you get three strikes.'

*DJ Sanders*



## A Grand Stand

'Best fans in the country' get new baseball park

Imagine what the future could hold for Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns baseball attendance.

A \$16.8 million renovation of M.L. "Tigue" Moore Field at Russo Park has bumped the number of seats from 3,775 to 4,650. The extra seats give Ragin' Cajun fans much needed space. The ballpark was bursting at the seams, with standing room only at some games.

Head coach Tony Robichaux's teams have long finished among national leaders in attendance. Consider the last three seasons: The Ragin' Cajuns were No. 7 in 2017, No. 15 in 2016, and No. 12 in 2014, according to *SportsBusiness Daily*, a weekly trade publication.

Outside of teams in Power Five conferences – those with teams from the largest schools in the country – no Division I squad enticed more fans through the turnstiles than the Ragin' Cajuns each of those three years.

"When you stop and think about it for a minute, it's pretty amazing. There are almost 300 Division 1 schools playing baseball," Robichaux said.

Since he became the Ragin' Cajuns head coach in 1995, Robichaux has consistently made it easy for fans to show up in droves.

In 2014, his squad earned the first No. 1 national ranking in school history for any sport, a mountain crested on the strength of an outstanding 58-win season – the best in college baseball.

It was no fluke, just an indicator of sustained excellence.

Robichaux has led his teams to 12 NCAA Regional appearances, four NCAA Super Regional appearances and the 2000 College World Series. In 2015, he became one of only 51 coaches in Division I history to earn 1,000 career victories.

The caliber of players he has attracted to the program is one reason for the success. Twenty-six Ragin' Cajuns have been named All-Americans during Robichaux's tenure. Fifty-seven of his players have been drafted by Major League Baseball.

In addition to rosters stacked year after year with some of the nation's best players, Robichaux attributes the baseball program's success to its fans.

"They have been so good, for so long. They were good when I got here, and since then we've had a great fan base, with a great passion for baseball. We have some of the best fans in the country."

Fan loyalty was rewarded with a makeover that began in 2016 as part of Ragin' Cajuns Athletics' Facilities Master Plan. The Lafayette-based firm Abell + Crozier + Davis Architects Inc. designed the renovated ballpark with input from the DLR Group. The latter firm, based in Omaha, Nebraska, has designed many of the top college baseball stadiums in the country.

Improvements for the 2017 season include a sprawling, raised grandstand with more seats and a roof that extends over new bleachers, luxury suites, a club room, concessions areas along the first and third baselines, an expanded press box, a shop with University merchandise, and state-of-the-art lighting.



BRAD KEMP

The renovated stadium features a raised grandstand, luxury suites and open concession areas.



BRAD KEMP

Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns defeated Southern Mississippi in the first game played in Russo Park.

Future improvements include a new clubhouse for players and coaches, and offices.

“We went from looking like a baseball field to a stadium,” Robichaux said.

Russo Park amenities don't tell the whole story of the renovations. The refurbished ballpark has added atmosphere to a place already dripping with it.

“We have great attendance because we have great atmosphere. One of the toughest things to build as a coach, or as an organization, is atmosphere. You can't just walk into a venue and sprinkle some magic dust on it and go, 'Oh, there's atmosphere.' Our atmosphere comes from our culture,” Robichaux said.

In 2016, before the renovation, D1baseball.com, a national online publication that covers Division I college baseball, ranked the stadium among the Top 10 in the nation in each of four categories: Best Ball Park Food (No. 5); Best Ballpark Traditions (No. 6); Most Intimidating Venue for Opponents (No. 7); and Best Family Atmosphere (No. 10).

The publication's rankings also placed the venue No. 18 overall in the nation, and the best ballpark in the Sun Belt Conference.

The news doesn't surprise Kennon Fontenot, a senior shortstop from Lake Charles.

“The atmosphere in here was already incredible,” said Fontenot after a recent fall practice, “and with more people, it's electrifying.”



DOUG DUGAS

Additional improvements are planned for Russo Park, including a new clubhouse for players.

## Golf team can practice, rain or shine

The Doppler radar system inside the Ragin' Cajuns golf team's new practice and instructional complex tracks golf balls, not thunderstorms. "It computes how far a ball carried, how far it rolled, spin rate, launch angle, club speed, ball speed. It's incredible," said golf head coach Theo Sliman.

The system is just one of several high-tech tools at the disposal of coaches and golfers at the 4,000-square-foot complex. The facility consists of adjoining 2,000-square-foot buildings at Oakbourne Country Club, about 3 miles from campus.

The \$850,000 complex was built this past summer as part of the Athletics Department Facilities Master Plan. It was funded through donations, including several large contributions made through the Vermilion Links Club, a recently formed booster organization.

One building contains an indoor practice facility. Its three hitting bays have huge metal doors that open onto a hilly sweep of closely-cropped grass dotted with golf holes and sand traps. UL Lafayette players use two of the bays; Oakbourne golf pros teach lessons in the other.

Golfers stand at tee boxes inside the covered bays and drive onto the practice range. Swings are evaluated with video equipment that beams images to 55-inch TV screens. Coaches monitor imperfections in stance and swing, thanks to software that measures, in degrees, almost imperceptible flaws that impact driving distance and accuracy.

The same goes for putts that, when tapped across a floor carpeted with artificial turf, can be analyzed by a high-tech device. Strokes can be scrutinized, with attention to club angles and ball paths.

Beyond the pluses for players, the technology often supports coaches. Video, Sliman reasons, is like a photo: it never lies.

"As a confident, high-level player, you can sometimes have

doubts about instruction, about what someone's saying you need to do to improve. This eliminates doubt," he said.

The facility also eliminates loss of practice time for Ragin' Cajun golfers when weather is rainy or cold. The metal doors of the hitting bays can be pulled down and closed to keep the bays warm and dry. Those doors don't restrict teeing off.

When they're closed, golfers smash drives into thick, mesh nets strung across the front of the bays like large curtains. The nets stop golf balls, which slide gently to the floor.

"This facility enables us to practice 365 days a year if we want to. Mother Nature can't stop us," Sliman said.

Ragnar Gardarsson, a member of the 2016-17 golf team, will graduate from UL Lafayette with a bachelor's degree in mathematics in December. Until then, he's squeezing as much practice time from the complex as possible.

Technology has enabled him to make several recent tweaks to his game, including

improvements to his "attack angle" on drives.

"This helps a lot. If we are struggling with anything, the equipment inside the building lets us see what adjustments we need to make," Gardarsson said. That's especially beneficial since he's prepping to become a professional golfer.

The golf complex's other building houses a coaches' office, a player's lounge, a locker room, and a study hall.

Most important, this new complex provides a home for Ragin' Cajun golfers.

Although team members have long practiced at Oakbourne, they had no roof over their heads before the complex's completion. They lugged bags loaded with clubs to and from their vehicles every day.

With access to a world-class facility, they can store gear, shower after practice or concentrate on homework.

