Kaleidoscope

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Louisiana Folkways

The magazine of the LSU College of Arts & Sciences
“Do you spend all your time thinking about money?” someone asked the other day. “No,” I replied, “I spend all my time thinking about the absence of money.” The College has had two major budget cuts this year, will have another this July, and probably still another the next year. It’s a reality none of us can ignore, but I—and all of us—should think of other things as well. In my job, it’s easy. I meet with alumni of the college, for whom their time at LSU remains a wonderful memory and, in many cases, whose lives were transformed by their time here.

Department chairs e-mail news of faculty members who have won national awards, been chosen to edit major journals, or published new articles or books. In historian Sue Marchand’s case, I got to read a review of her German Orientalism in the Age of Empire in London’s Times Literary Supplement. Our faculty’s accomplishments bring national and international attention to LSU—make it a flagship university in more than name.

Many mornings, I do not have to wait for an e-mail. I read about our faculty in the newspaper: Renee Edward’s work helping local leaders better communicate during hurricanes, Ed Shihadeh’s innovative insights on crime in our communities, and Troy Blanchard’s important demographic studies that will help with legislative redistricting. Our faculty not only make long lasting contributions to human understanding, they help Louisiana confront contemporary problems.

Sometimes I get to hear a faculty member give a talk—and realize how good they are in the classroom. Last fall, I attended a showing of “God’s Architects,” an award winning documentary by Zach Godshall of the English Department. It tells the story of five fascinating people who have undertaken to build various types of strange monuments. After the showing, Mike Pasquier, a Religious Studies professor, led the discussion. That Zach and Mike had been friends as undergraduates at LSU, before going off for further work and coming home, made the event even more special.

The achievements of our current undergraduates are many. One of our majors, Devon Wade, won a Truman Scholarship. Four of the “Tiger Twelve” seniors honored for their contributions to the LSU community came from our college. Twelve of our students completed the ASPIRE program, in which they worked with faculty mentors on research projects and presented their findings at scholarly conferences. At the college’s Honors Convocation, each of them gave a brief presentation of his or her work; they were all so bright, poised, and articulate. At the same convocation, we recognized our scholarship winners and the over 600 students in the College who have maintained a 3.5 GPA. Getting to shake their hands and see their—and their parents’—pride of accomplishment reminded me of what LSU is all about.

About a month earlier, the College held an open house for high school seniors who are thinking about coming to LSU. The enthusiasm was contagious. I remember one young woman in particular who, every time I mentioned a course we taught, brightened at the prospect of taking it and said “that would be really interesting.”

Our college strives to be worthy of her excitement. I believe it succeeds. Despite budget cuts, our students continue to have many opportunities to discover themselves and to better understand their world while our faculty still make outstanding contributions to knowledge. It’s important for me—for all of us—to remember how essential what we do is and how well we do it. It is also important to remember that for our college to sustain its excellence, LSU needs your support.

*Message from the Dean*

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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. Also, please send us your email
address so that we can contact you with the latest news.
What the Dickens?
LSU Dives into the Dickens Project

Many of LSU’s faculty garner national attention as they present their research at academic meetings, produce outstanding graduates, and take leadership roles in the professional organizations for their disciplines. Rarely, however, does that attention lead to an invitation to participate in an elite, prestigious consortium that includes several Ivy League institutions. One of these rare invitations came in 2007 when faculty specializing in 19th century literature and culture in the LSU Department of English were asked to become members of the Dickens Project. Three faculty members—Elsie Michie, Dan Novak, and Sharon Weltman—share LSU’s responsibilities for this project and have produced some impressive results.

The Dickens Project was established at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1981 and is limited to 29 institutions outside the University of California system. Other member schools include top universities in the United States, such as Columbia, Cornell, MIT, Penn State, Princeton, Rice, Rutgers, Stanford, and Yale, as well as a number of international universities. Formed to provide opportunities for collaborative research, the Dickens Project includes annual conferences and meetings, institutes, and publications.

Each summer, the consortium supports “Dickens Universe,” a week-long event that Weltman affectionately calls “a Dickens summer camp.” At this gathering, scholars, graduate students, high school teachers, and Elderhostel members discuss one of Dickens’ novels; the 2009 program featured, for example, David Copperfield.

While Dickens Universe provides community service on a broad, nationwide scale, some universities within the consortium also contribute to their local communities with free seminars and discussion groups. These community events are not restricted to Dickens’s work only. For example, a recent series of seminars hosted by Elsie Michie at a local Baton Rouge bookstore focused on the works of Jane Austen and the ways in which those works have been presented in movies and television.

The project has also contributed significantly to the opportunities for graduate students to present their work and to gain more expertise in the literature and culture of the period in which Dickens lived and worked, as well as to learn new teaching techniques. Of particular importance is the winter graduate student conference held each year.

Dan Mangiavellano, a Ph.D. candidate who has participated in two of these conferences pointed to the value these seminars have in helping the students to be better educators.

“I had a great experience when I went there in 2007. The conference focused on Dickens’s first novel, The Pickwick Papers. In addition to the many talks and events at the conference, I was part of an exciting week-long seminar on pedagogical practices in the English classroom,” Mangiavellano explained recently. “It really was a very dynamic environment that included graduate students from all over the country with a wide variety of teaching experiences. We talked a lot about issues that we seldom pause to think about in English literature instruction—like why we value discussion—
Dear A&S family,
Growing up in rural southwestern Oklahoma I learned two things: the meaning of hard work and every line of *Gone with the Wind*. The movie lines came easy; the hard work came from necessity. Whether it was on the baseball field or in the wheat field, I learned the value of giving more than was asked of me and only expecting what was fair in return. These life lessons served me well as I transitioned from a high school teacher and coach to a career in development.

Having spent a few years in LSU’s E. J. Ourso College of Business as the Associate Director of Development, I truly enjoyed working on some of the major initiatives of that college. I am thrilled to be joining the A&S family and am pleased to continue my work on the Forever LSU campaign. As we wrap up the final year of the campaign, our aim is to close out the 150th anniversary of LSU with the monumental achievement of reaching our $750 million goal.

The Gulf of Mexico oil spill is an impending disaster for our coast. The talents and spirit of our faculty, staff and students were shining during a recent open forum hosted on our campus. Many of our A&S family are already participating in efforts to help save our coast; from research to volunteering, A&S is once again at the forefront of the university.

It is efforts such as these that have encouraged me in my first few weeks. We have an extraordinary opportunity to share our knowledge and expertise with the state and the nation. I know you are proud of your A&S community! If you haven’t yet made your gift to the Forever LSU campaign, I would encourage your support of our outstanding faculty, staff and students.

I look forward to meeting each of you in the coming year.

Rhett Butler, the Director of Development
One of the most alluring aspects of graduate school is the ability to pursue in depth those topics that you found fascinating during your undergraduate years. Sometimes, however, it’s hard to narrow your focus enough to satisfy traditional programs of study. If your undergraduate degree is in English, do you pursue one literary period or one style of writing as a graduate student? If that first degree is in a language, must you limit yourself to that one language? What if you also have interests in other areas, such as philosophy, history, or science? How do you accommodate your nagging desire to have it all? One possibility is comparative literature, a program that allows an almost infinite combination of options to satisfy the thirstiest intellect.

Keeping with LSU Traditions

The comparative literature program at LSU has been around since the early 1980s when A&S Dean Henry Snyder brought together faculty from English, French Studies, and Foreign Languages and Literatures to promote collaboration among the units and to give graduate students more flexibility in designing their programs of study. The program continues to provide graduate students with the freedom to combine a variety of interests as they pursue their work. In turn, these bright students often serve the university by offering undergraduate courses in areas such as world literature.

