Dear Arts & Sciences Alumni,

In December 2007, the College of Arts & Sciences graduated five hundred ninety-eight students, of which five hundred forty-two were bachelor’s degrees, forty master’s degrees, and sixteen doctorates. These graduates provide a representative sample of the work we do in our college, and the graduating class’s statistics tell us a great deal about our college’s mission.

The graduates came from forty-six parishes in Louisiana, twenty-five states from across America, and from fourteen other countries. Of those receiving baccalaureate degrees, two hundred forty-two were male and three hundred were female. Of those receiving graduate degrees, twenty-eight were male and twenty-eight were female. The bachelor’s degree recipients varied in age from twenty-one to fifty-one. The graduate degree recipients ranged in age from twenty-four to fifty-six.

The College produced its first two LSU Distinguished Communicator graduates, Katherine Deluca and Margo Johnson. These students have been certified as having outstanding written, spoken, visual, and technological communication skills through course work and independent projects. Katherine Deluca demonstrated her competency in part by researching and writing for our magazine.

The College also recognized students who received College Honors, including Matthew Arnold, who took Honors classes and wrote an Honors thesis, and students who graduated with Latin Honors, with GPAs from 3.7 to 4.0, and our four university medalists, who graduated with perfect “A” averages. These students are pictured on the magazine’s back cover. We are proud of all of our students, and we invite you to continue to support our mission of education, accomplished through excellence in teaching, research, and service.

Guillermo Ferreyra, Dean

Message from the Dean

Joseph Savoie, former commissioner of higher education in Louisiana and future president of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, was on hand to celebrate the graduation of his daughter, Blaire Savoie, who graduated with a degree in General Studies from the LSU College of Arts & Sciences in fall 2007. Savoie, left, shared the platform with guest speaker LSU System President John Lombardi (center) and Dean Guillermo Ferreyra (right).
Kaleidoscope Magazine

Volume 4, Issue 2  Editor - Brenda Macon  Art Director - Tim Elder  Editorial Board - Bryan Landry, Robin Roberts, Ann Whitmer
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A publication of the College of Arts & Sciences, Louisiana State University. For corrections, omissions, or submissions, please contact Brenda Macon, (225) 578-6906 or bmacon@lsu.edu.

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LSU Design Services  120305  LSU Printing Services  04/08

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a special note from the editor:

To our alumni: Please contact us with news from your lives: family, career, etc. We are eager to include information from our former students in the pages of Kaleidoscope and look forward to hearing from you.
Have you ever attempted to spot changes in similar visual images only to come up blank? Don’t feel all alone. “Change blindness” is significant enough that this inability to detect slight changes can help researchers study how visual images are processed. Assistant Professor Melissa Beck in the LSU Department of Psychology uses visual change detection as a tool to investigate the almost instantaneous mechanism by which the brain attends, encodes, stores, and retrieves visual information. Studying this process is an important part of learning more about how memory works and how memory is related to our visual perception of the world around us.

Beck became interested in this area of research because she has always been fascinated by the discrepancy between how we think we record visual stimuli and how the brain actually processes this information. Most of us think that, if we see something, that image is indelible—after all, seeing is believing, right? Wrong—according to researchers. “Our beliefs are inaccurate,” Beck explained recently. “The brain processes information differently than we intuit.”

The difference is in the number of steps between the moment at which an image reaches the eye and the time that image becomes part of the stored memories in the brain. Each step in the process is important, from receiving the visual image on the retina to encoding, storing, and retrieving the image in the brain.

Beck’s research has focused specifically on how images are encoded and then how memories of the images are retrieved. She and her team of investigators studied these components of the process by having subjects first look at two images that look identical except for very minor changes in the second image. The changes were of two types: probable or improbable. Probable changes are those that the subjects would expect, such as a change in the location of a car on the street. Improbable changes are those that are unexpected, such as a change in the color of a car on the street. In previous research, subjects had a harder time recognizing improbable changes than probable changes, and Beck wanted to know why.

Two examples of these types of changes are shown in the photographs. If you glance at the two photos of the house, what difference do you notice? How about the photos of the shoes? Which difference did you spot first—the change in the photos of the house or that in the photos of the shoes? According to Beck’s findings, you most likely found the difference in the photos of the shoes because that difference represents a probable change—shoes frequently get moved around. On the other hand, the difference in the photos of the house is improbable—changes to otherwise static physical structures are less likely to occur.
What Beck and her team discovered is that the problems with detecting changes occur not only in the encoding phase, as one would expect, but also in the retrieval phase. Because the images are committed to memory, they can be affected by the subject’s own prior experiences.

“It’s fascinating to me how we process visual images,” Beck said. “The visual system is influenced by previous knowledge and experience.”

Beck’s next research will focus on attention strategies. She will be looking at individual differences in the spread of visual attention among a group of subjects. Beck explained that some people use global (broad) attention strategies and others use local ones. She plans to study which strategies are best for particular tasks, such as air traffic control.

Beck and her husband, Alex Cohen, both joined the faculty at LSU in August 2006. Beck had previously worked as a researcher at George Mason University in Washington, DC. She has found adapting to life in south Louisiana to be fairly easy after having lived in the DC area.

“The people here are friendly,” she commented. “People in DC are usually in transition from one place to another, so they aren’t as inclined to develop relationships with colleagues. Here, people take the time to be more sociable. We’re outgoing people, so we really like that. The cultural differences are also something that I hadn’t expected. Students are more polite and laid back.”

A Word from Bryan Landry, the Director of Development

Dear A&S Alumni and Friends,

Louisiana State University routinely presents us with reasons to feel proud to be associated with this great institution. The 2007-08 academic year has been especially bountiful in terms of good news for Tigers everywhere. The national championship in football has elevated awareness of the culture of excellence that defines LSU not only on the playing fields and courts but in the lecture halls and labs as well. In the College of Arts & Sciences, accomplishments such as the publication of the first edition of the National Women’s Studies Association journal represent the academic equivalent to that gridiron achievement. The prestige of having a national publication housed here, on our campus, in our College, and edited by our own Brenda Macon (whose excellent work you are reading now in this Kaleidoscope) cannot be overstated. At LSU, we are showing that academic excellence, athletic achievement, and cultural diversity can coexist and produce a unique and uniquely successful American institution of higher learning.

All these accomplishments rely on the commitment and academic accomplishments of our faculty, the enthusiasm and talent of our students, and the passionate support both moral and financial of our alumni and friends. The Forever LSU Campaign is vigorously progressing towards the stated goal of $750 million by the year 2010. To date, LSU has raised more than $423 million for the purposes of providing the resources that will enable us to build a university of which you can be even more proud. The stated goals of the Flagship Agenda to achieve a Tier One Ranking before the year 2010 are well within our reach thanks to your investment in LSU.

We are most grateful for your continued support of the College and LSU. If you have not yet made your commitment to the Forever LSU Campaign, we hope that you will consider making a gift either for scholarships, teaching awards, professorships, student life, or any other purpose that reflects your values and enables us to work to share those values with generations of Tigers to come. Please contact our office at 225-578-6441, or via email at blandry@lsu.edu, if you have any questions on making your commitment to the campaign. We hope to see you on campus very soon.
After its beginning in the 1990s with service-learning initiatives in the English department, The Center for Engagement, Learning, and Leadership Program (CCELL) was officially established in 2003. CCELL aims to advance civic and social responsibility through an effective combination of academic instruction, research, and community engagement. The program acts as a mediator between community organizations and service-learning classes, giving students opportunities to connect classroom learning with community activism.