"Now team members have a place where they can hang out and bond," Sliman said.



DOUG DUGAS



DOUG DUGAS

# Clear Bags Only

New policy supports University's efforts to keep sports fans safe

Anyone who attends a ticketed event at a UL Lafayette sports facility can enter with only minimal belongings in a see-through bag.

In August, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette implemented a clear bag policy. The practice of regulating how many possessions that people can take into a facility – and ensuring that those items are visible – is a growing trend at professional and collegiate sporting venues across the country. The SEC also adopted a clear bag policy for its member schools this season. The NFL has had one since 2013.

The new policy covers Cajun Field, the Cajundome, E.K. Long Gym, M.L. “Tigue” Moore Field at Russo Park, Lamson Park, and the Ragin’ Cajuns Track/Soccer Facility.

Each ticket holder, including children, may carry one approved clear bag, such as a one-gallon storage bag, plus a small purse.

The following bags are permitted inside Louisiana Ragin’ Cajuns sports facilities and subject to search:

- a clear plastic bag that does not exceed 12 inches by 6 inches by 12 inches;
- a clutch or small purse, with or without a strap, that does not exceed 6.5 inches by 4.5 inches;
- an equipment bag for necessary medical items; and



1-gallon clear storage bag



Stadium chairs



Clutch or small purse, with or without strap, that may not exceed 6.5" x 4.5"



Clear tote: plastic, vinyl or PVC and may not exceed 12" x 12" x 6"

- a diaper bag for an age-appropriate child accompanied by an adult.

Prohibited bags include, but are not limited to, large purses, coolers, briefcases, backpacks, fanny packs, mesh bags, or any bag larger than the permissible size. Tinted or plastic bags with printed patterns are not allowed. A non-obstructive team logo on one side of a clear bag is acceptable. Licensed Ragin’ Cajuns clear bags are available through the Ragin’ Cajuns Store and several area retailers.

Fans can wear or carry items such as binoculars, hand-held electronic devices, and cameras – with lenses shorter than four inches – without carrying cases. They may also carry in blankets and seat cushions, which will be screened at facility entrances.

The new policy was prompted by the University's interest in public safety, but has an added benefit, according to Joey Sturm, director of Public Safety and chief of police at UL Lafayette. “It will speed up entry into games,” he noted.

In October, a reentry policy was announced for all University athletics venues. The Cajundome, home of Louisiana Ragin’ Cajuns basketball, has had a reentry policy since it opened in 1985.

# Free Streaming

Ragin' Cajuns fans can catch every home game for all 16 NCAA sports

Fans who can't make it to home games played by their favorite Louisiana Ragin’ Cajuns teams can watch all the action online – at no cost.

In the past, they had to pay a subscription for online streaming.

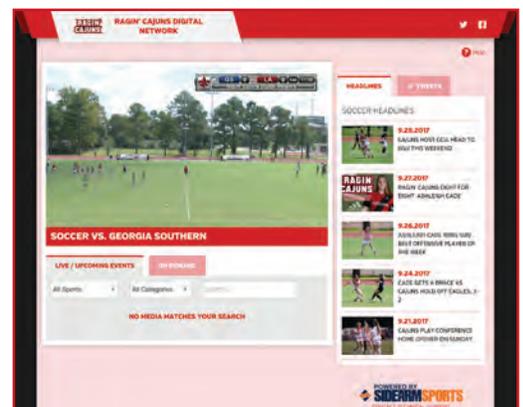
“This shift will provide viewers the opportunity to watch all of our home events from anywhere in the world while increasing the visibility of our University, sport programs and student-athletes,” said Dr. Bryan Maggard, UL Lafayette’s director of Athletics.

The decision was made to switch to free streaming after fans were given the chance to watch home baseball and softball games without paying for a subscription. Viewership rose for both sports.

In 2016, there were 8,500 views during the baseball season. This year, the number of views of streamed home baseball games jumped to 31,000.

The number of viewers who watched home softball games that were streamed online quadrupled. In 2016, about 6,000 viewers paid for online streaming. This year, 24,000 viewers caught games via online streaming at no cost.

“After seeing the viewership rise during both baseball and softball when we tested out the free model, it became obvious to us that this was something we needed to do across the board,” Maggard said.



All home events not aired on ESPN networks are now streamed live on the Ragin' Cajuns Digital Network on RaginCajuns.com.

The link to access the Ragin' Cajuns Digital Network can be found under the Fan Zone tab on RaginCajuns.com. Links to the streams are also available on the schedule page for each sport.

## Remembrance

Association asks former students, graduates to record their stories about campus life

Jeanette Ray, '84, '87, recalls arriving at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in a station wagon after a 1,500-mile trip from Jersey City, New Jersey.

"We were a family of four with two German shepherds and all were taking Jeanette to college," she wrote, recently. "We were struck by Cypress Lake and the moss-laden oaks that served as a warm, welcoming hug."

The freshman checked into her dorm and the family ate lunch at a nearby restaurant.

"I was 17 and had chosen to go to a college in a town that I had never visited, 1,500 miles from home. As my family parted, my mother turned back and said, 'It is not too late to change your mind. You can come home with us.'"

Ray told her mom to go, while "trying to hold back tears." The family left, with Ray settled into Evangeline dormitory.

"I was asked upon check-in if I had a roommate preference. I didn't know another soul. I was now all alone. I waited for the next girl to come through the door, walked up to her, asked her if she had a roommate and she said 'no'. I asked, 'Will you be my roommate?' She agreed."

The girls became close friends. Ray went on to become a dorm director at three campus residence halls.

Ray has recorded her fondest recollections for others to enjoy in the Ragin' Cajuns Memory Vault, a project that enables UL Lafayette alumni and former students to preserve online what they remember about their college experience.

She recounts taking her first plane ride, from Lafayette to her roommate's house in Terrebonne Parish, for a weekend visit and "sneaking out to Tastee Donuts on Johnston Street for late night snacks ..."

Jennifer LeMeunier, '92, executive director of the UL Lafayette Alumni Association, said shared experiences are what unite

alumni and former students.

"The Memory Vault enables us to record information about the people and places we remember most at the University. Everyone has a story. We want to gather as many stories as we can."

Sydnei Prosper-Moten, '13, cites one special day at UL Lafayette: Aug. 24, 2004.

"I ran from ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) in full BDU (battle dress uniform) to my Drawing 111 class and asked a guy outside the building which classroom

Drawing 111 was in. Neither of us knew there were two at the same time and he told me the wrong one.

"Turns out it was really the right one because the guy who informed me I was in the wrong classroom is now my husband and father of our two beautiful boys," she wrote for the Memory Vault.

LeMeunier said it's easy to record memories of UL Lafayette by going to [ragincajunsmemories.com](http://ragincajunsmemories.com). Digital photos can also be submitted via email to [alumni@louisiana.edu](mailto:alumni@louisiana.edu). Tag photos and memories on social media with #RaginCajunsMemories.