Attracting Talented Graduate Students

Richmond Eustis, a graduate student who defended his dissertation in March 2010, found his niche in this program that encourages its students to find connections in their work that transcend the texts that they use. Eustis’ field is in eco-criticism, an area that is currently generating a great deal of excitement. Fascinated by the ways in which nature and art are entangled, Eustis argues in his dissertation that the two cannot be separated. His academic work brings together literature as diverse as the writings of the Brotherhood of Purity—a tenth-century group of Sufi mystics—nineteenth-century American naturalists Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, American explorer John Wesley Powell, British writer Rudyard Kipling—particularly Kipling’s novel Jungle Book—the late Italian writer Italo Calvino, and contemporary nature writer and mountaineer Jon Krakauer.

“The comparative literature program at LSU is one of only a few in the South, and it was a great fit for my interests,” Eustis explained recently. “And I felt like I hit the jackpot with my [dissertation] committee.”

Eustis’s committee included faculty from at least three different units. Faculty members from departments all over campus participate in this interdisciplinary program: Faculty within the College of Arts & Sciences from English, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Philosophy & Religious Studies, and French Studies are, of course, obvious participants. The program, however, also brings together faculty from the School of Music & Dramatic Arts and the College of Education. Several faculty in the new Atlantic Studies program also contribute to the Comparative Literature program. LSU also hit the jackpot with Richmond Eustis. This versatile and talented graduate assistant teaches both Spanish and world literature. He incorporates into his courses cutting-edge technology that allows his students to participate in online class discussions while learning about language and literature. Eustis brings the energy and creativity of his life experiences into the classroom as he introduces his students to the world outside of their own experiences.

Another graduate student, Rachel Spear, chose to transfer to LSU’s comparative literature program from a prestigious writing program at De Paul University in Chicago because she missed the variety of courses she had enjoyed during her undergraduate years at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. She had graduated from Millsaps with degrees in math and French and a minor in English.

“I have always had diverse interests and found ways to connect them. One of the wonderful aspects about LSU’s Comparative Literature program is that you are able to design your own program of study,” Spear said.
recently. “That’s what drew me to LSU.” Spear has been able to do just that while continuing to study writing pedagogy, working closely with the English and Education departments.

Spear has also contributed to the university while she has been a student here. She held an assistantship that allowed her to teach a number of English courses, including the freshman writing courses and the sophomore-level fiction survey course. She currently holds an assistantship with the campus-wide Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) program, where she assists faculty and students with communication-intensive projects and coordinates the Annual CxC Digital Media Festival.

Spear, who graduated in May 2010, focuses her work on life-writing as a form of healing in the aftermath of trauma. Originally from Waveland, Mississippi, Spear transferred to LSU in 2004, a year before Katrina devastated her hometown. Although she recognizes that her traumatic experiences played a role when she selected her area of focus, she views her specialization as the perfect amalgamation of all of her interests.

“With this thematic topic of women authors who write their personal stories of trauma, I am able to draw from many fields such as cultural, literary, composition, and pedagogical studies,” Spear said. A few of the authors she includes in her dissertation are Dorothy Allison, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sylvia Fraser, and Anaïs Nin.

Spear calls her experience in the Comparative Literature program “enriching and challenging” and is excited that graduates of the program become specialists in multiple areas, which gives them greater career opportunities than a degree in a less varied field would allow.

Yet another bright star in the program is Julia Reineman, who arrived at LSU in August 2007. Reineman received her undergraduate degree and her M.A. in English Composition from California State University, San Bernardino in 2002 and an M.A. in Spanish from Tulane in 2005. Before coming to LSU, Reineman taught Spanish and English courses for several years at the university level.

She has co-authored two articles published in academic journals, including one dedicated to teaching in post-Katrina New Orleans, and she anticipates finishing her Ph.D. in spring 2011.

Specializing in Latin America, the focus of her dissertation is on Argentina’s “Dirty War” (1976-1983); drawing from psychoanalysis and cultural studies, she is analyzing how writers, musicians, and artists responded to and represented political violence.

Like Eustis and Spear, Reineman also finds teaching to be central to her educational goals. “I practice learning-centered instruction,” she writes. “My objective in any class is to create an environment where students can realize their full potential as learners; therefore, I incorporate and encourage a great deal of creativity and play in my curriculum.”

Reineman’s varied background in both her education and the courses she has taught reinforce her mission. At LSU, Reineman teaches service-learning courses which give college students the opportunity to meet vital needs in the community while reinforcing curriculum content; students in her introduction to literature class volunteer with local elementary school children who are reading below grade level.

These exceptional students attracted to LSU by the Comparative Literature program are examples of the way in which the program has benefitted the university.
The program gives graduate students in the program the option of pursuing multifaceted graduate work while bringing talented and engaging teachers with diverse experience and proficiencies into undergraduate classrooms. Leading this group of high-achieving students and finding ways to enhance the program takes special people—like Adelaide Russo.

Hosting a Recent Meeting with Nationally Prominent Scholars, Critics, and Writers

In March 2010, the Comparative Literature program and its faculty hosted a regional meeting of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers. The event took place at Hill Memorial Library, the Southern Review auditorium, and the Turner Gallery of the LSU Museum. Several of the program’s graduate students—including Eustis, Reineman, Spear, Benjamin Forkner, Jesse Russell and Olga Gudkov—presented work at the event. Several other graduate students enrolled in Comparative Literature courses, MFA students Jennifer Tamayo and Alison Barker, and English PhD candidate Michel Griffin, also presented their work.

Among the distinguished faculty and guests were poets Greg Delanty, Rosanna Warren and Ava Haymon, conductor and artistic director of the Baton Rouge Symphony Timothy Muffitt, folklore expert Barry Ancelet, writer Brenda Marie Osbey, composer Stephen David Beck and scholar and Comparative Literature faculty member John Pizer. Associate Dean Margaret Parker represented the Deans’ Office at the event, and Thomas Livesay, director of the LSU Museum, in keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of Comparative Literature and the ALSCW, opened the museum to this event.

Working for an Even Brighter Future

Professor Adelaide Russo, who became director of the LSU Comparative Literature Program in fall 2009, has achieved, through her scholarly work, a long list of prestigious awards, citations, and accolades. Nationally recognized among her peers, she hopes to use her experiences and her professional networks to take the program at LSU to new heights.

“I took on the directorship because I want this program to prosper and to go beyond what it has been in the past,” Russo explained recently. “We owe it to our graduates and to our current students to build on the work we have done and to make this program more visible.”

With the goal of getting the word out about this program that has produced a number of exceptional scholars in its relatively short history, Russo is working diligently to increase the national exposure of LSU Comparative Literature. She has created an advisory board composed of other nationally prominent scholars, such as Haun Saussy (Yale), Marjorie Perloff (Stanford, retired), Francoise Lionnet (UCLA), Margaret Higonnet (UCONN), and Lawrence Kritzman (Dartmouth).

Bringing these preeminent academicians into an advisory capacity will help Russo raise national and international recognition for the program. Adding to that recognition is the quality of the research and writing produced by students like Eustis, Reineman, and Spear—work that reflects the students’ diverse interests, intellectual curiosity, and their abilities to find connections that others have missed. These elements make up the heart of graduate-level study.
Studies of Confederate President
by Professor Cooper Lead to His Own Presidency

by Libby Ingram

Since 1968, Bill Cooper’s South Carolinian accent has echoed through the halls of the LSU history department, from his initial position as Assistant Professor to Dean of the Graduate School to his current honor as Boyd Professor. Throughout Cooper’s career at LSU, his scholarship has concentrated on the history of the South. His fascination with the region’s past culture and mysteries characterizes his many research projects and books. Cooper’s research has won him a number of prestigious awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is also a fellow of the Society of American Historians. This year, he has been honored with the presidency of the Southern Historical Association, and for this latest recognition, we congratulate him.

The Southern Historical Association, founded in 1934, is the chief national organization promoting the preservation and study of Southern history. Cooper, a long standing member of the association, described SHA as an association with deep Southern roots that now counts members across the country and internationally.

Referring to the Southern Historical Association, Cooper noted, “It’s not about Southerners, it’s about Southern history.”

The Association devotes its efforts to two major projects: the Journal of Southern History, which circulates quarterly, and its annual meeting at which scholars discuss various research projects and issues. As president, Cooper will be presiding over the 2010 annual gathering this upcoming November. Cooper’s previous leadership with the association includes his years serving on various committees and on the executive council.