According to Jan Shoemaker, Director of CCELL, “Service learning is important because it engages the university with the community.”

“Service learning engages students in deep, long-lasting learning,” Shoemaker explained. “Their experiences in the community make the statistics and theory they learn real and, therefore, memorable.”

Establishing connections between the classroom and the community is one of the primary goals for CCELL and the faculty who teach service-learning courses. In place across the university and at all levels, service-learning courses give students a chance to participate in an educational experience in which their work takes on the form of a real, deliverable product that can benefit their community. Service-learning can range from math students tutoring in public schools, to technical writing students composing grants for community organizations, to architecture students rebuilding homes in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Service learning has been a major component of many courses in the College of Arts & Sciences. Educators within the college see it as an important and useful way to teach students to engage with their work critically and practically.

Deborah Normand, an Instructor in the English Department, has been teaching service-learning courses since 2002. “I just got tired of standing in front of a class and saying, ‘This is important,’ and then going on to say, ‘Okay, now this is really important,’” Normand explained. Instead, she decided to show her students how important their lessons were by teaching courses in which they could link theory with practical application.

“For students to see the importance of writing, it [what they write] has to be important to them,” Normand said. “Service learning is a way to make their writing real. Instead of my deadlines, they have to face the deadlines of the community, and instead of my requirements, they have to work with the requirements of the organizations and for grants.”

Projects in Normand’s service-learning classes have taken many shapes: One technical writing class worked in conjunction with a group of engineering students, writing the grants that would bring in the $50,000 necessary for the engineering students to build a community playground.

Students see the benefits of such projects immediately. Ann Barlass, a sophomore in the College of Arts & Sciences majoring in Communication Sciences & Disorders, took a business writing course, which included a service-learning component, with Deborah Normand. Barlass’ project was to create a newsletter for the organization Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana, connecting her work and her studies with the community.

“Service learning is character building,” Barlass explained. “It helps you to be more socially aware of issues and aware of how to help the community.”

Equally important to Barlass, the service-learning project enabled her to make connections between the concepts she learned in class and the real world application of those ideas. “These let me see not only how to be a better writer but also the effects of my work,” said Barlass.

For Sociology Professor Mark Schafer, it is the way service-learning can help students make connections between their studies and practice that makes it such a valuable pedagogical tool.

In his Sociology of Education class, Schafer hopes his students will draw connections between practice and theory. His students study sociological theories of education before going into East Baton Rouge public schools to tutor first grade students in reading.

“Service learning helps to tie the reality of education to the classroom discussion,” Schafer explained.

“When students go into the schools,” Schafer stated, “it adds complexity to the articles they read and their understandings of them.” This complexity is important to service learning generally, because it appropriately
addresses one of aims of the CCELL program: to have students engage critically with classroom learning in a real life situation.

Casey Waldrop, a senior in the College of Arts & Sciences majoring in sociology with a concentration in criminology, has identified this importance in her service-learning experiences.

“Service learning is important because it teaches you practical communication and coping skills that are not covered in a general lecture setting,” Waldrop said.

Waldrop has found her real life experience as a tutor has enabled her to deeply and critically engage with her in-class education.

“I have been experimenting with different techniques to capture the interest of the students I tutor, my reading friends. It proves to be a difficult task to keep my two reading friends interested in reading from week to week,” Waldrop explained. “However, the challenge has helped me to develop my communication skills with the children and given me a better understanding of the problems that teachers encounter on a daily basis.”

Jason Becnel, her classmate, echoed Waldrop’s experiences. Becnel, a senior majoring in general studies with concentrations in sociology, communication studies, and anthropology, has found service learning to be challenging and highly rewarding.

“I think it’s better for learning,” Becnel said. “By going out and doing service in the community and relating to people, it contributes to your growth and maturity.”

As Deborah Normand describes it, service learning gives students a unique opportunity because it challenges them to become better problem solvers both in their work and for their community.

“It’s important for students to get outside of the ivory tower and to be able to work with others outside of academia,” she said. “This is a chance for them to address systemic problems, and when they go into the community, they learn to stop seeing the people they’re helping as ‘others.’”

“Students learn to work with diverse groups through service learning with whom they may have never worked before. It gives them an opportunity to gain an appreciation for difference and that’s really what a liberal education is all about,” Normand stated.

“The intent of service learning is to provide an experience with civic responsibility that benefits the community,” Shoemaker summarized.

Thanks to Shoemaker’s tireless work, CCELL and service learning have become an integral part of education within the College of Arts & Sciences that enables students to make real connections between their studies and their communities. Enabling students to identify needs in the community and to participate actively in the creation of a better social environment, service learning teaches students to engage critically with their surroundings, showing them how to contribute to the future of their society.
At a recent Saturday meeting of the LSU College of Arts & Sciences Advisory Council, council members visited the Psychological Services Center in the basement of Johnston Hall. Graduate students and their mentors crowded the hallways, waiting to present their latest work to the council.

Assistant Professor Alex Cohen eloquently described his work with schizophrenia patients, a research area that promises to provide new insight into the treatment and understanding of this often mysterious and sometimes tragic form of mental illness.

Several weeks after his initial presentation, Cohen talked about his research, which focuses on understanding why patients suffer long term impairments in relationships and work, despite advances in the medications available to treat schizophrenia. To this end, Cohen and his team are looking at core features of the illness that are not currently treated with medication and that have been historically under-researched. In particular, patient motivation, emotion, and cognitive abilities, such as attention and memory, play very important roles in how well individuals with schizophrenia function.

Many research groups across the world are devoting resources to understanding chronic dysfunctions in schizophrenia. However, what distinguishes LSU’s research is a focus on developing novel approaches to measuring the symptoms underlying these dysfunctions. Of particular note, Cohen’s team has developed a procedure for measuring motivational and emotional symptoms using computerized analysis of natural behavior. This procedure is already paying dividends in understanding these symptoms, and the researchers hope that the procedures will be used to assist practitioners in assessing and treating schizophrenia. This more objective approach to interviewing a patient involves having the person talk for a brief interval about stimuli presented on a computer screen. The patient’s voice is digitally recorded, and the voice patterns and speech content are analyzed using freely available software packages. The procedure is brief, repeatable, easy to administer, and dramatically more sensitive than the symptom rating scales that are in current use. Cohen hopes the prototype measurement program will soon be ready for testing in the clinical arena.

Data from the LSU laboratory suggests that individuals with schizophrenia show very little initiation when they
talk, and their speech is characterized by less energy than non-schizophrenics. Most striking, they show very little emotion when they talk, even when discussing highly charged topics. This is in contrast to individuals without the mental illness who show dramatic changes in their speech when discussing emotionally charged statements. This point is well illustrated in the graph, during which a patient expresses a rather solemn point yet shows little difference in expressivity compared to when expressing a more cheerful point.

As part of the team's ongoing research and as part of the Psychological Services Center's community service, Cohen and his students have undertaken a screening survey for most incoming LSU students through the University College. This survey provides the staff at the Psychological Services Center with information on students who may be at risk for developing serious psychological disorders such as schizophrenia.