*Ragin' Cajuns*  
**MEMORY VAULT**

What's your favorite memory from SLII, SLI, USL or UL Lafayette™?

**RAGINCAJUNSMEMORIES.COM**

# alumni

## 1948

**MARTIN A. ROY JR.** is chairman of Roy Motors Inc. in Opelousas, Louisiana. He assumed management of the family-owned automobile dealership in 1948 after completing a bachelor's degree in business administration at SLI. He married **MIRIAM MONCLA ROY, '49**, the following year. The Roys have six children, Martin A. Roy III; Deborah R. Fay; the late **ELIZABETH R. MARTIN, '74**; **JANICE R. MAYER, '78**; **ROBERT A. ROY, '81**; and **CHARLES A. ROY, '81**. The couple have 18 grandchildren, including **JENNIFER M. MARINE, '03**; **MARTIN A. ROY IV, '04**; **ROBERT A. ROY JR., '05**; **MATTHEW MAYER, '07**; **TYLER ROY, '09**; and **ALISON M. BROUSSARD, '11**. They also have 34 great-grandchildren.

## 1959

**LOUIS C. BUTAUD JR.** is a retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in May 1959, when he graduated from SLI with a bachelor's degree in business administration. His more than 20 years in the military included service in Vietnam. Butaud then worked for USAA, a financial services company, in San Antonio. He retired from USAA in 1997 and lives with his wife, Carol, in Boerne, Texas. Butaud and his late wife of 49 years, Connie, had four children, Marla, Mark, Nadine and Lisa.

## 1960

**RAFAEL A. MONROIG** retired from the Puerto Rican government, where he helped implement

programs in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. He and his wife, Carmen, have four children, Rafael, Miguel, Francisco and Ruben. The couple live in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He holds a bachelor's degree in agronomy.

**RONALD SAWYER** worked for 38 years as a NASA propulsion safety engineer and received the NASA Exceptional Service Medal. Following retirement, he continued to work as a consultant. He has two children, Peggy Jester and Kelly Owen, and lives in Pocomoke City, Maryland. Sawyer holds a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering.

## 1965

**SIDNEY P. BELLARD** recently retired after working in education for a half century. He earned a bachelor's degree in social studies and English. He taught European and American histories, civics, sociology, geography, English, French and adult literacy. He also served as director of adult education in St. Bernard Parish and was a vice principal and counselor at a private school. In retirement, he authored a book, *A Cajun in France: Journeys to Assimilations*. He and his wife, Freddie G. Bellard, have a daughter, Lisa Landry. The couple live in Mandeville, Louisiana.

## 1973

**PAUL M. YAKUPZACK** retired after 38 years as a refuge manager for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He is a wildlife consultant and commercial pesticide applicator. He

holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife management from USL and earned a master's degree in fisheries from LSU in 1976. Yakupzack and his wife, Janice Songe Yakupzack, live in Houma, Louisiana. The couple have two children, Bart and Amy.

## 1975

**DWIGHT T. COLES** was ordained a deacon in the Roman Catholic Church during a Mass held Jan. 14, 2017, at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston. The service also marked the culmination of six years of graduate education as both Dwight and his wife **JACQUELYN MINTER COLES, '75**, completed master's degrees in pastoral studies from the School of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary, part of the University of St. Thomas in Houston. They met as students in USL's Honors Program.

## 1977

**DR. ROCHELLA SELLERS NZE** is a family nurse practitioner with UnitedHealth Group and its subsidiary, OptumHealth. She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from USL and holds graduate degrees in nursing from LSU and the University of Tampa. She completed a doctorate in nursing practice at Maryville University in St. Louis in 2015. She has two children, Ellah Nze and Amadi Nze, and lives in Wesley Chapel, Florida.

## 1981

**GARY L. BROWN** is a certified master club maker, golf teacher and assistant

golf professional at Timberlane Country Club in Gretna, Louisiana. In addition, Brown works for the Jefferson Parish Department of Parks and Recreation as a coach, baseball umpire, and a basketball, football and soccer official. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration.

## 1982

**ROBERT B. ROBERTSON** is a retired librarian and archivist. He earned a master's degree in geography from USL and worked from 1978 to 1982 as a librarian in its Edith Garland Dupré Library. He also holds a master's degree in library science from LSU. Robertson later worked as a librarian at the University of Utah; Haverford College and Villanova University, both in Pennsylvania; and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Robertson has sailed around the world, and has visited all 50 states and 79 countries. He lives in Philadelphia.

## 1994

**EDDIE HUGHES** is included in the 2018 Best Lawyers in America, an annual, survey of the legal profession. He is a partner at Taylor Porter law firm in Baton Rouge, where he practices energy regulatory law, including oil and gas and commercial litigation. Hughes earned a bachelor's degree in political science from USL and a law degree from LSU's Paul M. Hebert Law Center. Before attending law school, he was an independent petroleum landman.

## ALUMNI INFORMATION FORM

If you enjoy reading about where your former classmates are now and what they're doing, consider this: They'd like to read about you, too. Please fill out the form below and mail it back to UL Lafayette or go to [louisiana.edu/louisiane](http://louisiana.edu/louisiane) to submit the information online.

## NAME

|       |        |      |             |
|-------|--------|------|-------------|
| FIRST | MIDDLE | LAST | MAIDEN NAME |
|-------|--------|------|-------------|

## ADDRESS

STREET OR BOX

|      |       |     |
|------|-------|-----|
| CITY | STATE | ZIP |
|------|-------|-----|

## PHONE

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| HOME | OFFICE |
|------|--------|

## E-MAIL

## FAX

## MAJOR &amp; DATE OF GRADUATION

OR THE SEMESTER YOU LAST ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY

## CURRENT JOB TITLE

## BUSINESS NAME

## BUSINESS ADDRESS

## PROFESSIONAL DUTIES

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## SPOUSE'S NAME

|       |        |      |             |
|-------|--------|------|-------------|
| FIRST | MIDDLE | LAST | MAIDEN NAME |
|-------|--------|------|-------------|

## SPOUSE'S USL OR UL LAFAYETTE GRADUATION DATE

AND MAJOR, IF A FORMER UL LAFAYETTE STUDENT

## CHILDREN

(IF ANY ARE UL LAFAYETTE STUDENTS OR USL GRADUATES, PLEASE INDICATE)

## CURRENT DATE

Please mail this form to , Box 43567, Lafayette, LA 70504-3567  
or send it online at [louisiana.edu/louisiane](http://louisiana.edu/louisiane)

## 2001

**DR. STEPHEN E. NOEL** is a cybersecurity research scientist with the Mitre Corporation in McLean, Virginia. He earned a doctorate in computer science. Noel also developed 10 patents and cofounded a security company. He and his wife, Margaret Gulden Noel, live in Woodbridge, Virginia.

