

UL System News

Recap of Official Business of the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System

Dr. Sally Clausen
President

ULS Presidents Launch Graduation Initiative Community colleges and tougher admission standards mean a new role for the system's eight universities

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Universities

Grambling State University

Louisiana Tech University

McNeese State University

Nicholls State University

Northwestern State
University

Southeastern Louisiana
University

University of Louisiana at
Lafayette

University of Louisiana at
Monroe

Students in the University of Louisiana System will graduate at a greater rate than the national average by 2012, according to a new plan introduced this month by UL System presidents.

Although UL System graduation rates have increased steadily over the past several years, they still lag behind the state and national averages.

According to UL System President Sally Clausen, some of the reasons some students have taken longer to graduate include:

- In the past, UL System universities have been the first point of access for many Louisiana students, regardless of academic preparation.
- Many of those students needed at least two remedial courses.

"That is all changing now," said Clausen. "With standards rising, students entering our universities will be better prepared, and that corresponds with faster progression toward graduation."

"Academic preparation is the number one precursor to student success. However, we won't rely on academic preparation alone. Under the presidents' initiative, our universities will do more to help address students'

needs before they get to campus and ensure success once they arrive."

Among the strategies presidents discussed were:

- More meaningful, customized advising for every student throughout the semester.
- Early intervention.
- More flexible class schedules, including weekend and evening classes.
- Online courses — anytime, anywhere.
- Opportunities for internships.
- Service learning.

"As we raise academic standards, we need to do everything in our power to ensure that students meet them. We do it for our athletes and honor students. We want to make sure we do it for everyone," Grambling President Horace Judson said.

Universities will focus primarily on improving advising and other student assistance during the freshman year. About 20 percent of students drop out between their first and second years of college.

UL System Board Chair Mike Woods of Shreveport

Louisiana Tech was among three universities in the nation cited by The Education Trust for significantly improving graduation rates.

said he has been encouraged to see higher freshman-to-sophomore retention rates since ULS universities implemented minimum entrance requirements in 2000.

"This bodes well for higher graduation rates in the future," he said. "With some good old-fashioned guidance, we believe we can do even better."

Recently, The Education Trust, a national education policy organization, called attention to the need to improve college retention and graduation rates nationally. It cited Louisiana Tech and a handful of other universities for their success in graduating students.

Louisiana Tech increased graduation rates from 35 percent in 1997 to 55 percent in 2002. The university implemented selective admissions in 1992 and created a culture that "involved the whole university in the graduation of students," Louisiana Tech President Dan Reneau said.

University Spotlight – Southeastern La. University



Novelist Joins Growing List of Acclaimed Authors on SLU Faculty

HAMMOND -- Olympia Vernon, an award-winning author, has joined the faculty of Southeastern Louisiana University, her alma mater, as a writer-in-residence.

Vernon, who has received universal praise for her debut novel, "Eden," will teach a course in creative writing this fall. She joins a growing contingent of noted creative writers within the Southeastern faculty, including Timothy Gautreaux, another writer-in-residence; poets Jack Bedell and Alison Pelegrin, and short story writer and novelist Norman German.

"We are pleased and honored to have Ms. Vernon on board," said Southeastern President Randy Moffett. "Not only will her talent, expertise and experience as a writer benefit our students, but her success is sure to inspire them as well."

Vernon received a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Southeastern in 1999. Her love of writing, nurtured by her Southeastern English professors, inspired her to earn a master of fine arts degree from Louisiana State University in 2002. "Eden" has prompted descriptions of Vernon as a "gifted new writer" and an "immense talent." Her second novel, "Logic," a coming of age tale of a young girl in Mississippi, was published in April.

"Olympia Vernon's 2003 novel 'Eden' put the reading world on notice that a bright

and original voice had arrived," said Times-Picayune book editor Susan Larsen. "Her second novel, 'Logic,' only confirms that strong promise."

Vernon is the two-time recipient of the Matt Clark Memorial Scholarship and was nominated for the Robert O. Butler Award in Fiction in 2002.

She was recently selected by the American Academy of Arts and Letters to receive the Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation Award for her literary achievement in "Eden." The award is for an American work of fiction "which is a considerable literary achievement." Previous recipients have included authors such as Alice Walker, Joyce Carol Oates, John Updike and John Knowles.



Award-winning author Olympia Vernon is Southeastern's new writer-in-residence.

Board Action

The ULS Board of Supervisors approved the following university requests:

Academic and Student Affairs

- Louisiana Tech: a curriculum revision for the First Professional Degree in Architecture
- Southeastern: a Bachelor of Science degree program in Health Science
- UL Monroe: a Master of Occupational Therapy degree program
- UL System: system universities' 2004-05 Promotions in Faculty Rank and Recommendations for Tenure

Joint Athletic and Audit

- UL Lafayette: employment contract and agreement for Robert Lee, Head Men's Basketball Coach, effective August 1, 2004

- UL Monroe: appointment of Mr. Robert H. Staub as Director of Athletics effective August 1, 2004

- UL System: Internal audit reports submitted for the period of June 15 to August 15, 2004

Finance

- Acceptance of the Fiscal Year 2003-04 Financial and Compliance Representation Letters for: a) Louisiana Tech University and b) Nicholls State University
- Louisiana Tech: issuance of revenue-funding bonds
- UL System: 2004-05 Operating Budgets, including organizational charts and Undergraduate/Graduate Mandatory Attendance Fees
- UL System: authorize severance pay to postsecondary

education employees in LASERS upon reaching retirement eligibility

Facilities Planning

- Nicholls: resolution authorizing President Stephen T. Hulbert to sign a petition for the annexation of University-owned property by the City of Thibodaux
- UL System: staff recommendations involving six projects included in Act 2, Capital Outlay Fiscal Year 2004-05 appropriations
- UL System: Fiscal Year 2005-06 Capital Outlay Budget Request and the Institutions' Five-Year Capital Outlay Plans

Personnel

- Grambling: appointment of Dr. Robert Dixon as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs/Professor

Did You Know?

Twenty-three percent of UL System undergraduates are age 25 or older.

- Grambling: appointment of Dr. Ernest L. Pickens, Sr. as Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
- Grambling: appointment of Dr. Mahoud Lamandanie as Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of International Student Affairs and Programs
- UL Monroe: appointment of Dr. Franklin Lamar Pritchard, Jr. as Dean of the College of Health Sciences and Dean of the School of Pharmacy
- UL Monroe: appointment of Dr. Ronald Lynn Berry as Interim Dean for the College of Business Administration