Cooper’s avid historical interest in the South suits him well for the honor of president of the Southern Historical Association. If the expansive book collection in his office isn’t the dead giveaway, when asked why he found it important to continue studies on the Civil War, Cooper passionately responded that this era is “the most fundamentally important event in our history.” The war changed the way America viewed slavery and the unity of the country.

Recently, Cooper has focused his interests on Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy. Davis’s complexity, confusing contradictions, and unresolved mystery seeded Cooper’s interest in his personality and character. Cooper described the former president as a successful Southern planter who expressed ambivalence and contradictory feelings about the issues of his day. For example, despite serving as the symbol for everything the South stood for, Davis indicated that for him secession made for “the saddest day of my life.” Among his several books, Cooper has written two on Davis, Jefferson Davis, American and Jefferson Davis and the Civil War Era.

When discussing the conclusions he draws from his research, such as that on Davis, Cooper pointed out that his goal was to persuade others to think anew about the past. As I listened to a mini-Civil War lecture during our interview, however, I was convinced of his qualification for the honorific position of President of the Southern Historical Association. Congratulations again, Professor Cooper.

Libby Ingram is a junior in LSU’s petroleum engineering program and an intern with the LSU College of Arts & Sciences.
When Associate Professor of English Carolyn Ware set out to explore the culture and foodways of Plaquemines Parish, she discovered a treasure of a community that she shared with her colleague, Professor James Catano. Ware was intrigued by the culture and history of the little-known Croatian community in Lower Plaquemines. Ware makes the argument that this relatively remote spot in Louisiana is its own distinctive region. The area, sometimes called the “Lower Coast,” constitutes the last 90 miles of land before entering the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana’s endangered coastal region. The Lower Coast has long been a “gateway for immigration,” becoming, over the course of more than 300 years, the home for many ethnic groups, including French Creoles directly from Canada and France, African Americans who were influenced by either French Catholics or English Protestants, Italians, Southeast Asians, and, of course, the Croatians.

After Ware shared her find with Catano, who recently became the director of the Film and Media Arts program, he developed plans for documenting the effects of devastating storms and coastal erosion on this community that had long ago established oyster farming in the Gulf. As they worked with members of the community, both Ware and Catano were captivated by the hospitality of the Croatian residents and were intrigued with the community’s continuing strength and determination: These are the descendants of immigrants who built their community from land that was perhaps the least desirable to early settlers of the area, who were able to derive a living for their families from that land, creating a sustainable form of agriculture. These descendants continue to fight today against coastal erosion and other setbacks to their way of life.

Early immigrants to South Louisiana from Croatia were already very familiar with deriving their living from the sea. Many of these early settlers came from Dalmatia, along the coast of the Adriatic Sea, and were accustomed to hard work in adverse conditions, so the marshes of Louisiana weren’t intimidating. Members of the community in Plaquemines Parish built fishing camps and fleets, making the most of the natural resources around them. One primary example of the community’s resourcefulness is evident in their development of the oyster beds: Rather than simply taking oysters from the Gulf, they created farms, which allowed the fledgling industry to replenish itself. The oyster industry that has arisen from the community’s aquiculture is one of Louisiana’s most famous and productive economic enterprises.

Another fascinating aspect of the community for Catano is the back-and-forth migration to and from Croatia that is prevalent among the residents. Relatives from Croatia routinely come into the area to help with the oyster farms, and residents go back to Croatia to visit and to stay in touch with their families there. Because of this constant flow of people between the Lower Coast and Croatia and because of the relative isolation of the area on this spit of land on the Gulf, Croatian traditions are kept alive rather than being lost in the assimilation within a larger culture.

The competing forces in this rural community, between the dependency that develops because of the remoteness of the area and the influx of people to and from Croatia, piqued Catano’s interest. In addition to that initial curiosity, Catano wanted to expose how the damage caused by recent storms endangers not only the terrain but also the lives of people in this area. He is in the process of filming a documentary, entitled “After the Aftermath: Croatian Fishing Families in Louisiana,” that explores how long-term coastal erosion and the more recent spate of powerful hurricanes have affected the oyster industry, and, consequently, the community itself. In many ways, Ware’s work complements this initiative, as she focuses on the foodways, cultural, and domestic customs of the community.

“One of the things I hope this film will do is to show, not only what the men in the community do, but also what the Croatian-American women do,” Ware commented.

One area of particular interest to both Ware and Catano is the way in which the division of labor in the community reflects both Eastern European culture and modern economic necessity in South Louisiana. Though
photos, top to bottom
Eva and Captain Pete Vujnovich (photo by Lori Waselchuk)
WPA photo of four men on the Royal Queen
Tereza Tesvich with embroidery (photo by Lori Waselchuk)
Neda Jurisich with Oyster Tongs
Jurisich Family Oyster Camp 1930s
St Anthony Celebration 2006 (bottom two photos by Maida Owens)
Elsie Michie leads a very busy life. She works with colleagues Sharon Weltman and Dan Novak on the Dickens Project, especially in conducting community seminars. She has had a number of articles published in major scholarly journals, most notably in *PMLA*, the most prestigious journal in which an English scholar can be included. Additionally, she writes creatively, having recently had one of her autobiographical essays appear in *The Southern Review*. She was awarded an ATLAS (Awards To Louisiana Artists and Scholars) grant from the Louisiana Board of Regents to continue her work on a book titled *The Vulgar Question of Money: Heiresses in the Novel of Manners from Jane Austen to Henry James*.

Yet, besides her professional, scholarly, and creative work, Michie still has time for a very active life outside of academia: She’s a former Baton Rouge Mardi Gras Queen—a significant feat for a transplant from a small Quaker community in Pennsylvania.

When Michie first arrived in South Louisiana to teach at Tulane, she was unprepared for what lay in store. The strength and resourcefulness of these people will, in the long run, help their community to survive. Technology is also playing a role in helping these people, beginning with electric motors for small fishing boats, and moving forward into cell phone use, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and computer mapping of the beds and fishing areas. On land, Internet connectivity has opened new ways to communicate while strengthening the sense of place among the residents, both within the state and abroad. Especially since Hurricane Katrina, technology has served a positive function in bringing the Croatian community together. Through studying and portraying these ongoing traditions and equally ongoing changes, LSU’s Catano and Ware document this unique and intriguing group of people that make up the vibrant diversity that is Louisiana.
for her. She adapted quickly to the culture, however, when several of her colleagues and acquaintances, including Beth Willinger and Teresa Toulose at Tulane and Barbara Ewell at Loyola, formed Muses, an all-women’s Mardi Gras krewe in 2000. They asked Michie to join them, and she wholeheartedly accepted. The krewe has since become the most prestigious women’s krewe in New Orleans—the only all-women’s krewe to earn the much sought-after status of being scheduled as a night parade during the week immediately preceding Mardi Gras day. This auspicious introduction to Mardi Gras set the stage for Michie’s continuing fascination with what she calls a “vulgarity of excess.”

After she left Tulane for LSU, she shared her membership in the New Orleans krewe with several faculty members at LSU during those first years. Michie, meanwhile, had met someone in Baton Rouge who was involved in Mardi Gras festivities closer to her new home. That “someone” is her partner, Phil. Finally, after riding in three of the Muses parades during her nine years as a member, she gave up her membership in the now popular krewe to devote more time to the two Baton Rouge krewes that she had joined when she moved to the area.

These two organizations, the Krewe of Southdowns and the “Krewe of Yazoo,” the hilariously entertaining lawnmower performance group that participates in Baton Rouge’s Spanish Town parade on the Saturday before Mardi Gras, provide Michie with the comraderie of the Mardi Gras experience, and she doesn’t even have to leave her adopted hometown. Michie reigned as Queen of Mardi Gras for the Krewe of Southdowns in 2009, an honor she holds dear. Her elaborate peacock costume for the event was designed specifically for her to wear for the occasion by a former LSU student who now has her own business, Exquisite Restraint, in Los Angeles, California. This student worked with a friend of Michie’s, Karla King, who, in turn, was a costume designer in the LSU Theater Department. Michie commented, “The LSU connection is great—all that creativity!”