## 2006

The Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation named **VICKIE MORITZ MAYEUX** its 2016 Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year. Mayeux is a prekindergarten teacher at Cottonport Elementary School in Cottonport, Louisiana, where she regularly incorporates agriculture activities, including raising chickens and studying local farm crops, into her lessons. Her students also plant and harvest gardens. Mayeux received a master's degree in education from UL Lafayette. She previously had earned a bachelor's degree in vocational home economics education from LSU. She and her husband, Steve, have two children, Mallory Mayeux and **CALEB MAYEUX, '11**. They live in Cottonport.

## In Memoriam

**LORRAINE FLETCHER ELLIOTT, '44**, died Jan. 4, 2017, at age 93. She was the daughter of Dr. Joel Lafayette Fletcher Jr., the University's third president, and Frances McLees Fletcher. Elliott initially pursued – at the insistence of her father – a home economics degree. After earning a D in a dressmaking class, she switched majors and graduated instead with a bachelor's degree in chemistry. She was a chemist at Shell Oil Company in Houston, and then was a food chemist at Western Regional Research Center in Albany, California, where she researched food production and safety. Elliott patented several food processing techniques. In the early 1960s, she; her husband, Roy Elliott

Jr.; and several friends purchased property along San Francisco Bay and developed Brickyard Cove, a residential community and marina. She and her husband were avid sailors. They competed three times in the 2,500-mile Transpacific Yacht Race from California to Hawaii in boats he designed. The couple also owned a cattle ranch and a Napa Valley vineyard. Elliott was preceded in death by her husband, her parents and a sister, **ELLEN F. MEADORS, '41**. Survivors include a sister, Florence F. Rimkus of St. George, Utah, and a brother, Joel L. Fletcher III, of Fredricksburg, Virginia.

**KATHLEEN G. TOUPS, '45**, who wrote for local and regional Catholic publications for 60 years, died March 14, 2017. She was 91. Her service to the Catholic Diocese of Lafayette spanned the administration of six bishops and earned her two papal medals. A Jennings, Louisiana, native, Toups, known widely as “KT,” worked briefly at the *Lafayette Daily Advertiser* before her seven-year tenure as a member of the SLI News Bureau staff. In 1949, she began filing reports about the Diocese of Lafayette to the *Catholic Action of the South* newsletter. In 1954, when Bishop Jules Jeanmard established the *Southwest Louisiana Register*, he appointed Toups as the Diocesan newspaper's assistant editor. She later co-authored, with Mary Alice Fontenot, *The Gentle Shepard*, a biography of Jeanmard. She wrote for and edited the *Register's* successor publication, *Acadiana Catholic*, until her retirement in 2009. She is survived by two nieces, Carol Ship of Houston and Susan Comeaux of Crowley, Louisiana.

**RAYMOND J. YAKUPZACK, '49**, died Dec. 4, 2015. He was 89. Yakupzack enlisted in the U.S. Navy during World War II and was a radio technician in the Pacific theater. He completed a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering at SLI and an MBA from Nicholls

# How Irish?

Historians go hi-tech to show makeup of Crescent City neighborhood

As graduate students in history at UL Lafayette, Maegan Smith, '16, and Victoria Throop, '16, created an online, interactive reconstruction of the Irish Channel in 1880. It marries technology and old-fashioned historical detective work to examine one of the evergreen questions about the storied New Orleans neighborhood – just how Irish was it?

They found the Irish Channel embraced a diverse population. In 1880, there were not just Irish residents, but French, English, German, African-Americans, Italians, Scots, Dutch and native-born Louisianians of varying ancestry.

Throop acknowledges that other scholars also have concluded that the Channel was “probably not that Irish.” But the Irish Channel Project does something previous published studies could not. It tills well-worn historical ground with a technological edge.

It uses GIS – which stands for geographical (or geospatial) information system – to resurrect the residents who called the working class, multiethnic neighborhood home nearly 140 years ago.

“It really is a great tool for historians. So much of history is spatial. There is so much data in location,” Throop explained.

Mary Churay was another history graduate student and Smith and Throop's classmate.

Churay's family had ties to the Irish Channel. As the trio discussed potential class projects, they realized the neighborhood was a crossroads for each of their individual interests. Churay studied religious history. Throop examined ethnicity, while Smith's field was spatial history. A previous job working with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development had exposed Smith to GIS.

They made a website, [irishchannelproject.com](http://irishchannelproject.com), that would enable them to present their results to as wide an audience as possible. Mapping technology would also differentiate their work from other scholars' research.

GIS enabled them to present their primary source research in a graphical form. They harvested details from the 1880 U.S. Census and studied contemporary city directories. Maps from the period and an 1883 city atlas revealed locations and sizes of long-gone buildings.

They then entered the data into ArcGIS, a website that translated it into plot points on a base map of the Irish Channel today. The dots are color-coded. Clicking on any of the nearly 2,000 points will reveal a sidebar that details information about what was

at the location in 1880.

Purple dots are residences. These points contain the most information: the head of household's name, race, age, marital status and occupation; where they and their parents were born; and how many family members, boarders and servants lived there.

Each dot tells a story. Throop said there's an appeal to clicking on

illuminated data points and finding even the most basic information about long-dead New Orleanians. “Humans are essentially nosy, and this is digging into people's business,” she observed.

For example, Richard Hauk was a Russian-born organist who in 1880 lived on Washington Avenue. Andrew Hall resided across the street. Born a slave, he was an African-American laborer from Mississippi. On the same block were Moses Levy, a peddler and native of France, and Mary Small,

a widow who ran a store that sold “notions,” or sewing accessories. Small's parents had emigrated from Ireland.

Ethnic neighborhoods remained in flux due to the constant arrival of immigrants from Western Europe. The Port of New Orleans was the principal debarkation point in the South, and second only to New York, during much of the 1840s and 1850s.

After Churay left the University, Smith and Throop decided to continue the project on their own. When using it for a class fell through, they worked independently on weekends, holidays and late at night.

The pair received graduate degrees in May 2016, but continued to work on the project after taking full-time jobs.

They completed it in spring 2017, after more than a year of work, and presented it at the National Public History Conference in Indianapolis. The marriage of the humanities and digital scholarship is a relatively new phenomenon, so they entertained a host of questions.

Smith and Throop want to use GIS to create a site for educators that traces how New Orleans' ethnic makeup changed over time. They've also discussed expanding their focus beyond the official Irish Channel Historic District.

They've received emails from Irish Channel residents and relatives of people who once lived there. They've considered soliciting photos and other local history to offer a more-detailed view of the people who called the neighborhood home more than a century ago.

“Historians really want to bring the past to life,” Throop said. “This technology is an interactive way to do just that.”



St. Mary's Assumption Church on Josephine Street, right, served a congregation composed mostly of Germans when it opened in the Irish Channel in 1860. The congregation of St. Alphonsus on Constance Street, left, was predominantly Irish.