“It is important to note that the majority of people identified by our study will never develop schizophrenia, but it is important to offer these people resources should they decide they need help in the future,” Cohen explained.

Cohen believes that catching problems early may help at-risk students to get treatment before their symptoms become severe. The average age for the onset of schizophrenia is from 18 to 25 years for men and in the early to late 20s for women, but symptoms, such as hallucinations and hearing voices, can be detected early with the LSU survey. Early identification and intervention can often improve the course of the illness.

Cohen supervises ten graduate students, four of whom are key members of his research team, and eighteen undergraduates. The graduate students work in state-run community mental health clinics in both New Orleans and Lafayette as part of their programs of study, a service that helps the students gain practical experience with real patients and, reciprocally, helps the clinic staff keep abreast of current research. The undergraduates perform research at levels that provide them opportunities to publish and to prepare for graduate school.

“I came to this field because of the dollar book table at Powell’s to browse through the books on the sale rack,” he explained. “They always had a large stack of psychology books, and I was enamored with the books describing abnormal psychological states. I started volunteering in patient care and soon decided this is what I want to do.”

Cohen and his wife, Melissa Beck, both accepted faculty positions in the LSU Psychology Department and arrived in Baton Rouge in August 2006 after having lived in Washington, DC. Like Beck, Cohen finds South Louisiana to be much friendlier.

“In Washington, there’s so much going on all the time, and that can be a lot of fun, but it’s sterile. Relationships tend to be a little more superficial,” he said. “Here, people are much more social, and they bond really quickly. We’re social people, so we really like it here.”
The Communication across the Curriculum initiative’s Distinguished Communicator program intrigued Lacey Deshotel even before she enrolled in the certification program.

“Just watching my boyfriend get involved in the program and the positive effects it had on his communication skills got me interested,” Deshotel said.

A senior majoring in English with a concentration in writing and culture and a minor in German, Deshotel is one of the many students in the College of Arts & Sciences and at LSU who have taken advantage of a unique opportunity by enrolling in the LSU Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) program.

Through the generous donation of LSU alumnus Gordon Cain in 2004, the LSU CxC initiative has sought to improve LSU students’ education. Helping students across the university improve their communication skills in four fields—writing, speaking, visual communication, and technological communication—CxC aims to raise perceptions outside of LSU and the region about the talents and quality of LSU students.

After spending many years at the University of Minnesota developing their writing across the curriculum program, CxC Director Lillian Bridwell-Bowles brought her expertise to LSU. She saw a new start at LSU as an opportunity to create an exceptional program that incorporates all of the best elements of writing across the curriculum initiatives that she has encountered in her twenty-five career in the field.

“I think CxC is a huge part of the flagship agenda,” said Bridwell-Bowles. “CxC plays right into making the case that LSU is an outstanding university and that its students are wonderful.”

Not only does CxC make the case that LSU and its students are wonderful, but the program’s distinctive features show how wonderful it is, too. The program features a diverse faculty and staff with different areas of expertise in the four emphasized fields of communication, as well as state-of-the-art resources and facilities to help students improve their communication skills. While its main offices were first located in historic Pleasant Hall, the program recently made the move to the second floor of Coates Hall, giving it a more central location and placing it closer to its many satellite communication studios.

“I knew we wanted communication studios, I knew we wanted student recognition, I knew we wanted to do digital portfolios, and I also knew we wanted to decide if we wanted our focus to be more than just writing,” Bridwell-Bowles explained.

Out of these desires came the CxC program in its current form. Students gain recognition through completion of the Distinguished Communicator program and construction of their digital portfolios. To help them achieve these goals, CxC established communication studios across campus.

In the College of Arts & Sciences, CxC created Studio 151 as a place in which students can work specifically on visual communication. The studio is equipped with all of the accoutrements necessary to help students produce projects of outstanding quality. Studio 151 gives students access to the latest technology, like Apple Mac Book Pro workstations with

The CxC Program: Enhancing LSU Education

(above) Students’ work in the CxC program culminates in the creation of a Digital Portfolio. Portfolios, like this one by Margeaux Johnson, illustrate the depth and extent of the work and accomplishments completed during students’ undergraduate careers.

(opposite left) Kenneth Reynolds, Sarah Duhan, and Jessica Shamba, all undergraduates, work with Joey Watson, Studio 151 graduate assistant (right), on a video production. Studio 151 provides students with the materials and the instruction necessary to create professional quality video projects.

(opposite center) Undergraduates Louis Tolliver and Nausheen Qolam Hossen work together on a communication project using advanced technology in Studio 151. The CxC Program enables students to improve their communication skills in a variety of areas: written communication, spoken communication, technological communication, and visual communication.

(opposite right) Professor Lillian Bridwell-Bowles (center), director of the CxC program, celebrates with recent Distinguished Communicator certified students. Pictured are (back row) Warren Waggenspack, faculty advisor; Ishliaq Rouf; Shauin Treadaway; Stephanie Simmons; Karen Powell, CxC assistant director; Laura Gauthreaux; Sarah Quinn; Ximna Adokpaye; (front row) Jennifer Macha, faculty advisor; Meredith Lapré; Kim Bourque, CxC Administrative Coordinator; Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, CxC director; and Marybeth Lima, faculty advisor.
professional quality editing software, and valuable equipment, such as Canon camcorders and other useful production tools.

Margeaux Johnson, a senior in the College of Arts & Sciences majoring in the English: Writing and Culture concentration, enrolled in the CxC program to improve her skills in technological communication. Because Johnson is interested in pursuing a career in the entertainment and film industries, she saw the experience she could gain through CxC as invaluable.

“I’ve learned how to use Adobe Dreamweaver and a lot more technological things that I was not originally able to use,” Johnson said. Working with CxC and in Studio 151, she was able to complete her digital portfolio and video projects for some classes.

Now about to graduate, Johnson knows that the program has given her a distinctive way to highlight the skills and knowledge she has obtained as a student at LSU.

“Completing the program and having a digital portfolio showcases what you’ve accomplished because when you graduate you have your degree and your GPA, but this shows more than those do. It really shows what you’ve learned,” she explained.

For Johnson, the opportunity to learn about new technologies and to have experiences in the “four flavors” of communication has been priceless to her education and professional preparation.

“You can gain a lot of experiences, like internships,” she said. “Working in this program improved my communication skills, and it even got me actual jobs working in film.”

Her experiences with CxC have led Johnson to see the importance of the program for all students. “It’s a really good program, and I just really want to encourage students to go into it because no matter what your major, it’s always important to be able to communicate effectively.”

Along with developing students’ communication skills and preparing them for entering the workforce and community, Assistant Director Karen Powell also sees highlighting the quality of students’ achievements and work at LSU as one of the major functions of the program. “We want to recognize what students are already doing. We want to help students build upon their skills and recognize all the good work they’re doing more publicly, both at LSU and nationally.”

To enhance students’ experiences and education and give them the opportunities to be recognized for their accomplishments, CxC has relied on donations from alumni and members of the LSU community.

“Having the money and people to start this together has been, personally, incredibly satisfying,” Bridwell-Bowles explained.

Indeed, Gordon Cain’s legacy has provided the funding to furnish the university with a tremendous start, but Bridwell-Bowles notes that it won’t always be enough. She hopes the program will continue to grow, bettering its facilities and increasing its services with the generosity of donors.

As senior Lacey Deshotel views it, the CxC program is a precious resource for students within the College of Arts & Sciences who want to make the most of their education.