Michie says of her reign as queen, “I was one of the few people ever to have an article published in PMLA and to be named a Mardi Gras queen in the same year!”

These social activities have also fueled her academic curiosity: Michie has long had an interest in the role that vulgarity plays in society and culture, and, as previously noted, Mardi Gras certainly has its vulgar moments. Her experiences with Mardi Gras had the unexpected effect of helping her to put together another scholarly project. Michie recently explained, “The process of thinking about vulgarity, in Louisiana and out, led me to co-edit a collection of essays, Victorian Vulgarity: Taste in Visual and Verbal Culture, which appeared from Ashgate Press in 2009.”

Michie is certainly proof that sometimes going with the flow of an initial culture shock can lead to surprisingly productive results.

Joyce Marie Jackson: Helping to Heal a Neighborhood

When the article about Joyce Marie Jackson and her work, along with that of her husband, photographer J. Nash Porter, appeared in the fall 2006 issue of Kaleidoscope, she and Porter were busy presenting their work on the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians at a number of venues, including the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. Sadly, on October 27, 2007, Porter died. Since his death, Jackson has continued to showcase his work, to maintain contact with the Mardi Gras Indians—a group that he loved and worked tirelessly to document—and to collaborate with community activists in the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans. These community leaders—who include several of the remaining Mardi Gras Indians—are determined to preserve the traditions and cultural treasures of their neighborhood. Jackson’s work combines research into the folkways of this community with support for their activities and causes.

As an invited delegate to the National Congressional Black Caucus in Washington D.C., Jackson continues to bring the concerns of this New Orleans neighborhood to the
attention of politicians at the state and national levels. She also introduces students in her classes to this community through critical ethnographic research and study. As a by-product of this research, these students engage in the community through service projects to help rebuild and lend support to this area of the city that was the site of some of Hurricane Katrina’s worst devastation.

“People are still healing, and there is so much work yet to be done,” Jackson explained. “Students in my class at LSU work on the ground level with the people, helping in various ways and also recording the stories of the neighborhoods. The students’ work and experiences with the Ninth Ward residents has turned some of their ideas about this community completely around.”

As part of their work in Jackson’s Urban Ethnography course, the LSU students have participated for the last three years in a program at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology, and this year they are also working with Carver High School students by way of the Desire Street Ministries. They are teaching the high school students how to record stories and how to interview their family and community members. Since spring semester 2008, Jackson’s students in this service-learning class have worked with Jackson and the charter school’s art teacher, Ms. Amalie Prescott, who is also a children’s trauma therapist. She and the students also work with Ms. Marcia Peterson, director of the Desire Street Ministries, to turn the high school students’ interviews into artistic and literary products. The project also includes inviting community members to talk with the high students in the class, sharing their own experiences, history, and culture of the community and helping with the healing process.

“This project has helped both the children in the schools and the community members celebrate their culture and talk about their pain and has been cathartic for both,” Jackson commented.

In addition to her ethnographic and service-learning course, Jackson has also been working on a book about the Fazendeville community from St. Bernard Parish. Established in 1867 by a group of recently freed slaves, this small, African American village, originally situated on the site of the Battle of New Orleans, was seized by the National Park Service in 1964 to incorporate the land into the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. The Battle Ground Baptist Church had served as the community’s center, and when the village was razed, the church was ironically reestablished on Flood Street in the Lower Ninth Ward. Hurricane Betsy wreaked havoc and flooded the Ninth Ward and the church in 1965, and Katrina’s storm surge nearly destroyed the church and scattered the remaining descendants of Fazendeville in 2005. Jackson had been recording and preserving the stories of this historic community, traveling to various cities after Katrina to collect interviews with former residents, and plans to publish these accounts in an upcoming book.

Jackson’s work with the neighborhoods in the Lower and Upper Ninth Wards has introduced her to some highly innovative and creative individuals in the community. Many years ago, one of those people, Ronald W. Lewis, established a local museum in his garage that he calls “The House of Dance and Feathers.” This collection of local memorabilia and colorful exhibits—which includes materials from the Second Line/Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, and of course, the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians—has been a wonderful resource for Jackson and other cultural anthropologists and folklorists in the area.

“Ronald Lewis kept newspaper clippings about everything related to the neighborhood,” Jackson explained. “This collection also holds artifacts from many of the local clubs and organizations, and he has an extensive collection on area musicians and other artists. He is one of my gatekeepers, the community griot—keeper of the word.”

Though the tiny museum was destroyed when Hurricane Katrina ripped through the city, an Arkansas architect and his students volunteered their services to build a permanent structure to house Lewis’ collections. Already,
however, the museum is outgrowing its new quarters, and Lewis is thinking of expanding into a house next door that was abandoned after the hurricane. He was able to take advantage of the Lot Next Door Program sponsored by the New Orleans Recovery Authority and to acquire the property.

Another one of Jackson’s gatekeepers and a prominent member of the community, Valerie Schexnayder, was a teenager in the Fazendeville community when it was displaced in 1964. Her family home was the only one that was physically moved from its original location to a lot on Renes Street (three streets from the breach in the Industrial Canal). Miraculously, the family home that was moved to the Lower Ninth Ward forty years earlier was still standing after Katrina. Though the wind and floods caused by Katrina moved Schexnayder’s newer home down the street and totally destroyed it, Schexnayder returned to the area and has rebuilt her home. She also continues to work ardently to protect the Lower Ninth Ward, helping others to come back, challenging local politicians and rallying her neighbors to keep the neighborhood alive. Schexnayder made quite an impression on Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, during Pelosi’s visit in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. After hearing Schexnayder’s impassioned plea to save the community, Pelosi maintained contact and returned to check on Schexnayder’s progress a year later.

Dedicated community members like Lewis and Schexnayder enrich the experiences of Jackson and her students, and she seizes every opportunity to facilitate their voices being heard by others at academic conferences and other venues. In turn, Jackson’s work with the community documents the cultural, historical, and social importance of this area while also adding to the neighborhood’s network of support. This symbiosis forms the basis of true critical ethnographic research.

Studying Culture and Having Fun: Robin Roberts Combines Scholarship with Mardi Gras

Bringing intellectual curiosity first to the contagious and rowdy crowds surrounding Zulu and then, in an even more in-depth way, to the sisterhood of the Krewe of Muses, Robin Roberts has found herself, like Alice in a raucous Wonderland, in the midst of Mardi Gras fever. From her first experience more than twenty years ago when she arrived in South Louisiana, finding herself screaming for the signature coconut throws of Zulu, Roberts has been hooked.

Always the inquisitive scholar, she has recently approached the krewes and parades from an academic angle. What, she wondered, lies behind the customs and behaviors of krewes like Zulu, a predominantly African American group that has been around for over 100 years, and Muses, a relatively new group of middle-class professional women? How do these groups celebrate the ways in which they are different from the traditionally upper class, all-male, all-white krewes? How do the middle-class truck parades, composed of men and women, play into this same kind of celebration of difference?

In 1987 Roberts accepted a position as an assistant professor in the English department at LSU. At the time, she was already researching and writing about popular culture, having created a video—and later an accompanying book—about women and popular music called *Ladies First: Women in Music Videos* (published by University of Mississippi Press in 1996). When LSU professor of English Anthony Barthelmy, the brother of the mayor of New Orleans at the time, invited her to watch Mardi Gras parades from the mayor’s stand, she looked at the experience as an opportunity to observe a culture that she wanted to understand better.

