



For Immediate Release: Feb. 8, 2008

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UL System Students Continue to Aid Hurricane Recovery

BATON ROUGE - Over the next year, New Orleans will see more faculty, staff and students from the University of Louisiana System applying classroom knowledge to help the city recover from Hurricane Katrina thanks to service-learning grants.

The UL System awarded over \$450,000 grants to 22 programs, most tied to hurricane recovery. Three of those programs focus specifically on New Orleans:

- Northwestern State University counseling students will partner with the New Orleans Recovery School District, the Seton Resource Center of New Orleans and the Alexandria branch of the LSU Ag-Center to provide school counselors in the recovery district with resources and materials to help parents and students understand the importance of school attendance.
- University of Louisiana at Lafayette students will work with the Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana to assess and provide recommendations to combat hunger, while providing healthy and nutritious options for the needy.
- The Center for Child Development and the Applied Language and Speech Sciences program at UL Lafayette will work with the Orleans Parish School Board, the Recovery School District, the Louisiana Public Health Institute, Agenda for Children, and Head Start to support existing efforts to establish an early childhood and family learning center at the Mahalia Jackson Center in New Orleans' Central City neighborhood.

“As Louisiana continues to recover from the devastating hurricanes of 2005, it is gratifying to know we have top faculty, staff and students at our universities who will be investing their time, resources, and brainpower to make a difference,” said UL System Board Chair Elsie Burkhalter, who lost her Slidell home during Katrina and is still in the process of rebuilding.

The grants are made possible through a three-year, \$1.2 million grant to the UL System from the Learn and Serve America division of the Corporation for National and Community Service. The awards presented recently are the second phase of the three-year grant program. Last year, the UL System awarded \$606,918 to 29 projects.

More than 3,000 students participated last spring in the start of the first round of programs. In one semester alone, they generated over 14,000 volunteer hours with 95 community partners in service-learning efforts.

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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

Dr. Sally Clausen President

The UL System:

- Ranks among the 20 largest public systems in the U.S.
- Enrolls approx 80,000 students
- Employs over 8,000 faculty/staff
- Awards more than half of the public college degrees in Louisiana

Several of those first phase programs were aimed directly at New Orleans recovery including Louisiana Tech University architecture and design students who developed site-specific housing prototypes for the Gert Town community and Grambling State University students who conducted workshops, replenished band supplies and performed community concerts at O. Perry Walker High School and St. Augustine High School.

Service-learning provides numerous benefits to the student. According to UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, student participation in service has positive impacts on leadership ability, grades, retention, degree aspirations, critical thinking skills and commitment to helping others in difficulty.

Furthermore, research shows at least 50 percent of students who engage in service during college will continue volunteering after they graduate.

"Higher education today must not only provide students with a competitive academic experience, we also must ensure that students led by their own faculty will link classroom experiences with meaningful opportunities to serve. The result is an improved society and a better educated student," said UL System President Sally Clausen. "We hope these combined experiences will prepare students to make a better living for themselves and a better life for others."

In addition to the service-learning grants, University of Louisiana System students, faculty, and staff participated in a Habitat for Humanity build at Musicians' Village in December called "Home is Where the Music Lives." Over 70 people participated in a wall raising and numerous construction efforts in the ninth ward.

For more information about these programs and a full list of funded projects, visit www.ulsystem.net.