“Overall,” Deshotel said, “the CxC program provides students with a great opportunity to develop skills used in everyday life.”
Algorithmic and Pedagogical Aspects in a Mathematical Laboratory Environment

or How a Computer Helped Me Learn Math
When incoming freshmen walk through the doors of the state-of-the-art math lab in Pleasant Hall, they may at first feel as if they have entered a NASA control room. The building itself, which originally housed a women’s dormitory and was later used as an on-campus hotel, has a quaint charm. The math lab takes on a completely different character. The three rooms are equipped with everything necessary-student identification login systems, Internet access directly linked to the students’ courses, and 250 computer stations—to accommodate students learning college-level algebra and trigonometry. All three rooms also contain a full range of multimedia equipment, including document cameras, ceiling-mounted projectors, and high-end sound systems.

The technologically enhanced lab is an integral component in the LSU Mathematics Department’s intensive course redesign program, which began in fall 2003. As part of their implementation of LSU’s Flagship Agenda, Guillermo Ferreyra, who was then chair of the math department, and Larry Smolinsky, who is the current department chair, worked with a committee of their faculty to devise creative ways to teach entry-level courses. This committee, with members including now-emeritus Boyd Professor Jimmy Lawson, who served as chair, and Phoebe Rouse, who served as coordinator, visited other universities and studied a variety of systems before they decided on a program that they felt would work at LSU.

Their criteria for such a program required that it would allow students to learn in a combination of classroom and laboratory environments, that it would be a departure from the traditional lecture classroom setting, and that student success rates would be higher than in the traditional classroom. The classes eventually incorporated into the program were to be Math 1021 College Algebra, Math 1022 Trigonometry, and Math 1023 Precalculus. Sixty percent of incoming freshmen at LSU, regardless of their majors, take at least one of these courses.

The program they ultimately chose for College Algebra and Trigonometry incorporates an Internet account package appropriately called MyMathLab and requires students to attend a one-hour lecture each week and to work in the lab at least three hours per week. They decided that participation in both the lecture and the lab should be mandatory and made it part of the students’ final grade. Student progress is monitored throughout the semester, with reports on each student sent to the individual teachers every week. Also, recording the hours each student works during the week allows the teacher to identify and encourage those students who may not be meeting the minimum requirements.

Once the basic decisions had been made, Lawson and Rouse went to work: They wrote grant proposals and ultimately obtained funding from LSU, the LSU Student Technology fee, the Louisiana Board of Regents, and the LSU College of Arts & Sciences. Rouse oversaw the renovation—a superhuman feat—of three vacant spaces in Pleasant Hall, one of which had long been abandoned, and purchased computers and other equipment for the lab.

On the first floor of Pleasant, the main room—which opened in fall 2005—contains workstations for 114 students, two administrators, and connections for eight laptops. The basement room opened in fall 2006 and contains workstations for 118 students, two administrators, two tech support staff, and connections for 18 laptops. A smaller room to the side of the basement space that opened in fall 2007 can accommodate 14 students in a small seminar-type setting.

Recently, while standing in the basement room in Pleasant Hall, Rouse mused, “My mother once lived in this building when she was a student at LSU many years ago. This space was their cafeteria.”

The space—which had been abandoned for years and was dirty, dank, and deserted—is now airy, light, and well-equipped to handle the students who pack into the lab each week.
Phoebe Rouse attributes the success of the new math program to several factors, not the least of which is the team of hard-working, dedicated people involved. From the faculty and instructors who administer the program to the instructors and graduate students who teach, the graduate and undergraduate students who tutor, and the ITS staff and undergraduate student workers who provide tech support, the people make the difference in the continuing vitality of this important course redesign effort.

Recently, one member of the team graduated from LSU. Brian Bannon had worked with Rouse since fall of 2006. His efforts on behalf of the program exemplify the quality of the work ethic within the team. According to Rouse:

“On a typically warm August afternoon in 2006, Brian Bannon, along with several other ITS student workers, carried 120 computer boxes and 120 monitors from a truck on Chimes Street into the basement math lab. Brian never complained about the heat or the work, and he exhibited leadership skills while doing this feat. He then proceeded to work at unpacking the computers, setting them up, ghost imaging them, and cleaning up the mess. Throughout, he maintained a positive, professional attitude.”

“That semester and the following spring, summer, and fall of 2007, he lead the team of student workers who handled the tech support and maintenance for those computers as well as the other 116 we already had. He was always congenial, interested in whatever was happening in the lab, and often even answered students’ math questions.”

“Though Brian’s primary responsibility was taking care of these 236 computers, he helped with whatever we needed. Our time clock software was challenging to set up, and Brian worked tirelessly with us to network the system in the two lab rooms and get it running smoothly. He also helped to revise the Excel macros we use in our tutor scheduling efforts.”

“One day in early September 2007, something unusual happened to our time clock computer in the first floor lab and 3000 students were instantly logged in with negative hours. Brian worked carefully to determine what had caused the problem. Within a few minutes, he found that the month on the time clock computer calendar had accidentally been changed and all of a sudden it was August instead of September in the time clock. After some effort, we were able to restore the system and straighten out all of the problems it caused. This would have been a major disaster without Brian’s methodical problem solving skills and calm demeanor.”

Undergraduate Contributes to Successful Program

Phoebe Rouse attributes the success of the new math program to several factors, not the least of which is the team of hard-working, dedicated people involved. From the faculty and instructors who administer the program to the instructors and graduate students who teach, the graduate and undergraduate students who tutor, and the ITS staff and undergraduate student workers who provide tech support, the people make the difference in the continuing vitality of this important course redesign effort.

While the facilities were being prepared and the Internet connections and monitoring apparatus were being installed, Rouse and her colleagues were redesigning the course curricula. Rouse leads an impressive management team of seasoned educators: Karla Neal coordinates the Math 1022 Trigonometry curriculum; Gerry Fitch serves as the Math 1023 Precalculus curriculum coordinator; Debra Kopcso supervises the many tutors employed in the program; Stephanie Kurtz has the daunting task of managing and maintaining the time clock that records each student’s time in the lab; and Rouse coordinates the Math 1021 College Algebra curriculum and oversees the entire program. All are career instructors in the LSU Mathematics Department. The management team also works diligently to prepare graduate students in the math department to teach...
freshman math courses. Their rigorous training program requires the graduate students to take an introductory half-day workshop in the summer before they begin their own course work at LSU. Then, in their first year, the graduate students must take two more courses in which they observe experienced teachers, give mock presentations, learn about appropriate teaching methods, and practice managing courses on the computer. Before they actually begin teaching, these graduate assistants must attend two more half-day workshops to polish their skills.

Undergraduate tutors undergo similar training before they begin helping students in the lab. These peer tutors are usually junior- or senior-level math or biology majors who are selected not only for their proficiency in math, but also for their nurturing, patient personalities and their ability to explain math concepts at a level that freshmen can understand. These students must reapply every semester to prevent them from becoming complacent in their roles as tutors. The new program employs four levels of workers: career instructors; upper-level graduate teaching assistants; first-year graduate students; and undergraduate tutors.