Later, she attended the Zulu parade with noted feminist Emily Toth, another LSU professor of English who has published a number of books that deal with New Orleans. In a recent presentation, Roberts said of that fateful parade, “Somewhat skeptical, I nevertheless found myself screaming like the rest of the crowd for a coconut. Decades later, in 2008, I found myself a part of the...”
Catching Neighborhood Spirit in New Orleans: Helen Regis Documents Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs

Helen A. Regis, associate professor and graduate director in the Department of Geography and Anthropology at LSU, grew up “moving around a lot,” living all over the United States and in France. Until moving to New Orleans, first as an undergraduate at Loyola and continuing as a graduate student at Tulane, she didn’t feel that she had a hometown. Regis knew even before she completed her dissertation that she wanted to stay in Louisiana. She also wanted to be part of a department that values both international and local research and discovery. She found just that at LSU.

One of the reasons she feels so at home in Louisiana is because of her participation as a graduate student in a year-long National Park Service research project that took her to a number of neighborhoods in New Orleans and connected her to an even larger number of people. Her work included a study of the area’s many “Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs.” These organizations create strong bonds among the people in the many “wards” that make up the city, and Regis found her niche in documenting their activities and working with the neighborhoods.

“Working with the second line parades, I developed relationships over the decades,” Regis explained recently. “I’ve always appreciated the sense of place that people felt for New Orleans.”

These clubs have long been some of the most important organizations in their communities. In majority African American neighborhoods, they serve as both support for the residents and entertainment for the community at large. Throughout the year, members of the clubs serve their communities in a variety of ways, such as providing services or by giving voice to issues of importance to their communities. Historically, these groups have served as much as unions as they have benevolent societies, providing workers with support and solidarity when no other organization served that purpose.

Then, throughout the year between August and June—with a moratorium during Mardi Gras when others take to the streets—each club has a designated Sunday on which the members celebrate their organization with a grand parade, or “second line.” These parades, as well as being celebrations of work done, also mark the
anniversaries of the clubs and serve as memorials to those members who have passed during the year. These organizations are also prime training grounds for those members of the community who want to participate in local politics or activism. Within the club structure, older, more experienced, members serve as mentors for younger participants. The organizations also have a family dimension, and relatives often guide the younger generations into service to the community. Members also learn valuable leadership skills through their participation and service, and natural leaders emerge. One such young leader is Tamara Jackson, who now heads the city’s Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force, a group that was formed to ensure that the community organizations have a voice in local government and to create a better environment for the second line clubs.

Besides her work with the clubs, Regis has always been actively engaged in her own neighborhood. In 2004, she became involved as a member of the advisory board for a newly formed initiative called The Neighborhood Project, the tagline for which is “Our Stories Told by Us.” This innovative project was the brainchild of Abram Shalom Himelstein and Rachel Breunlin, two residents of New Orleans’ Seventh Ward. Regis had served on Breunlin’s master’s thesis committee and shared a common research interest: parades. Regis was also intrigued by the efforts of Himelstein and Breunlin to teach writing and to work with public school students and community activists to record the remarkable accomplishments of their neighbors. The group has published twelve books about the area, including Coming Out the Door for the Ninth Ward, which was written by the Nine Times Social and Pleasure Club in collaboration with Breunlin, Himelstein, and Regis. Part memoir and part creative writing, this book documents the history and showcases the accomplishments of one of the area’s prominent Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs.

Begun in June 2005, about two months before Hurricane Katrina devastated the city, the book is, as Regis respectfully terms it, a “collective ethnography.” Every Monday night between fall 2005 and fall 2006, members of the Nine Times Club met at Breunlin’s home for writing workshops as they diligently worked on the text. Ronald W. Lewis, a local resident who put together a museum called the House of Dance & Feathers, also worked with the Neighborhood Project to catalogue the contents of the museum and to document the cultural history of his neighborhood. This book, aptly named The House of Dance & Feathers, contains high-quality photos from the museum collection as well as descriptions of the museum exhibits and a history of the traditions and people represented by those exhibits.

Both of these projects draw on long-term relationships that combine research and reciprocity. Regis’s work with these neighborhood activists serves as a prime example of this combination of scholarship and cooperation. “We were giving to and getting from each other,” Regis explained. “We, as researchers, got information from the members, and in exchange we gave back help with the publication.”

For Regis, as an urban/cultural anthropologist and also as a member of the community, this symbiosis is vital. These people are truly her neighbors, and the love she feels for her adopted hometown infuses her research and service.

For additional information on the Neighborhood Story Project, please visit www.neighborhoodstoryproject.org. Also, for information on ordering books mentioned in this article, as well as others, please visit www.neighborhoodstoryproject.org/books.
Life's work and life's passions are often at odds, and many of us rush to retirement with the hope to pursue our passions after work has ended. Not so with Frank de Caro and Rosan Jordan, two well-known and respected folklorists and former LSU faculty members: The married couple arrived at LSU together in 1970 and retired together over ten years ago, yet they are still researching, writing, and editing works on folklore, continuing the interests they passionately pursued while they were teaching at LSU.

That Louisiana has a rich cultural history and is fertile ground for those working in the area of folklore should be obvious to all who have visited the state. Frank de Caro and Rosan Jordan, both dedicated folklorists, filled a much needed role in educating LSU students and producing scholarship in the area of folklore, particularly the folklore of South Louisiana, for thirty years. While at LSU, the two professors wrote a number of important books and papers, presented at academic conferences and meetings, inspired students (including me, when I was an undergraduate) in the classroom, and served as mentors and role models for both graduate students and junior faculty members. When they decided to retire, that just meant they had more time to pursue their passion—more folklore research.

Since retirement, de Caro and Jordan have co-authored a book, Re-Situating Folklore: Folk Contexts and Twentieth-Century Literature and Art, published by University of Tennessee Press in 2004. This text explores the ways in which writers and artists incorporate folklore into their works and attends to both literature and visual art forms, including murals, other paintings, prints, and photographs.

Taking a slightly different approach in his next work, de Caro edited a collection of poems, fiction, memoirs, and

Folklore at LSU

Frank de Caro and Rosan Jordan credit the support for folklorists at LSU for their long careers with the university. As de Caro stressed in a recent interview, they were not the first faculty members in the LSU English department to focus on folklife and culture, and the tradition is still going strong today. Both before they arrived and after they left, this very important area of research had been, and continues to be, firmly established at LSU.

Folklore in the Department of English

The tradition of folklore specialists at LSU may stem from the richness of South Louisiana culture, which has attracted several brilliant and inspired faculty. For example, one of America’s most highly regarded academic folklore specialists, Harry Oster, began his career at LSU in the 1950s. Though not originally hired as a folklorist at LSU, Oster conducted extensive fieldwork, collecting folksongs around the state. Most notable among his collections were songs from Cajun culture and from the African-American blues tradition. Based on his work, he produced several albums from his Louisiana recordings and wrote a book, Living Country Blues, from his fieldwork in the state. Partially because of his influence, the Louisiana Folklore Society, which continues to exist, was founded on the LSU campus in 1956. Oster left LSU in 1964 to join the faculty at the University of Iowa, where he remained for the rest of his career, but former students recalled years later that Oster sang folksongs in class.

Several of the department’s top faculty members—including Darwin Shrell, Otis Wheeler, and Lewis P. Simpson—maintained an active interest in folklore even after Oster left. Then, in 1970, six years after Oster left LSU, de Caro was hired, and shortly afterward, Jordan joined the faculty.

“I think that after he was gone, the English department missed having a bit of folklore around, and I was hired as an actual folklorist,” de Caro commented recently.

De Caro and Jordan added such courses as “American Folklore,” “Women and Folklore,” and “Folklore and Literature.” In the late 1970s, they coordinated their efforts with Jay Edwards, from the Department of Geography & Anthropology. This dynamic team cross-listed their courses as both English and Anthropology courses.

After de Caro and Jordan retired—Jordan in December 2000 and de Caro in June 2001—two new folklorists,
informal essays, and a play—all by folklorists and inspired by their folklore interests—to, as he describes it, “fit in with recent trends in folklore study...that allow for more personal and self-reflective kinds of writing.” Both he and Jordan contributed their poetry to this project, and several LSU graduates who had gone on to pursue work in folklore after studying with de Caro or Jordan also are included in the work. The book, titled *The Folklore Muse: Poetry, Fiction, and Other Reflections by Folklorists*, was published by Utah State University Press in 2008.