CHRIS GRANGER

State University, where he later taught engineering. Yakupzack was a logging engineer with Schlumberger Well Services before opening Yak's Electronic Service in 1955. He later was the power and water plant manager for the city of Houma, Louisiana, as the general manager of Consolidated Waterworks District No. 1. He also was a consultant with Gulf South Engineers. Survivors include his wife of 66 years, Edwina Milsted Yakupzack; a son, **PAUL YAKUPZACK, '73**; a daughter, **LAURA Y. FLETCHER, '76**; four grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

**DR. THOMAS LAWRENCE "LARRY" KREAMER, '61**, a former professor in the College of Education, died April 18, 2017. He was 82. Kreamer served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean conflict. He held a bachelor's degree from USL, a master's degree from LSU

and a doctorate from McNeese State University. In 1966, he joined the USL faculty as an educational consultant and instructor of special education, and chaired the special education and the curriculum and instruction programs before his retirement in 1990. Kreamer held memberships in many professional and civic organizations and was an active supporter of the arts. Survivors include his wife, **DR. JEAN T. KREAMER, '67**, retired director of Media and Printing Services at UL Lafayette; three sons, **THOMAS L. KREAMER JR., '80**, **MICHAEL KREAMER, '83, '99**, and **CHUCK KREAMER, '90**; a sister, Elizabeth K. Clarke; a brother, **JAMES A. KREAMER, '63, '65**; and eight grandchildren, **HELEN MICHELLE KREAMER '11, '15**, **GARRETT KREAMER, '13, '16**, **LAURENCE KREAMER, '15**, **ANDREW KREAMER, '15**,

Charles M. Kreamer II, a current computer science major, William Kreamer, Eleanor Kreamer and Thomas L. Kreamer III. The family requests memorial contributions be made to the Dr. Jean T. and Dr. Larry Kreamer Endowment, which benefits Edith Garland Dupré Library and is administered by the UL Lafayette Foundation.

**ALFRED S. LIPPMAN, '61**, a former member of the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors, died Oct. 17, 2016. He was 78. Lippman earned a bachelor's degree from USL. He was also a graduate of Tulane University School of Law. Lippman served on the boards of directors of Whitney National Bank and Hancock Bank. He was president of the Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District and chairman of the Community Foundation of Acadiana. He was

appointed to the UL System board in 2001 and served one year. Survivors include his wife of 60 years, Gail Poché Lippman; three children, Karen Lippman, Beth L. Busbice, and **DAVID LIPPMAN, '82**; nine grandchildren, **RYAN BUSBICE, '01**; **ANDREE LIPPMAN, '13**; **KELLI LIPPMAN, '15**; Matthew Busbice, Sarah Dickerson, Michelle Boudreaux, Michael Lippman, Ashleigh Schneider and William Schneider; and six great-grandchildren..

**ALICE J. VOORHIES, '61, '69**, an instructor in the College of Education for 35 years, died April 1, 2017. She was 77. She wrote two books, *The Promise* and *Once Upon a Time in New Iberia*, which was set in her native New Iberia, Louisiana. She also operated a private counseling and testing center. Survivors include seven siblings, **PAUL VOORHIES II, '65**, Richard Voorhies Jr., **SUSAN V.**

## Graduate sends all five children to his alma mater

Wafai Mseis, '82, refers to himself as "UL's most loyal graduate."

The civil engineering grad has sent four of his children to UL Lafayette, where each earned a bachelor's degree. Mseis' fifth and youngest child, Hannah, is a freshman.

"I really love Lafayette. It's my college town. And I loved UL. It was a great experience. That's why I wanted my kids to take my lead and attend," said Mseis, who enrolled in 1979 on the advice of a friend studying at the University.

His oldest daughter, Zayne, earned a bachelor's degree in interior design in 2011. Next was his second child, son Zayd, who earned a bachelor's in music media in 2013. Daughter Jenna, Mseis' third child, earned a degree in marketing in 2013. Fourth child Jude earned a business management degree in 2015.

Hannah, who enrolled this semester, said although she and her siblings weren't forced to attend UL Lafayette, Mseis gave each a strong nudge.

"My dad loves UL. So, it was just like, 'OK, that's where everyone will go.' And I don't mind. I really like it. It's so nice here. Everyone is very welcoming. And it makes it easier that I have family here," she said.



From left: Zayne Mseis; Zayd Mseis; Jenna Mseis; Bonnie Boudreaux Mseis; Wafai Mseis; Hannah Mseis; and Jude Mseis

Two of Hannah's sisters – Jenna and Zayne – live in Lafayette. Hannah has other family ties here, too.

Mom Bonnie Boudreaux Mseis is from Lafayette. She studied journalism at the University for two years. The couple, who married in 1982, met at USL in 1980 through mutual friends. They live in Amman, Jordan, the hometown of Wafai Mseis, 58, a retired engineer.

Hannah isn't exactly sure what she will major in yet. She is, however, certain her diploma will be from UL Lafayette.

**WALSH, '72**, Mary V. Davis, Walter Voorhies, Evie V. Andras and **DAVID VOORHIES, '86**. Her family has established the Alice J. Voorhies Endowed Scholarship Fund through the UL Lafayette Foundation.

**GEORGE C. LARRIEU, '64**, died June 7, 2017. He was 92. Larrieu enrolled at SLI in 1944 as a U.S. Marine Corps recruit participating in the V-5 and V-12 officer training programs. Following service in World War II, he studied photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology before returning to SLI. He was a photographer for *The Vermilion*, the school's student-run newspaper, and *L'Acadien* yearbook. Later, as a freelance photographer, he photographed movie stars, such as Mickey Rooney; boxer Jack Dempsey; bandleader Tommy Dorsey; and Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Lyndon B. Johnson. His photos also appeared in *Life* and *Look* magazines. Larrieu was a public information officer for the military for the next decade. He returned to the University in 1963 and completed a bachelor's degree a year later. He re-entered the Air Force and received a Bronze Star for his work as director of combat information photography during the Vietnam War. Larrieu retired from the military in 1970 and then received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of

Texas at Austin. He worked in public relations in San Antonio before his retirement in 1989.

**RANDALL F. CHRICEOL, '83**, an engineer who aided NASA's investigation of the space shuttle Challenger explosion, died Sept. 26, 2016. He was 59. Chriceol held a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He worked in the oil industry until 1987, when he joined NASA's John C. Stennis Space Center. There, he was part of a team that studied why the Challenger exploded 73 seconds after it launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida, on Jan. 28, 1986. The shuttle's seven crew members died in the tragedy. Chriceol and other investigators discovered that two rubber O-rings, designed to separate the rocket booster's sections, had failed because of cold temperatures the morning of the launch. The discovery enabled NASA to improve safety procedures on future shuttle flights. Survivors include a sister, **CHARLENE C. GOW, '70**, and a brother, Art Chriceol.

**BRAD C. WEDLOCK, '12, '14, '17**, died April 3, 2017. He was 28. Wedlock held a bachelor's degree in mass communication and a master's degree in public relations. At the time of his death, he was pursuing a master's degree in teaching and a doctorate in educational leadership.