When students who are enrolled in one of the targeted courses come to the lab, they must present their LSU ID cards, which are scanned into the AccuTrack monitoring software. Students then sit at the workstations, which are dedicated solely to the MyMathLab Internet site. Tutors are available to give students individualized, immediate feedback on their questions. Students work their math problems on paper and then check their results with the computer. If they get the correct answers, the computer congratulates them. If they miss problems, the computer walks them through a tutorial that explains how to correctly solve the problems.

Students purchase the MyMathLab package bundled with the textbook for their math courses. A hard cover textbook would normally cost about $147, and the stand-alone MyMathLab account would cost $57. However, the LSU paperback version of the text, which includes the Internet account, costs about $105 and is good for two semesters of math courses (usually Math 1021 College Algebra and Math 1022 Trigonometry). Rouse explained that the publisher has been very cooperative, which has kept the price relatively low.

The management team has maintained data on the new program since the pilot for the newly redesigned courses began in spring 2005. Unlike the results from studies of the previous system, the results show that the new program is less teacher-dependent. The classes have been normalized so that the effectiveness of instruction and learning can be studied by looking at objective factors, such as the amount of time students spent in the lab.

During the fall 2005 semester, the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the University adversely affected student performance in a number of ways, and the lab data from the program’s second semester in operation reflect that. However, by fall 2006, the data indicated that student performance was improving at a remarkable rate, with 80% of students who put in at least 70% of the required time earning at least a “C” in Math 1021 College Algebra. The success rate (grade of A, B, or C) was 75%, which is the highest it has ever been at LSU. The national average is 50%.

Responding to these impressive results, the management team made some adjustments to the courses, increasing the rigor to provide students with more challenging material. Despite this increased difficulty, the majority of students continue to succeed in the courses with at least a “C” average.

“Participation is the key to improved grades,” Rouse explained. “Students are spending more time doing math and less time watching math than they were in the traditional model.”

The team will continue to adjust the courses and the lab to increase the effectiveness of the program, and students seem to recognize the importance of this innovative approach to teaching and learning math concepts. According to both Rouse and LSU Mathematics Department chair Larry Smolinsky, surveys of students who have participated in the program indicate that a large majority of students believe using this approach is helping them to be successful.
Scott Baldridge, who joined the faculty of the LSU Department of Mathematics in 2004, recently received a prestigious National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) award. According to the Foundation’s website, these awards are granted “in support of the early career-development activities of those teacher-scholars who most effectively integrate research and education within the context of the mission of their organization. Such activities should build a firm foundation for a lifetime of integrated contributions to research and education.” Baldridge’s award was one of only sixteen in the field of mathematics during this granting period for all U.S. university systems. One component of this award is that he will also be considered for one of the few Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) that are made each year.

Proposals for the CAREER Award are evaluated on two factors: intellectual merit and broad impact, and Baldridge ties these two elements together through both the intensity of his research and his service to the mathematical community. His work in the topology, a type of geometry, of smooth four-dimensional spaces is part of an intellectual endeavor by mathematicians and physicists around the world on this difficult problem: Can we classify the different potential “shapes” of the space-time universe? As members of this large research community, Baldridge and another researcher, Paul Kirk, recently introduced new techniques and methods to construct exotic new examples of four-dimensional spaces. These examples are tangentially related to the smooth Poincaré in dimension four: Are there examples of exotic four-dimensional spheres? The standard four-dimensional sphere is just the space given by real-valued solutions to the equation:

$$a^2 + b^2 + c^2 + d^2 + e^2 = 1.$$  

Baldridge’s research involves finding new techniques for constructing smooth four-dimensional spaces, constructing new examples using those techniques, and using non-linear partial differential equations to show that those examples are not part of the current list of known examples. Baldridge is a young leader in this line of research.

Larry Smolinsky, chair of the LSU Mathematics Department, recently explained that topology is one of three main areas—algebra, analysis, and topology—of mathematical research today. Regardless of the area, however, he commented that all mathematicians share the same goal: To reach an understanding of often complex ideas and concepts.

“The work of mathematicians builds from intense intellectual activity,” Smolinsky explained. “A mathematical argument has to hold together perfectly. When the whole thing comes together, it may be a complicated, long argument, but it ultimately has to fit...
perfectly." As he summarized, "Mathematical research is vibrant and far-reaching and involves many people."

“One of the questions recipients of the CAREER award are asked is 'how are you getting young people excited about working in your field?'” Baldridge explained. “The career award is about my research in mathematics and about building a life-long program around my mathematics that attracts young men and women to work on questions generated by that research. So part of the career award is about promoting this research. As a mathematician, I think almost completely in the abstract, so it’s challenging to present my work to people in terms they can not only understand but also get excited about.”

Besides contributing to a better understanding of four-dimensional spaces specifically and topology in general, Baldridge hopes to help others come to a better understanding of, and appreciation for, mathematics. As part of his work with the CAREER grant, he plans to continue previous work he has done in educating mathematics teachers.

Baldridge has been interested in mathematics education for several years. As a graduate student at Michigan State University, he became involved in the Connected Mathematics Project and worked to develop mathematics curriculum for sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. It was also at Michigan State that he won a graduate student teaching award. He has also co-authored a textbook (Elementary Mathematics for Teachers, Sefton-Ash Publishing 2004) for training mathematics teachers in the lower grades and is working on a second co-authored text, Elementary Geometry for Teachers.

“The CAREER grant will help me finish this second book and start a third called Elementary Algebra for Teachers,” Baldridge commented.

2006). Recently the two researchers wrote a proposal for a Board of Regents grant to help train twelve new high school teachers for the Road to Redesign project (R2R). This project uses computer software to encourage students to do homework in mathematics through on-site math labs in the schools. This seed grant is expected to get the program up and running at twelve high schools while the two investigators search for additional funding for the program.

In addition to the R2R project, the Board of Regents grant would also continue to fund a high school math competition at LSU; fund “Math Circles,” five-week summer programs for high-achieving high school students; and establish a residential program in mathematics for incoming math majors. The goal of the grant is to increase the number of Louisiana high school students who major in science and mathematics at LSU.

While Baldridge appreciates the state and federal funding he has been able to secure, he has a special fondness for the private donations. “Individual donations and funding from private foundations are exciting and important components of these projects,” he explained. “When a donor pledges to fund even a small part of a project, that pledge greatly increases the odds that a federal or state agency will help fund the rest of the project,” he said. “Using each pledged dollar to attract three or four more dollars is a very effective way for an individual or foundation to get involved and make a difference in education!”

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A look around Jerry Kennedy’s office in Allen Hall can make one’s head spin. Flyers announce presentations he is making at other universities; a manuscript for the Cambridge edition of Hemingway’s collected correspondence await his editorial eye; chapters from books in progress fill filing cabinet drawers. In addition to his own scholarly work, Kennedy serves on a number of boards and committees in his area of expertise, and he is part of a world-class production team put together by Perry Miller Adato, an award-winning documentary filmmaker. Kennedy, the William A. Read Professor of English, has been with LSU since 1973 and is an internationally acclaimed and well-established authority in American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One of Kennedy’s specialties within the larger field of American literature is American expatriate writers in Paris. His interest began soon after he was selected, as a junior faculty member in 1978, to receive a Fulbright Fellowship to study and teach in France. His assignment to teach one day a week in Lille, France, allowed him to spend the rest of the week exploring Paris and attending lectures at the Collège de France. He became particularly attracted to the lectures of Roland Barthes. The French critic’s seminars on the topic “Préparation du roman,” or preparing to write the novel, were a powerful influence on Kennedy, especially the concept Barthes introduced as “vouloir écrire,” the desire to write, which begins at the point when the writer can see that there is both a beginning and an end to one’s life. Barthes’ reflections on writing and death directly inspired Kennedy to write his own book on Edgar Allan Poe and death. Paris still holds a strong attraction for Kennedy, and, by leading a number of LSU Study Abroad programs, he has shared his love for the culture and the city with his students.