The latest of de Caro’s books, his third since retirement, is a collection of previously published folk narratives titled *An Anthology of American Folktales and Legends* (M.E. Sharpe, 2009). This text includes a variety of narratives that were originally passed down orally and that had first been printed in obscure places.

Of this project, de Caro says, “For folklorists it would provide an overview reminding them of what was available for the study of American storytelling. For the general reading public, it would be a resource for finding not only a great many individual stories, but also the larger picture of one important (and sometimes overlooked) American mode of communication through oral narrative.”

The book includes sections on “folktales,” with subsections on tall tales and wonder tales, and “legends,” those stories that are perceived to be true by some people—ghost and witch narratives fall into this category.

Jordan has been equally busy. In addition to co-authoring one book with de Caro and contributing to the other, she also served on the editorial board for the recently published *Encyclopedia of Women’s Folklore and Folklife* (Greenwood Press, 2009).

Rarely do any of us find a field that continues to bring us joy and fulfillment over an entire lifetime. When bright and gifted people choose to follow a path that brings intrinsic satisfaction as well as greater understanding for all of us regarding the world around us, they give us far more than just information.

Carolyn Ware and Solimar Otero, joined the English department. Ware has researched and written extensively on the rural Mardi Gras traditions, especially those of women, in Southwest Louisiana and, most recently, has worked with James Catano to document the culture of the Croatian community in Plaquemines Parish (see related story in this issue).

Otero’s research interests include Afro-Caribbean spirituality and Yoruba traditional religion in Cuba and the United States. She has conducted fieldwork in these areas under a Fulbright Award and, most recently, was awarded a fellowship to Harvard Divinity School for a year. Her research has culminated in a brand new book, *Afro-Cuban Diasporas in the Atlantic World*, which is due out from University of Rochester Press in July 2010.

**Folklore in Geography & Anthropology**

The LSU Department of Geography & Anthropology has perhaps an even longer tradition of folklore research than the English department. For example, the late Boyd Professor Fred Kniffen’s pioneering work in the study of folk architecture is well documented. This area of research, studying structures built according to traditional methods and ideas that have been informally handed down within communities, was continued by Kniffen’s colleague, Milton Newton, and is continuing today through the work of Jay Edwards. Edwards, in particular has achieved acclaim for his work with folk and vernacular architecture, and has written a book, *A Creole Lexicon: Architecture, Landscape, People* (LSU Press, 2004) on the subject.

Other faculty in Geography & Anthropology are also engaged in folklore-related activity. Joyce Jackson has worked extensively in the area of folklore, teaching courses and performing fieldwork, both in South Louisiana and in Senegal. Also, Helen Regis’s work with second line traditions has generated considerable interest among folklorists. Both Jackson and Regis are featured in related articles in this issue.

**Carrying Forward the Tradition**

These LSU faculty members, both those who have retired and those still at the university, continue to document the culture and serve the communities of Louisiana in ways that transcend their original callings. The undergraduates they teach and the graduate students they mentor will be the next generations to follow their paths. We commend them for their service and for their dedication to their fields, to the state of Louisiana, and to this next generation of folklorists, ethnographers, and anthropologists.
Focus On: Undergraduate Students

Julia Bent, Graduating Senior, May 2010
Major: Women’s and Gender Studies  Hometown: Jennings, Louisiana

Active in student organizations throughout her undergraduate career, Julia Bent is the president of Women Organizing Women and Voices for Planned Parenthood, LSU Chapter. She coordinated the Spring 2010 production of Eve Ensler’s “The Vagina Monologues.” A public affairs intern with Planned Parenthood of Louisiana, Bent works for reproductive justice for Louisiana women. She has applied to serve in the City Year program in Detroit and, after that, plans to apply to the Peace Corps in Africa.

Caroline Davis, Sophomore; anticipated graduation date: May 2012
Double Major: International Studies and Spanish  Hometown: Lafayette, Louisiana

Caroline Davis is a member of the Honors College and received the Sophomore Honors Distinction in spring 2010. She participated in the ASPIRE Program, researching determinates of constructive patriotism in the United States within the context of war, and attended the Midwestern Political Science Association Conference to present her research in late April 2010. She has also participated in the Chancellor’s Future Leaders in Research program. This summer, Caroline will study Spanish in Granada, Spain, with the LSU in Spain program. She is an officer in her sorority, Delta Delta Delta, serves on the Greek Board of Directors Fundraising Committee to benefit Habitat for Humanity, is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, and is Vice President of the International Studies Society.

Charlotte Gates, Graduating Senior, May 2010
Major: Psychology  Minors: French and Biology  Hometown: Shreveport, LA

An active student with both academic and extracurricular interests, Charlotte Gates enjoys participating in activities at her church, where she is a student ministry intern. In addition to spiritual and social activities, her group is involved in continued hurricane relief service projects to New Orleans. Gates is a member of the second wave of ASPIRE students to graduate after participating in the program. Gates says of her experience in ASPIRE, “I discovered my long-term goal of attending graduate school for Clinical Psychology primarily through researching schizophrenia-spectrum disorders in Dr. Cohen’s Severe Psychopathology Research Lab. Through ASPIRE (Arts and Sciences Program in Research), I was given the opportunity to travel to the Society for Research in Psychopathology conference and present our findings on neurocognition and quality of life in undergraduates at-risk for schizophrenia.” Gates recently received a Fulbright scholarship to study in Toulouse, France, during the next academic year and to work at CNRS, a top research center. There, she will be examining personality, creativity, and mental imagery in synesthesia, the neurological phenomenon in which individuals automatically experience a linkage of two or more senses.

Sarah Gates, Graduating Senior, May 2010
Dual Major (two degrees): German and International Studies  Hometown: Oxford, Mississippi

Sarah Gates graduated this spring with a double major in German and International Studies, and she wrote her senior thesis on how membership in the European Union influences states’ decisions to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. She also studied French and short story writing. While she was a senior, she also completed an internship with the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana. Following her freshman year, she completed a summer program with the Institute on Philanthropy and Voluntary Service at Georgetown University, while interning at a non-profit literacy organization, “Everybody Wins!” in Washington, D.C. In 2009, she won a DAAD scholarship, which she used to study German and American foreign policy at the University of Bonn. Following graduation, she hopes to pursue a master’s degree in international relations, focusing on the role of social institutions in peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction.
Laurel Keys, Sophomore; anticipated graduation date: May 2012  
**Double Major:** Business Management, Human Resources concentration; Women’s and Gender Studies  
**Hometown:** Plano, TX

A sophomore in the Honors College and Ourso College of Business, Laurel Keys represents other sophomores on the Honors College Student Council. In spring 2010, the group held a charity event for St Jude’s Children’s Hospital. Also, as a member of Honors Advocates, she helped introduce incoming Honors freshmen at the 2010 Spring Invitational. Beginning the requirements for Upper Division Honors in Management, Keys has already begun researching ideas for her senior thesis project. She also attended the National Young Feminist Leadership Conference in Washington D.C., hosted by the Feminist Majority Foundation. Of this conference experience, Keys said, “Feminism and Women’s Studies are my greatest passions, so it was an honor to meet these women who have done so much for the movement.”

Meghann Landry, Graduating Senior, May 2010  
**Major:** History  
**Hometown:** DeQuincy, Louisiana

While an undergraduate at LSU, Meghann Landry was named to the Dean’s List and Chancellor’s Honor Roll a number of times. She studied abroad in summer 2009 through LSU in Germany, where she earned course credit and spent six weeks in Europe. She is an active member and secretary of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society. Landry also participated in the ASPIRE program and most recently won the Kimberly S. Hanger Award for outstanding paper written and presented by an undergraduate during the Phi Alpha Theta sessions of the Louisiana Historical Association 2010 annual meeting in Lafayette. Landry has also participated in a number of community service projects, the most recent of which was the “Church in a Day” program at Grand Lake, Louisiana. She plans to participate in a similar program in Abita Springs next fall. Meghann has been accepted into the graduate program at LSU, where she plans to pursue a master’s degree in history.