The University awarded his doctorate posthumously during the Summer 2017 Commencement. Wedlock was an adjunct communications instructor at South Louisiana Community College, a deejay and an on-air personality at a Lafayette radio station. Survivors include his parents, Rogers and Lisa Wedlock, and a sister, Maegan Wedlock. Friends have established a scholarship fund in his memory through the UL Lafayette Foundation.

**DR. DAN R. WARD**, an accounting professor in the B.I. Moody III College of Business Administration for 36 years, died June 12, 2017. He was 69. Ward served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He held a bachelor's degree from Southeast Missouri State University, an MBA from Arkansas State University and a doctor of business administration in accounting degree from Louisiana Tech University. Survivors include his wife, Dr. Suzanne Pinac Ward, a UL Lafayette professor and head of the Moody College's Department of Accounting. His family and colleagues have established the Dr. Dan R. Ward Memorial Scholarship in Accounting through the UL Lafayette Foundation.

**DR. JOHN KEITH WATSON**, an economics professor in the B.I. Moody III College of Business

Administration, died Aug. 31, 2017. He was 67. A native of Beaumont, Texas, Watson held a bachelor's degree from Lamar University and earned master's and doctoral degrees in economics from Texas A&M. He taught at Oklahoma State and Auburn universities before joining the USL faculty in 1988. The Moody College honored Watson with its John T. and Sandra B. Landry Endowed Award for Teaching in 2013. Survivors include his wife, Patricia McDonald Watson, and three children, **THOMAS WATSON, '02**, **ELIZABETH WATSON, '02**, and David Watson.



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Industrial Institute

1921-1960  
Southwestern Louisiana  
Institute

1960-1999  
University of Southwestern  
Louisiana

1999-PRESENT  
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at Lafayette



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## Eminent Faculty

Awards recognize educators whose work contributes to University's stature

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette Foundation presented its annual Eminent Faculty Awards during an event in April.

The ceremony was the easy part. It's choosing the award winners that's tough, said Dr. Julie Bolton Falgout, the Foundation's president and CEO.

"It's really a good problem to have. UL Lafayette's faculty does not lack for talent. It's always a hard process to select the award winners, but we knew no matter who we chose, they would represent the best the University has to offer.

"These five scholars exemplify the values that have given UL Lafayette a national reputation for academic excellence: a passion for teaching, a willingness to experiment with new ideas, and a desire to improve our community and our world," Falgout said.

Dr. Chad Parker, an associate professor of history, and Dr. Michael Totaro, an associate professor of computing and informatics, received the Dr. Ray P. Authement Excellence in Teaching Award. It is named for the University's fifth president and was created in 1992 to recognize faculty commitment to teaching and innovation.

Dr. Boyun Guo, a professor of petroleum engineering, and Corey Saft, a professor of architecture, were the

Distinguished Professor Award honorees. Established in 1965, the award recognizes educators for their research, teaching effectiveness, and contributions to their professions and to campus life.

The Leadership in Service Award went to Brian Kelly, professor of visual arts.

The award honors a faculty member who combines service learning with classroom instruction to forge skills and knowledge that students can apply to community leadership opportunities.

The Foundation presented the inaugural Leadership in Service Award in 2016.

A committee composed of faculty members from each academic discipline, led by the director of the Office of Academic Planning and Faculty Development, selects finalists. The Foundation presents awards based on the panel's recommendations. Each award carries a \$5,000 stipend.

Video profiles of the recipients and a photo gallery from the award ceremonies can be viewed at: [ullafayettefoundation.org/event/efavideos](http://ullafayettefoundation.org/event/efavideos).

The Foundation assists with the acquisition of donations to UL Lafayette and invests and manages all private assets gifted to the University.



## Dr. Chad Parker

The light bulb can click on anytime. That spontaneous reaction – the second a student's face registers understanding – is why Dr. Chad Parker teaches.

During a lecture about the federal government's handling of the Great Depression, a student's hand shot into the air. His question about that day's topic recalled information presented weeks earlier.

It was a gratifying moment for Parker, an associate professor of history.

DOUG DUGAS

“When students are making those connections, you know they are engaged,” he said.

Parker joined the UL Lafayette history faculty in 2008. He quickly established himself as an innovator, setting up the Department of History, Geography and Philosophy’s first online class offerings in 2012.

But history isn’t a course confined to traditional classrooms or online platforms, Parker said. It’s a vibrant academic discipline that demands public engagement. So he encouraged students to develop public history projects using the department’s Museum on the Move, a mobile presentation space contained in a renovated Airstream trailer.

A few semesters ago, research his students conducted during a class on the role of oil in American history became the basis for an exhibition.

“My students could then proudly enter the museum to see their contributions,” he said.

He also has spearheaded undergraduate research conferences where students presented their work to peers and other scholars. These activities “provide students with invaluable experience outside a comfortable classroom environment and enable them to demonstrate their talents across campus,” he explained.

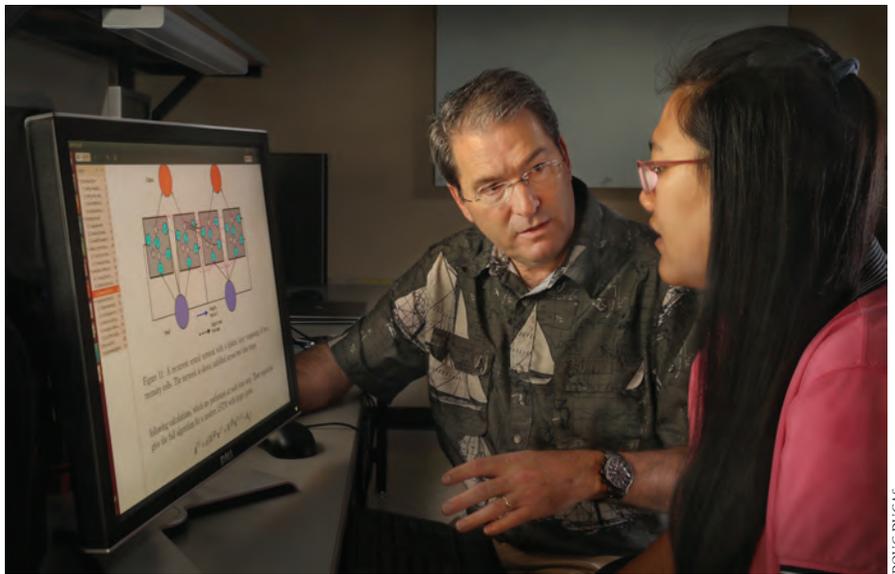
Parker models the professional engagement he wants his students to foster. He maintains an active schedule of community outreach, and his regular attendance at conferences and consistent focus on improving his classroom methods ensure that his teaching stays relevant and engaging.

Parker became department chair in 2017. He succeeded Dr. Sara Ritchey, who wrote in support of his nomination for the Dr. Ray P. Authement Excellence in Teaching Award.