Another way of tapping his years of Paris-related scholarship is his recent selection to serve on the production team for Perry Miller Adato’s most recent film project, tentatively titled *Paris: The Luminous Years*. Kennedy is especially excited about his involvement in the collaboration. Three of Adato’s previous films have won prestigious Directors’ Guild Awards, and Kennedy feels that this film on Paris, exploring the city’s influential impact on art and culture from about 1890 to 1930, could be another winner. Besides Kennedy, other team members include art historians Kenneth Silver, New York University, and Linda Nochlin, New York University Institute of Fine Arts; historians John Merriman, Yale, and Albert Sonnenfeld, Professor of French emeritus, and Noël Riley Fitch, Professor of American Literature, both with the University of Southern California; dance historian Lynn Garafola, Barnard College; Jane Fulcher, a musicologist from the University of Michigan; and Leon Botstein, music director and principal conductor of both the American Symphony Orchestra and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra and president of Bard College in New York. The team has completed the script and is ready to begin filming.

The Adato film will be only his latest appearance in film. He was interviewed at Ernest Hemingway’s home in Cuba for a 2003 Florida Public Television film entitled *Hemingway in Cuba*, and served as a consultant and on-camera commentator for two films on Poe, one by The Learning Channel and the other by the Arts & Entertainment Cable Network Biography series.

Besides working on the Adato film production, Kennedy is also hard at work with his own writing. With eleven authored or edited books already published and at least three in the works, Kennedy continues to keep very busy, and he is in high demand for a number of projects in his field. Recently he was asked by the publisher of the *Oxford History of the Novel in English* to edit volume five in that series, which covers the American novel from its beginning to 1870. He is also editing the Oxford handbook on Edgar Allan Poe and the forthcoming Penguin Classics edition of Black Hawk’s Autobiography. His most ambitious project, however, is one that has occupied his thinking and writing for years: *Illusions of National Destiny* traces the complications of American nation building through the literature of the antebellum period. Kennedy has received a number of awards and grants, including a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2001-2002), in support of this monumental effort.

On receiving the letter informing him that he had received the Guggenheim, Kennedy remembered, “It was an out of body experience. It was better than winning the lottery!”

Jerry Kennedy: Man of Letters and Many Projects
Kennedy also served as the chair of the LSU Department of English for three years from 1995 to 1998. Though he did not see himself as an administrator, he felt a sense of responsibility to the department and his colleagues of many years, so he decided to run for the position and was subsequently elected. As chair, he oversaw the hiring of several new faculty, developed a five-year hiring plan for the department, and created an Executive Committee to help with consensus building.

“It’s an honor to be a department chair,” he explained. “The position comes with a lot of responsibility. It remains the case that more people report directly to the English chair than to any other campus administrator. But the position was also a great opportunity to make an important contribution. Besides, I came to the conclusion that if I didn’t do it, I would regret it.”

Though glad to have served as chair, he recognizes that his true callings are scholarship and teaching. He has won two of the University’s highest awards for faculty: the LSU Foundation Distinguished Faculty Award (1993) and the LSU Distinguished Research Master Award (1999). Also, his William A. Read professorship is one of the most prestigious professorships awarded by the university. These awards are simply the recognition of the obvious: Kennedy has developed his talents to produce high levels of achievement.

During the spring 2008 term, Kennedy was teaching a course on Hemingway that focuses on ideas of manhood, and he felt that the students in his class were some of the best he has ever taught: “I am amazed this semester with how good my undergraduates are! They are teeming with ideas and really sharp insights—a lot of really smart young people, passionate and engaged and willing to talk with each other and to disagree so we’re doing something right here.”

We in the College of Arts & Sciences hope we will continue “doing something right” to retain exceptional faculty such as Jerry Kennedy.
Darrel J. Papillion grew up in the small community of Swords, Louisiana, near Eunice. He graduated from LSU in 1990 and followed his dream of becoming a lawyer, graduating from LSU Law School in 1994. He clerked for Associate Justice Catherine D. Kimball at the Louisiana Supreme Court from 1994 to 1995 and worked with the law firm of McGlinchey Stafford in New Orleans from 1995 to 1999 before returning to Baton Rouge. In 1999, he joined the Moore, Walters firm in Baton Rouge, where he has been a partner for several years. He is married and has two children: Jude, a six-year-old boy, and Anna Claire, a five-year-old girl. He says, "I am a huge LSU sports fans and have probably missed no more than five LSU home football games in the last 20 years. I have seen lots of LSU road games in person, too."

Kaleidoscope: What was your experience as an undergraduate in LSU’s Arts & Sciences like? What was your major? In what organizations, etc., were you involved?

Darrel J. Papillion: I had a wonderful experience as an undergraduate in LSU’s College of Arts & Sciences. I wish I had known then what a special, unique time I was experiencing, but, like so many college students, I was looking ahead to a life after college and joining the world of work. Unfortunately, I did not take as much time as I should have to smell the roses—or at least enjoy the azaleas and camellias in the quadrangle. I was a history major, and my days at LSU were among the most intellectually stimulating days of my life. In those days, going to class and studying seemed like work, but, as I look back, having an opportunity to read great books, and listen to interesting lectures about history and politics seems like an ideal vacation. Much of what I am today is attributable to the things I learned, ideas I formed, and my exposure to classical literature, world history, political theory and other subjects in Allen Hall, Prescott Hall, and the other classroom buildings where liberal arts students studied twenty years ago.

I was a busy and active member of the LSU student community. I volunteered for a number of campus service projects, was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, loved going to LSU football and basketball games, and doing all the fun things that LSU students have done for years. One of the most interesting and exciting things I did while at LSU was to serve as chairman of the LSU Homecoming Pep Rally in 1989. I am not sure if LSU still has a Homecoming Pep Rally, but we had a great one that year. It was held on the Parade Ground, and we had great participation from the football team, cheerleaders, and students.

K: How do you feel that your education in the College of Arts & Sciences prepared you for life after college?

DJP: When I was a college student, my idea of preparing me for “life after college” was focused on gaining admission to law school. I was urged to major in English, history, or political science because, I was told, those courses would help prepare me for law exams. I majored in history, and I minored in English and political science. I have no doubt that the constitutional law courses I took under James Bolner, the English classes with Lawrence Sasek, and the history courses I took with Burl Noggle, Robert Lipscomb and others prepared me for life far beyond college. Having an opportunity to read the Bible as literature, study the rise of the British Empire, read about Islamic history, and study Shakespeare helped me develop into a person I did not understand I could become in those days. The education I received in the College of Arts & Sciences affects the decisions I make today and the views I hold, and I am a far richer person because of what I learned at LSU.

K: How did you choose your profession—or did it choose you? Why?