Katie LaSalle, Graduating Senior, May 2010  
**Major:** Sociology  
**Minor:** Criminology  
**Hometown:** St. Martinville, Louisiana

A member of Kappa Delta sorority, Katie LaSalle has participated in several philanthropic events on behalf of organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and Prevent Child Abuse America. She is also a member of the honor society Phi Sigma Theta. During her junior year, LaSalle interned with the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, an experience that led her to realize that she wanted to go into social work. She participated in the ASPIRE (Arts and Sciences Program In Research) program during her final year at LSU, working on a research project with Sociology Professor Joachim Singelmann. As a result of her ASPIRE work, in April 2010, she presented a paper on poverty in Appalachia at the Southern Sociological conference. She hopes to continue her studies in fall 2010 in the LSU social work graduate program.

Rebekah Myers, Sophomore; anticipated graduation date: May 2012  
**Major:** Political Science  
**Minor:** Sociology  
**Hometown:** Knoxville, Tennessee

Accepted into the LSU Honors College as a freshman, Myers participated in the ASPIRE program this year, and, from her work in that program, she will be presenting a paper at the annual Midwest Political Science Association Conference in Chicago. Besides her academic accomplishments, she is a member of Pi Beta Phi sorority and is the secretary of the LSU Equestrian Team. Last year as a freshman, she competed at the IHSA Nationals and was ranked 18th in the country in Novice Fences. This year, she was ranked first in...
Focus On: Undergraduate Students

IHSA Zone 7, Region 2 Novice Flat, and will be representing LSU in Amarillo, Texas, at the Zone 7 competition, which is the last qualifier to compete in the IHSA Nationals for 2010. Myers said recently, “At LSU, I have been very fortunate to have so many opportunities to achieve many goals by my sophomore year that I would have never dreamed possible.”

Andrew Schwehm, Junior; anticipated graduation date: May 2011
Dual Major (two degrees): English and Psychology Minor: Sociology
Hometown: New Orleans, Louisiana

Andrew Schewehm is a junior from New Orleans pursuing degrees in both English and Psychology with a minor in Sociology. As a member of Psi Chi, the psychology honor society, Schwehm has been named to the Dean’s List every semester since arriving on campus, as well as making the Chancellor’s Honor Roll in spring 2009. Schwehm has also worked for LSU’s student newspaper, The Daily Reveille, since his freshman year, serving as a copy editor, contributing writer, and sports writer. In summer 2009, he traveled to Omaha, Nebraska, to cover the ‘Tigers’ quest for a baseball national championship, serving as the paper’s sole writer and photographer. Schwehm has combined his passions for psychology, English, and sports to work on his honors thesis project on mentoring and coaching college athletes. He will be traveling to South Kensington this summer with the LSU in London program.

Sarah Kaye Slocum, Graduating Senior, May 2010
Major: Psychology
Hometown: Slidell, Louisiana

When she entered LSU, Sarah Slocum knew she wanted to pursue a major in psychology, and in particular, behavior analysis. While in the Honors College, she completed Sophomore Honors Distinction, and went on to complete the undergraduate thesis program. Of that experience, Slocum commented, “This two-year program taught me so much about research in the field of psychology.” She was also inducted into a number of honor societies, including Mortar Board, Order of Omega, and Rho Lambda. After her graduation, she plans to continue at LSU in the Ph.D. program in school psychology, focusing on Applied Behavior Analysis. Her ultimate goal is to open a behavioral clinic in Louisiana to help people with autism and related developmental disabilities.

Krista Allen: Undergraduate Extraordinaire

Krista Allen, the amazing young woman from Houma, Louisiana, who graduated magna cum laude in May 2010 with a degree in history and a minor in leadership development, dazzled all of us in the LSU College of Arts & Sciences dean’s office. During her days as an undergraduate, she managed to find time in her busy life as a student to serve as the college’s recruiting coordinator and worked closely with Assistant Dean Rebecca Caire on a number of projects. Allen developed innovative ideas for reaching potential students and put together materials for the “prospective students” pages on the A&S website (see her work at http://www.artsci.lsu.edu/Prospective_students/index.html).

She was not only active in A&S, however. Allen served in a number of leadership positions on campus during her time as an undergraduate. She was the Freshman Orientation Team Leader, supervising an entire staff of other student orientation leaders. She also served on the Student Government Senate, representing
Arlene Tayag Gordon, Ph.D. candidate; anticipated graduation date: August 2011
Area of Concentration: Clinical Psychology Hometown: Houston, Texas

Arlene Tayag Gordon is a native of Houston, Texas. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Houston and Master of Arts from Houston Baptist University. In August 2007, Arlene relocated to Baton Rouge, Louisiana to pursue a doctoral degree in clinical psychology, child track, at LSU. She currently works under psychology professor and licensed clinical psychologist, Mary Lou Kelley, conducting research on the after-effects of Hurricane Katrina, with a focus on identifying factors predictive of psychological resiliency post-disaster. While at LSU, Gordon received the Huel D. Perkins Fellowship Award, followed by the LSU Board of Regents Fellowship Award. In addition, she has presented her research at numerous conferences, including the Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, and most recently, the Department of Homeland Security University Network Summit, where she was one of only two LSU students invited to participate.

Ryan Orgera, Ph.D. candidate; anticipated graduation date: December 2011
Concentration: Geography (environmental/cultural) Hometown: Englewood, Florida

While at LSU, Orgera has contributed to the university in a number of ways, including being editorial assistant for the Geographical Review, instructor in French Studies, vice-president of the Graduate Student Association, vice-president of Pétanque Louisianaise, secretary of Geaux Obama, interpreter for the Prix Louisianais (literary prize), and, currently, working in the Disaster Science Management Program. Academically two things interest Orgera: the environment and languages. His B.A. and M.A. are both in Romance languages and literatures. He realized that he needed to understand the cultural idea of nature in literature and beyond and found that geography was a discipline that welcomed people trained in diverse fields. He currently combines his humanities and social science training in exploring how we in the United States treat and perceive wilderness. Orgera commented, “I feel very fortunate to be a part of two tremendous departments: Geography & Anthropology and French Studies.”
Focus On: Graduate Students

**Bruce Parker**, Ph.D. candidate
Program: Curriculum Theory and Women’s and Gender Studies Hometown: Pikeville, Kentucky

Bruce Parker is a third-year Ph.D. student, the Office of Multicultural Affairs’ Safe Space Campaign Coordinator, and a community activist. Parker has published in *The English Journal*, *The High School Journal*, and *Democracy in Education* about using literature to discuss multicultural issues such as transgender identity and social class. He also has forthcoming essays in *Theory Into Practice* and *Curriculum Inquiry*. Parker also serves as assistant editor for *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* and the Assistant Conference Chair for the Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice. Since becoming politically active ten years ago, he has worked as a community organizer and political advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer causes. As Safe Space Campaign Coordinator, Parker works to make LSU a better place for all students through education and advocacy.

**Katherine Sawyer**, Ph.D. candidate; anticipated graduation date: May 2013
Major: History Hometown: Pineville, Louisiana

Katherine Sawyer is a third year graduate student in the Department of History, focusing on Early Modern Britain with a minor in World History. While working on her bachelor’s degree at Louisiana College, she spent a semester studying in London, and became fascinated with the city’s diverse culture and vibrant history. At LSU, Katherine has focused her studies on popular culture and religion in the Tudor era, writing her M.A. thesis on presbyterianism and its manifestation among the various orders of Elizabethan London society. She is tentatively aiming to expand this analysis in the future for her doctoral dissertation. Katherine has maintained an active involvement in student life in the history department, serving as the founding president of the History Graduate Student Association and helping to organize the HGSA’s first Graduate History Conference in March 2010. She is currently completing her World History minor and will take general exams in 2011. She hopes to graduate with a Ph.D. in 2013.