“I have observed countless students express how their lives and understanding of the world have changed completely due to enrolling in Dr. Parker’s courses,” Ritchey wrote.

“Bringing new significance, an informed and meaningful engagement, to students’ outlook on their local and global communities is without doubt the most important work we can do as scholars and professors.”

*‘I have observed countless students express how their lives and understanding of the world have changed completely due to enrolling in Dr. Parker’s courses,’  
Dr. Sara Ritchey*



## Dr. Michael Totaro

These days, Dr. Michael Totaro stands at the front of his classes as an associate professor in the School of Computing and Informatics. But he’s never forgotten what it’s like to be seated in the audience.

Totaro completed a bachelor’s degree in computer science at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in 1982. Three additional degrees followed: two master’s and a doctorate.

Technological advances over the past three decades have propelled computer science in a direction Totaro could not have imagined as a student, but he has remained dedicated to a vow he took when he decided he wanted to teach.

“My experiences as an undergraduate student and graduate student have given me the unique perspective of my students today, what their mental framework is. I made a promise to myself that I would always do everything possible to never forget what it was like to be on that side of the desk,” he said.

Totaro has been a driving force in the School of Computing and Informatics since its inception in 2011. He joined the University’s faculty in 1996 and taught in the B.I. Moody III College of Business Administration for 15 years.

He is a two-time winner of the John T. and Sandra B. Landry Award for Teaching Excellence and a four-time recipient of the UL Lafayette Award for Excellence in Academic Advising.

He helped create a master’s degree program in informatics, which the Louisiana Board of Regents approved earlier this year. It’s the state’s only graduate program in applied computer science.

Informatics is an ever-changing field in an equally dynamic computer science frontier, so keeping current is essential for professors, said Dr. Xindong Wu, program director of the School of Computing and Informatics.

Totaro has made that a priority, Wu wrote in a letter nominating him for the Dr. Ray P. Authement Excellence in Teaching Award.

“In fact, many of his students’ group projects require significant interactions between informatics students and firms in industry, thereby providing students with opportunities to learn experimentally the ‘unstructured’ problems facing informatics professionals on a nearly daily basis,” Wu concluded.

*‘I made a promise to myself that I would always do everything possible to never forget what it was like to be on that side of the desk.’  
Dr. Michael Totaro*

## Dr. Boyun Guo

One of Dr. Boyun Guo's books is the *Well Productivity Handbook*. The title might just as easily be applied to its author. The petroleum engineering professor has collaborated on 10 books and has 70 journal articles to his credit.

In addition, Guo has secured more than \$2.5 million in external funding. That total includes grants from the U.S. Department of Energy and NASA.

"He's very productive," said colleague Dr. Mehdi Mokhtari, an assistant professor in the Department of Petroleum Engineering, in a letter nominating Guo for the 2017 Distinguished Professor Award.

Guo's prodigious scholarship and reputation as an expert in technology that aims to increase energy supplies while also protecting the environment "puts the University of Louisiana at Louisiana on the map for petroleum engineering," Mokhtari said.

"He has done beyond what is expected.

"It shows in his passion for what he is doing. He really likes teaching. He really likes research. He likes his students. He cares about them. Also, he's a very humble person."

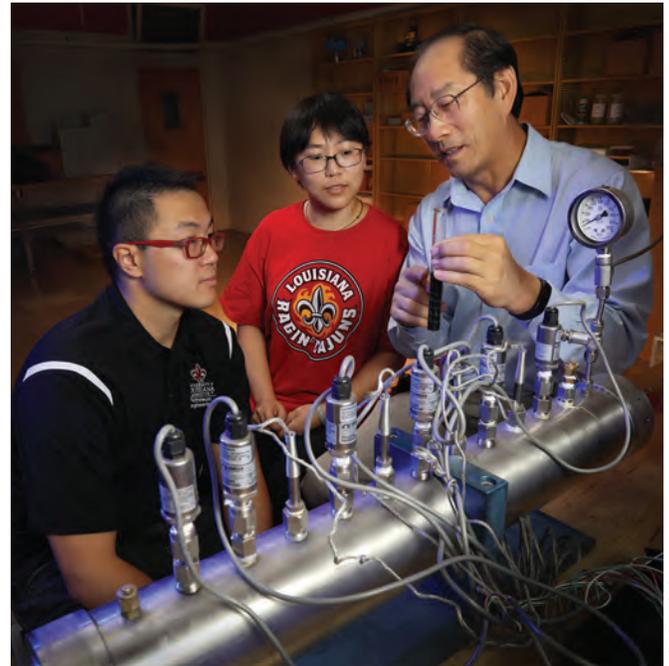
Guo's career in oil and gas began in 1982 while working for a drilling company in his native China.

As a researcher at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Guo and his colleagues developed a mobile tank for the transport of gas hydrates, an ice-like form of water that in nature would be considered methane. The U.S. government awarded a patent for the device in 1993.

'He has done beyond what is expected. It shows in his passion for what he is doing. He really likes teaching.

He really likes research. He likes his students...'

*Dr. Mehdi Mokhtari*



DOUG DUGAS

Guo later worked as a petroleum engineer in Houston before joining the UL Lafayette faculty in 2000.

NASA has twice named him a Faculty Fellow. The UL Lafayette College of Engineering recognized him as its 2016 Researcher of the Year. He was the college's 2008 Teacher of the Year.

Guo continues to offer technical advice to oil and gas companies, and his contributions earned awards from regional, national and international chapters of the Society of Petroleum Engineers. His ties to the petroleum industry give him insight into the political and economic dynamics shaping the field today. That fuels his scholarship, his teaching and his optimism about the future of the profession.

"People need energy. People need affordable energy. No matter what happens in the industry, people will need petroleum engineers," Guo said.



DOUG DUGAS

## Corey Saft

As an undergraduate studying in south Asia, Corey Saft noticed how its architecture melded into the region's natural surroundings.

Now a practicing architect and a professor in the School of Architecture and Design, Saft regularly repeats the lesson his observations taught him: architects should design buildings that are in harmony with their environment.

That's one way the environment factors into his designs. Sustainability is another.

Saft envisions “buildings as living experiments,” New Orleans architect Z Smith wrote in support of Saft’s nomination for the 2017 Distinguished Professor Award. “By instrumenting his projects, observing their performance, and making modifications as data comes in, he exemplifies the best in the emerging field of evidence-based architecture.”

One of his most significant designs, the LeBois House and Courtyard in Lafayette, was the first certified Passive House in the South. Passive House is a construction concept that focuses on energy efficiency, internal air quality and comfort, but it had been applied only in colder environments until Saft designed LeBois House.

Another project was Uptown Lofts, a 72-unit, mixed-use housing development on the edge of downtown Lafayette. The \$16.5 million complex achieved the highest LEED ratings. LEED is an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It is a globally recognized designation for highly efficient and cost-saving green buildings.

Architecture professor Hector LaSala collaborated with Saft on Uptown Lofts.