DJP: I am a lawyer. I believe I have always wanted to be a lawyer. I studied in the College of Arts & Sciences at LSU en route to law school. Ironically, I am giving an interview about my days in the College of Arts & Sciences, and the only serious consideration I ever gave to not going to law school was in my last year as a history major. As I recall, I had a perfect average in my major field, a 4.0; and I was encouraged by one of my professors to pursue graduate study in history. The
professor suggested that law school would ruin my writing, and I would not have nearly as much fun as a lawyer as I would as a history professor. I knew I wanted to be a lawyer, so I resisted any temptation I might have had at that time to pursue graduate study in history, and I entered law school the following year.

**K:** What are you doing today and what do you like best about what you do?

**DJP:** I represent people who are involved in serious accidents. Most of my work involves terrible tragedies in which people are seriously injured or killed. While the subject matter is often sad, it is very gratifying work. I have an opportunity to represent people who have suffered life-changing events. I view it as a great privilege to represent these people and help them move forward in life.

**K:** What advice would you give to students who would like to follow your career path?

**DJP:** My advice to students in the College of Arts & Sciences in particular is to—in spite of my not having done much of it in my own time—take some time and smell the roses. Study hard, but enjoy the opportunity to read and study for the sake of reading and studying. It is now a great luxury for me to have an opportunity to read an engrossing, well-written history book, a long biography, or an important work of fiction, but when I was in college, it was my job to read those things. I really miss what I once viewed as drudgery. I would encourage students to try and enjoy their studies and not try to rush through school en route to a life full of responsibility. I believe I took for granted in college what a luxury it is to have an opportunity to enjoy a sunny day while reading a good book out by the LSU lakes or in the quadrangle and to be young and healthy. In those days, I was so looking forward to the life that I have now, and while I love and enjoy the life I lead today, I have come to learn that life is a journey, and all parts of it should be enjoyed in equal measure.

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**Karen Powell:**

**Coming Home to LSU**

When Karen Powell headed to the University of Delaware to attend graduate school, she knew she had been well prepared to face this new challenge by her time as an undergraduate at LSU. "I was very involved as a student, and I was a good student," Powell explained. Studying in the College of Arts & Sciences and the Honors College enabled Powell to develop a wide base of knowledge both within her chosen field and across many disciplines.

"My mentors at the University of Delaware were impressed by the breadth of my undergraduate studies as well as my interdisciplinary work," Powell said. Her professors were pleased to have a student with a working knowledge of western civilization from ancient times through modern periods.

Powell’s well-rounded liberal arts education served her well during her graduate studies at the University of Delaware. Powell completed a master’s program in English, specializing in medieval studies, and received her degree from the university. Afterward, Powell worked and taught at the University of Delaware.

"I had very good experiences there which I think prepared me to come back," Powell said of her time in Delaware, "but I just felt, after a certain amount of time, that I needed to move on." Looking for a new challenge, Powell returned to Louisiana and LSU.

Once back at LSU, Powell worked for three years as an instructor in the Department of English, and she also taught in the Honors College. Powell has taught a range of courses; in the English department, she was able to use her passion and interest in communication to teach courses on composition, including business writing. She also taught courses in introduction to drama, poetry, and Shakespeare.

Her work with students extends beyond the classroom. Besides teaching, Powell has also spent time advising and recruiting students. Currently, she works with students in residential colleges through the Summer Reading Program.

"I lead discussions with students in Herget Residential
College after the Summer Reading Academic Convocation, and I interact with them throughout the year, going to theater nights and other events,” Powell said.

Powell has also worked closely with students in the Honors College, acting as an advisor and overseeing activities such as the Honors College Fellows Lecture Series during which she presented films and led discussions. Some of Powell’s most exciting teaching experiences have been in the Honors College where she was afforded the rare opportunity to co-teach with some of the professors who had taught her.

“I’ve loved having the chance to reconnect with my former professors and mentors,” she said.

Apart from making reconnections, Powell’s work outside of the classroom with some organizations on and off campus has enabled her to network and connect with a diverse range of people. One such activity is the LSU Women’s Faculty Club. As an active member and former officer in this organization, Powell has been able to meet people from all over campus, faculty and staff, and to build a strong network of women from across the university. A member of the club since 2001, Powell served as an officer from 2002-2005, starting as secretary and working up to president. One of her favorite aspects of belonging to the Women’s Faculty Club has been the opportunity it provides to meet people in a variety of fields and to discuss their work and interests with them. Having guest speakers at monthly luncheons also makes it possible to learn about many fields and subjects.

“I have the chance to talk about just about everything with many people,” Powell explained. “And I love learning about everything!”

Powell is also involved with the English Department’s Readers and Writers Program. A member of the committee, Powell was the former receptions chair from 2002 to 2004. “It was my artistic release,” she said. “I liked making sure the receptions were special.”

Now assistant director of the LSU CxC program, Powell has found that her experiences at LSU, both as a student and as an educator, have equipped her to continue her success in her career. As assistant director of the CXC Program, Powell takes her past experiences and developed expertise in the field of communication and works to help the students of the LSU community better themselves as communicators.

“I miss teaching,” Powell said, “but I do enjoy the opportunities I have to work one-on-one with students.”

Working with students in the Distinguished Communicator program, with her colleagues in CxC program itself, and with deans of colleges across the University, Powell does all she can to make her goal of bettering the university happen.

“I love the idea of LSU,” Powell stated, “but I also know that it can be made better.”

Powell also finds ways to work on improving the community beyond the university. Her involvement with Capital Area CASA as a Court Appointed Special Advocate is one of her favorite activities. A national organization, CASA is a group of volunteers who are judge-appointed advocates for foster children. CASA appoints one volunteer to each foster child so that the child can have individualized attention. Powell’s work as a CASA volunteer requires her to meet regularly with her court-appointed foster children and make sure their educational, medical, and emotional needs are being met. Becoming involved after first hearing about the program from her mother, Powell was appointed her first cases in the summer of 2006.

Powell hopes that her background in education and communication will enable her to help her foster kids in a meaningful way. “I want to help them to understand their situation better and to have a voice in what’s going on,” Powell explained. “CASA wants to give continuous support to these kids. We want to give them some stability.”

In her free time, Powell enjoys exploring nature, whether spending time outdoors on her family’s wooded property or traveling to see the Badlands or New England in the fall. She also has a passion for art, and she enjoys reading, attending the theater, and listening to music—including attending one of her relative’s organ recitals and acting as her page turner.

From her days as an undergraduate to her position as an instructor and now to her career as assistant director in the LSU CxC program, Karen Powell’s education and experiences at LSU have enabled her to accomplish many things. She looks forward to her future at LSU where she will continue to search out challenges in her work, looking to create positive change and progress within the university and the community as a whole.
“I enjoyed being surrounded by 7,000 educators who are passionate, creative, and eager to teach students!” said Danielle Masterson, English Secondary Education major, of her trip to the National Convention for Teachers of English held in New York City in October 2007. Nine students enrolled in the College of Arts & Sciences were given the opportunity to travel to New York City where English teachers from all over the nation gather to share ideas and experiences. The LSU students, led by faculty members Jackie Bach and Susan Weinstein, made up the largest group of college students.

Offered at the convention were a wide variety of panels presenting useful information for English teachers. Some panels focused on new teaching strategies, while others featured lectures by acclaimed authors. The panels gave fresh ideas and motivation to LSU’s future teachers. While not attending panels, the students traveled the subways-many for the first time-and visited numerous historical landmarks.