**Pavica Sheldon**, Ph.D. candidate; Graduation date: May 21, 2010
Area of concentration: Communication theory, Department of Communication Studies
Hometown: Pozega, Croatia

Pavica Sheldon is a doctoral student in the Department of Communication Studies. Her research interests include self-disclosure in social network sites and intercultural communication. She has presented 17 papers at various national and regional organizations and already has eight journal publications. In February 2010, she defended her dissertation, which explores the differences and similarities in self-disclosure and friendship development between Facebook and face-to-face friends. At LSU, she has taught Interpersonal Communication, Public Speaking, Fundamentals of Communication, and Communication Research. Originally from a small town in the continental part of Croatia, Pavica came to the United States in 2004 to study mass communication at the Manship School at Louisiana State University. She decided to stay in Baton Rouge to attend the doctoral program in communication theory. Pavica received her Ph.D. from LSU in May 2010.
Focus On: Alumni

José Ramirez: Leading the Way against Leprosy

by Libby Ingram

LSU takes pride in the diverse student body brought together under the oak groves all over campus, each student bringing a one of a kind flavor to the university. José Ramirez’s experience seems especially unique. As the first man to be admitted to the university with leprosy, his determination to gain a college diploma stood strong despite his illness. Ramirez’s master’s degree in social work jumpstarted his advocacy against the stigmas associated with Hansen’s disease, more commonly known as leprosy.

Ramirez first found out that he had the disease when he was about 20, a fact that would momentarily halt his life while he was admitted to the leprosarium in Carville, Louisiana. In order to leave his family in Laredo, Texas, arrangements were made to drive Ramirez to Louisiana in a hearse; when questioning why he wasn’t traveling in the presumed ambulance, the retort was that ambulances were for the living, and he was essentially a part of the dead. The mood at the leprosarium was not much better.

Ramirez recalled, “The feeling of hopelessness would surface often while I was at Carville as I witnessed and learned about the great injustices experienced by so many of my friends and which I felt I too would be destined to experience.”

Ramirez was never completely disheartened. “I also saw how so many patients, with the love and support of staff and the Daughters of Charity, were able to forgive God and found love, dignity and respect among the hundreds hospitalized during my stay,” he explained recently.

Ramirez often credits his mother and his girlfriend Magdalena, who eventually became his wife, for giving him never-ending support through his illness despite their Catholic backgrounds claiming that the disease was a punishment from God. The staff members caring for the Carville patients made a large impression on Ramirez as well, especially Chief of the Social Services and Rehabilitation Department Vernon Bahlinger, who Ramirez described with great respect: “He admonished me when I would get angry at the world, embraced me when I cried, and redirected me when I felt depressed.”

Under Bahlinger’s great influence, Ramirez chose to emulate his Carville hero and go into social work. The combined love and hope offered by all of Ramirez’s friends and family helped him transition from Carville to his pursuit of a degree at LSU.

Ramirez remembers the start of his journey at LSU, remarking that a change in university policy was required so a person with leprosy could be admitted into the university. By 1969, Ramirez entered LSU and claimed his title as a Tiger. Despite entering the university with the visible differences caused by the disease, Ramirez decided to keep his illness undercover in order to gain acceptance from his fellow students.

Ramirez recalled, “My initial plan was to hide my identity from peers and faculty. However, this plan was like inflicting salt into an open wound.”

After experiencing firsthand the ignorance of the public about Hansen’s disease, Ramirez began the advocacy that he would continue throughout his life, clarifying to his peers that the real disease is not the sinful punishment described in the Bible and that persons afflicted with Hansen’s disease are much more than “lepers,” a word that Ramirez refers to as “the ‘L’ word.”

Ramirez recalled finding his balance: “As opportunities arose, I would educate others, for example, when the offensive “L” word was used. [I initiated] field trips for the Sociology Club members, inviting the Intramural League champions to play against the patients at Carville, and speaking at the Soapbox. Without yelling to the student body that I lived at Carville and was treated for Hansen’s disease, I gradually learned to whisper about the illness and educate many.”

He continued working with social issues by volunteering with “The Phone,” a suicide hotline, and using assignments and papers to continue educating those around him. Ramirez attributed his enduring strength to his acceptance and involvement on campus, diving into activities such as the Sociology Club, where he eventually became president; umpire of the Intramural Softball League; and, as every good Tiger should be, a loyal sports fan, especially during the time when Pete Maravich and Bert Jones dominated sports. However, Ramirez’s best experience at the university was “[t]he formation of everlasting friendships with my peers and many of the faculty [which] made it possible for me to enjoy the life of a student at LSU.”
Since graduating in 1974 with a Master’s in Social Work, Ramirez has continued his efforts to inform people about leprosy and has even expanded his advocacy to include issues such as mental and cognitive disabilities and Hispanic issues. Currently, Ramirez lives in Houston, Texas, among many other LSU graduates. He is the department director at the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority (MHMRA) of Harris County.

When asked what accomplishments he was most proud of, Ramirez replied, “To date, I have traveled to many countries to make presentations on stigma, serve as a special consultant to the World Health Organization on stigma, serve as Managing Editor of The Star (patient driven international journal), and serve as USA Coordinator of IDEA (international patient organization).”


When asked what the main goal of his advocacy was, he stated, “My definition of stigma is: an act of labeling, rejection, or unexplained fear of a person. To paraphrase a famous quote, knowledge is power, but ignorance is more powerful. The amount of knowledge that most persons have about Hansen’s disease is often times negative, resulting in fear and labeling. The community needs to understand that biblical leprosy is not today’s leprosy; this illness is found in the arts, literature, movies and many more media. The [real] illness becomes non-contagious as soon as treatment is started; it is not fatal. It occurs all over the world, including the U.S., but 95% of the world population is immune to the disease. We must all educate others about this grossly misunderstood disease.”

Ramirez’s unfailing confidence has led him to spread his message all around the world; he never let fear overcome his goal of educating people. Ramirez credits support from family, old friends and new friends for this strength, such as the camaraderie that he found when he entered the university: “At the beginning, LSU was seen through the eyes of a young man scared to be ostracized. Later, the beauty of the grounds, the history of the school, and the spirit of the student body made me realize that I was surrounded by family.” Ramirez asks any former classmates and colleagues to contact him and reconnect at joseramirezjr@hotmail.com.

LSU Alumna Recognized for Teaching Excellence

Stephanie Judice, a 1993 LSU College of Arts & Sciences graduate, recently received the 2009 Milken Educator Award for her work as a teacher at two New Iberia, Louisiana, high schools. Judice, whose undergraduate degree is in English, also received a Master’s degree in gifted education from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She teaches English and fine arts at both Westgate High School and New Iberia High School.

Honored for her classroom innovation and creativity, Judice had not always intended to be a teacher, working for several years in fields unrelated to either literature or education before finally taking a position as a teacher.

“It was an unexpected opportunity that led me to teaching. My father-in-law worked in the school system in New Iberia, and he let me know that there was still an open gifted English position at the end of the summer,” Judice explained. “It was one of those moments when you know fate is opening a door, so I took it and have been so happy ever since.”

The Milken Educator Awards were established by Milken Family Foundation Chairman Lowell Milken to provide public recognition and individual financial rewards of $25,000 to elementary and secondary teachers, principals and specialists who are furthering excellence in education. Educators are recognized for their accomplishments and for their future promise and are invited to participate in the annual Milken Educator Forum, which is hosted by the Foundation in Santa Monica, California.
Forever LSU: The Campaign for Louisiana State University presents a unique opportunity for the University family to create a positive, permanent change that will make LSU a top-tier public institution. With help, the whispers of LSU’s past will unite into a thunderous roar that surely will be heard across our great nation.

Visit www.foreverlsu.org to learn more.
Three of the eight students who received University Medals at the December 2009 commencement were from the College of Arts & Sciences. Pictured (left to right) are Dean Gaines Foster, Provost Astrid Merget, medalists Mitchell Blanchard, Richele Craven, and Ashley Gieg, and Chancellor Michael Martin.