In a letter of support, LaSala called his colleague “the complete professor.” He highlighted Saft’s ability to build relationships with other University departments and demonstrate the applicability of architecture in other disciplines.

Since joining the School of Architecture and Design faculty in 2003, Saft has engaged in environmental initiatives to bolster Louisiana’s fading coastline and in projects to design upgraded classrooms that are more responsive to the needs of today’s students and teachers. He also worked to develop apps that teach green energy concepts to elementary-age children.

Dr. Ramesh Kolluru, the University’s vice president for Research, Innovation and Economic Development, called Saft “an extraordinarily special guy.

“His passion, his unique understanding of the ecosystem of the community – he’s one of those rare gems we have at this University.”

‘His passion, his unique understanding of the ecosystem of the community – he’s one of those rare gems we have at this University.’  
*Dr. Ramesh Kolluru*

## Brian Kelly

Brian Kelly’s no stranger to accolades. In 2010, he received the UL Lafayette Foundation’s Distinguished Professor Award for his outstanding teaching in the Department of Visual Arts.

This year’s Leadership in Service Award honors a different aspect of Kelly’s career: a passion for service learning, which encourages community engagement by students, staff and faculty.

A recent independent analysis showed UL Lafayette was responsible for about 332,000 hours of community service in 2015. That’s nearly 38 years of work packed into one year.

No doubt Kelly and his students were in that number. He is coordinator of Marais Press, the only professional printmaking facility on a Louisiana university campus.

He and his students host a summer camp to mentor middle- and high-schoolers in the craft. The camp helped his printmaking students sharpen their teaching skills and nurture a spirit of service among them.

It’s also a time when Kelly’s students can teach their own apprentices what they’ve learned from the professional printmakers who regularly visit Marais Press.

“It is important for students studying printmaking to experience collaborating with professional artists. It allows them to develop communication skills in a way that is outside the realm of making work in the comfort of a class,” Kelly said.

“It’s a different type of pressure, a different type of experience, where the student is being moved into a very



DOUG DUGAS

“He is a master of his craft.

Primarily, his love is his printmaking, but he can do it all – etching, you name it.

He has set a course that’s made a bunch of us reconsider exactly how much and how hard we should be working.’

*Allan Jones*

professional, real-world situation.”

Marais Press is more than a classroom. It’s also a laboratory where Kelly fuses his research into nontoxic, alternative and computerized printmaking techniques with more traditional methods.

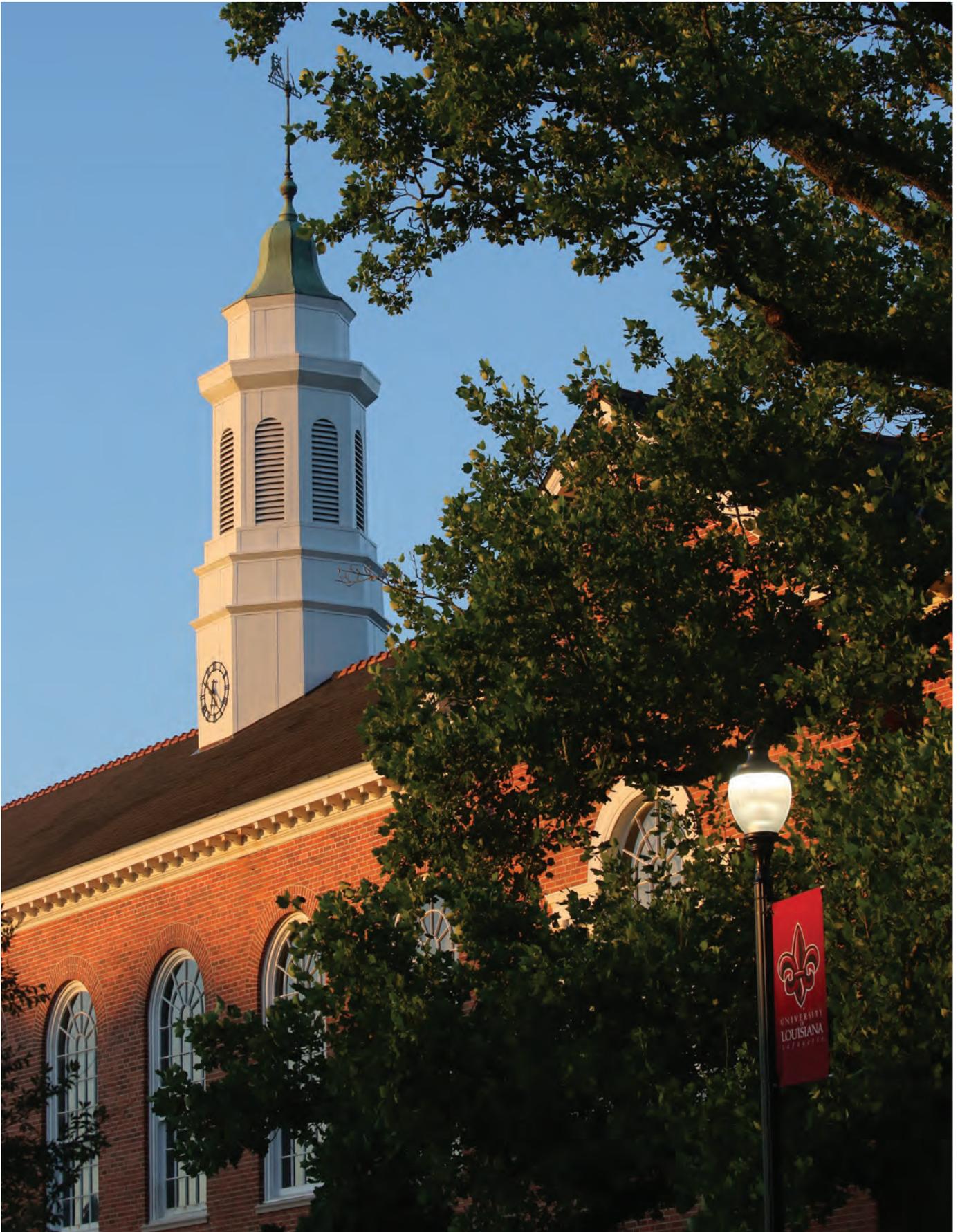
“He is a master of his craft,” said Allan Jones, a visual arts professor. “Primarily, his love is his printmaking, but he can do it

all – etching, you name it.

“He has set a course that’s made a bunch of us reconsider exactly how much and how hard we should be working.”

Kelly’s prints have been featured in nearly 500 national and international exhibitions since 1988. He joined the University’s Visual Arts faculty in 1999.

“I am extremely fortunate to be at a University and within a college that allows me to develop projects that dovetail into the community and that involve the students,” Kelly said.



Stephens Hall is named for UL Lafayette's first president, Dr. Edwin Lewis Stephens, who served from 1900-38. His portrait hangs in a new gallery in Edith Garland Dupré Library that honors the University's five former presidents. For more about the gallery, see page 11.



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