John Starr, 2007 Arts & Sciences graduate, remarked, “The conference sessions were enjoyable, the presentations were enjoyable, and the fact that you could easily get around New York to see things was a bonus.”

One of the highlights for Starr was having the opportunity to meet and have his photo made with Walter Dean Meyers. The author, whose book Starr’s students at Westdale Middle were reading at the time, made a lasting impression on the young teacher.

Because the students from LSU were some of the youngest attending the conference, the other teachers were eager to share their experiences and give advice. Dr. Weinstein believes that organizations like NCTE keep young students interested and involved.

“Seeing older teachers still excited about teaching really refreshes your spirit for teaching,” said first time attendee Kaitlin Boyington, English Secondary Education junior.

Likewise, Weinstein revealed, “The students rejuvenate the older teachers.”

In addition to the amount of fresh ideas that LSU students took away from the conference, they also brought home dozens of helpful books. According to Boyington, once the teachers and speakers at the conference knew the students were aspiring teachers, they gave the students a plethora of books. “They just gave away books-I went away with three bags of books,” Boyington remarked.

Not only was the conference a learning experience, but it is also a bonding experience for those who attend annually.

Weinstein, who attends the convention every year, explained, “A large part of the conference is social. You visit with people you get to see only once a year and you also get to talk with people that are doing research similar to your own.”

Although there are over 60 college NCTE organizations located across the country, the LSU branch is one of only four located in the south. Of the 60 national college NCTE organizations, few were able to attend the conventions due to a lack of funding. However, with generous donations from the College of Arts & Sciences, the College of Education, and the LSU Organizational Relief Fund, the trip was affordable for these LSU students.

While a number of LSU professors have attended the conference in the past, this is only the second year that students have attended. Next year’s conference will be held much closer to home in San Antonio, and plans are in progress to send students again.

Boyington, who plans to go back every year, said her experience taught her “how important it is for people who share a common passion to come together and exchange ideas and experiences.”
**Focus On: Undergraduate Students**

**Brian Bannon, Graduated in December 2007**  
*Major:* Computer Science, College of Basic Sciences  
*Minor:* Graphic Design, College of Art & Design  
*Hometown:* Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Brian graduated in December 2007 with a major in Computer Science and a minor in Fine Arts. While at LSU, he attended the first offered game development course teleconference from the University of Illinois at Chicago. During his time at LSU, he was instrumental in setting up the new mathematics lab spaces in Pleasant Hall and in keeping the computer systems running accurately and reliably. He currently works for a software development company, Trendsic Solutions, based in Denham Springs, handling network development, internet applications, web sites, and database management. He hopes to one day work in the game design industry and has already created several games that incorporate his love for telling stories with his talent for developing computer code. Though he was not an Arts & Sciences major while he was at LSU, his contributions to the success of the new math facilities make him a member of the A&S family.

**Andrea Kelley, Junior**  
*Major:* English Literature  
*Minor:* African and African American Studies  
*Hometown:* Houston, Texas

Andrea is currently the Vice President of the Resident Hall Association, the second largest student organization on campus. Her qualities as a leader were recognized when she was inducted into the National Hall Honor Society, an honor given to the top 1% of LSU dorm residents. She was elected to this honor by her fellow students. Andrea is a dancer for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Dance Ensemble, which performs at our annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Ceremony. She also serves on the LSU Union Governing Board, and she co-chairs the LSU Union Security Committee. She says that as an English major at LSU, she has appreciated being pushed by her teachers to become a better writer. She plans to attend law school and to earn a master’s degree in business, and to pursue her dream of publishing an age-appropriate magazine for female minority adolescents.

**Megan Peterson, Senior**  
*Major:* Political Science  
*Minor:* Business Administration  
*Hometown:* Harvey, Louisiana

Megan has been very active in leadership roles at Louisiana State University. She has participated in LSU Ambassadors, Student Government, and the STRIPES program. Currently, she is President of Pi Sigma Alpha, the LSU chapter of a national political science honor society, and she is also a member of the senior honor society, Mortar Board, and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Megan participated in the LSU trip to the Iowa Caucuses, and she worked for Governor Kathleen Blanco for two years, interning with her chief of staff. Megan plans to attend law school in the fall.
Alexandra Trana, Senior
Major: Anthropology Minor: Psychology
Hometown: Clinton, Louisiana

Alexandra Trana has maintained a 3.72 GPA, majoring in anthropology with a minor in psychology, while actively soaking up all that LSU has to offer. She was a member of Tiger Band her freshman and sophomore years and has been a member of the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) since her freshman year. As a member of AFROTC, Alexandra has held leadership positions ranging from training to public affairs and has distinguished herself as a “Superior Performer” in the program. As such, she earned an AFROTC Scholarship along with numerous other awards, traveled to Chile last summer for a language immersion program and was selected to become a pilot in the United States Air Force. She has worked on campus all four years with High School Independent and Distance Learning, volunteers for community service with Connections for Life, and loves to play recreational softball. Following graduation in May 2008, Alexandra will attend Air Force undergraduate pilot training and plans to acquire a master's degree in Forensic Anthropology.

Russell Woodard, Senior
Major: Political Science
Hometown: Ruston, Louisiana

Russell has been an opinion columnist for the Daily Reveille, covering a range of topics including race and politics and gender and religion. He has studied abroad in Innsbruck, where he focused on international finance. A member of the Kappa Sigma fraternity for four years, Russell likes to hunt and spear fish; his favorite author is Ernest Hemingway. Russell has an interest in litigation and prosecution, which he will pursue when he begins his legal studies at LSU Law School in the fall.

Correction: Myriam Chancy, who was reported in the fall 2007 issue of Kaleidoscope (Volume 4, number 1) to be a member of the new Atlantic studies concentration, is primarily a member of the English department faculty, specializing in Caribbean studies and creative writing.
Focus On: Graduate Students

Ashli Dykes, Ph.D. candidate
Program: English literature
Hometown: Hot Springs, Arkansas

Ashli Dykes is a third-year Ph.D. student in the English department and the graduate editorial and research assistant for the National Women’s Studies Association Journal. Before coming to LSU, she earned her bachelor’s and Master of Liberal Arts degrees from Henderson State University. Ashli’s current research focuses on depictions of single women on contemporary television. She recently read her paper “The Contemporary ‘Non-Mother’: Representations of Single Pregnancy on Friends” at the Popular Culture Association conference and will also be presenting at the National Women’s Studies Association conference and the Slayage Conference on the Whedonverse this summer. Upon graduation, Ashli hopes to teach at the university-level, educating students about the importance of feminism and the significance of popular culture in their lives.

Dylan Wade, M.A., August 2008
Program: Philosophy
Hometown: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Due to hurricane Katrina, Dylan, then a philosophy undergraduate at Tulane University, spent fall 2005 at Louisiana State University. Attracted by the department’s emphasis on continental philosophy, Dylan returned to LSU in the fall of 2006 to enter the graduate program. A graduate teaching assistant for classes in Introduction to Philosophy, Ethics, and French Existentialism, Dylan has enjoyed educating undergraduates in the finer points of the philosophical tradition. He is drawn to philosophy because “philosophical investigation forces people to become accountable for their actions and for what they say. Too much of the world avoids the reflection of discourse.” After graduation from LSU, Dylan plans to pursue a doctorate in philosophy.

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New Developments in Creative Writing...
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