Voilà!
Fall 2009
THE MAGAZINE OF NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY

SUGAR CANE
The Bayou Region's Historic Economic Mainstay Remains Vital in the 21st Century
As most of you have learned by now, Nicholls State University has passed through a budget crisis the likes of which we had never experienced during our brief 60-year history. It has been a time of stress, anxiety, and pain for all of us, but it has also been a time in which the innate goodness of the people at Nicholls rose to the surface once again and reason prevailed.

In early January, upon learning of the likelihood of deep cuts to higher education, I called upon my executive council to begin developing a process to manage the anticipated budget cuts. I directed them to consider first and foremost the central mission of the university and to develop a plan that would protect the university’s academic core. Operating under very limited time constraints and involving deans, faculty members, and other stakeholders to the extent possible, we did develop and implement our plan. The results are now in place.

What has impressed me throughout this whole ordeal is the willingness of our people to look for every opportunity to advance this university, even in a time of crisis. Nicholls has remained true to its roots while getting beyond the pain of having to eliminate programs and personnel in order to shore up and preserve essential services and academic programs. We are determined to come out of this better and stronger than we were going in.

There are those who maintain that the budget situation in Louisiana will continue to decline for perhaps two more years. If this is the case, Nicholls must continue to demonstrate that higher education is a part of the long-term solution to this state’s financial woes, and that tax dollars spent here are investments in our economic, social, cultural, and economic well-being. Having come so far down the road to achieving excellence, we must not be allowed to slip back into a state of stagnation and deterioration.

I wish to thank publicly everyone who has assisted Nicholls during this period, including our loyal alumni and our supportive friends who regard themselves as “ABCs,” or Alumni By Choice. I also want to thank those legislators who realize the critical importance of higher education to Louisiana’s future and who were willing to demonstrate their personal courage in making difficult choices that may have gone against the political tide of the moment. Nicholls is forever grateful for all who supported us in these dark hours, and Nicholls will continue to do its part to bring higher education to the wonderful people of the Bayou Region.

Stephen Hulbert, Ph.D.
President, Nicholls State University
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Generous donors of 2008-09

Front Cover
A field of sugar cane outside Raceland, Louisiana, on an August morning. Photograph by Tony Cook
PHENOMENA
Words from the editor

This issue of Voilà! is the product of many months of planning and creative work by a team of Nicholls employees who have varied daily roles on campus. Once a year, we all break away from our preoccupation with routine tasks and try to be purely creative. The result is the publication you have in your hands.

I came to Nicholls after working at several institutions that had larger budgets and greater staff support for publications like Voilà! While it is good to have abundant resources, talent, as much as funding, creates a truly well-made university magazine.

Take a look. This magazine reflects the knowledge and experience—as well as the creativity—of homegrown talents working here at Nicholls. Bruno Ruggiero, the art director, is a Donaldsonville native and resident. Misty McElroy, the photographer, is from Houma. Norby Chabert was born and raised on Bayou Petite Caillou. All are graduates of Nicholls.

Just as I have confidence in the staff who worked together to create and publish this issue, I have faith that you, as a supporter and perhaps a graduate of Nicholls yourself, will appreciate the high quality of writing, photography, and art in this publication. You are the person we have all worked so hard and so well, together, to reach and to please.

I trust that Voilà! will achieve its goals of keeping you in touch with Nicholls State University and sharing ideas and information with you that broadens your perspective on life in south Louisiana and the world beyond the bayous. Thank you for spending time with us.

Tony J. Cook
Editor, Voilà!

The Ripple Effect

BY RENEE PIPER

This spring, Nicholls and the University of Louisiana System completed a comprehensive study of the economic and community impact the university has on the Bayou Region and Louisiana. Not surprisingly, the study shows that Nicholls has a ripple effect on the economic vitality of the entire state and the quality of life of its citizens. Imagine the state as a smooth pond, with Nicholls as the place where a large drop of water has broken the surface and sent gentle waves rippling outward to the farthest extent.

What may be more surprising than the extent of the Nicholls ripple effect is its depth, because it is far from superficial. Nicholls provides jobs, trains the workforce, incubates businesses, creates andbolsters new industries, enriches the lives of residents through the arts and humanities, and sustains the financial well-being of the community it serves.

Consider these numbers:

8
The impact of every dollar the state government invests in Nicholls is multiplied by eight as it cycles through the statewide economy.

The number of years Nicholls has provided human service activities.

30
The number of formal research and service activities conducted at Nicholls. This includes two economic development initiatives, two engineering and technology programs, three cultural development programs, seven environmental and life science projects, and 16 education, health, and human service activities.

4,294
The number of visitors attending Nicholls events in the past 50 years. The last 10 years alone have seen 10,274, including 1,385 associate's degrees, 7,254 bachelor's degrees, and 1,193 master's degrees.

37,288
The number of degrees awarded at Nicholls since the annual Manning Passing Academy, a camp conducted by former NFL quarterback Archie Manning and his sons Cooper, Peyton, and Eli.

4,294
The number of dollars a Nicholls associate's degree holder earns annually above those earned by a high school graduate. That figure increases to $17,287 for a bachelor's degree and $27,856 for a master's.

100
The percentage of Nicholls education students taking the teacher certification exam who passed it on the first attempt—well above state averages.

16,400
The annual attendance at Nicholls summer youth camps. This includes 4,180 who attend the annual Manning Passing Academy, a camp conducted by former NFL quarterback Archie Manning and his sons Cooper, Peyton, and Eli.

85,000
The number of people attending jubilee events at Nicholls since the annual festival of the arts and humanities at Nicholls began in 1998.

188,000
The number of visitors attending Nicholls events in 2008—two out of three of these visits from off-campus and spend money on travel, food, and lodging.

176,000
The number of hours Nicholls faculty, staff, and students devoted to voluntary service in 2008. Nicholls encourages service-learning and is proud it has become part of its culture.

61
The number of visitors attending Nicholls events in 2008—two out of three of these visits from off-campus and spend money on travel, food, and lodging.

2,843
The number of fall-time jobs created throughout Louisiana as a result of Nicholls spending. These are non-university positions in industries such as construction, healthcare, and food services.

100,000,000
The number of dollars invested by the state and other public and private sources for recent and ongoing improvements to Nicholls campus buildings and the overall physical plant, including: new and renovated residence halls, a renovated student union and main dining hall, a completely rebuilt and improved science building, road and parking lot improvements, new landscaping and signage, and general infrastructure upgrades.

274,000,000
The dollar amount of the total statewide annual economic impact from Nicholls, which includes $24 million from university operating expenditures, $19 million from capital outlay and construction projects, $11 million from health insurance payments, $14 million from retiree spending, $30 million from visitor expenditures, $56 million from spending by faculty and staff, and $109 million from spending by the most important people at Nicholls: our students.

The Ripple Effect

In dollars, the university’s 2008-09 annual operating budget, which generates a considerable economic impact throughout the Bayou Region and the state. The industries benefiting most from university spending are housing, food, entertainment, telecommunications, transportation, healthcare, and construction.

60,000,000

RUNNING THE NUMBERS

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THE Magnum Of NICHOllS STaTe UniveRSITy

The views and opinions expressed in Voilà! are those of the authors and individuals involved. They do not necessarily represent the perspectives of the magazine’s staff or policies of Nicholls State University.

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Voilà! THE MAGAZINE OF NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY • 3
Internationalism

Those who think of Nicholls simply as a regional institution may be surprised to learn that almost two dozen students last year came from a country on the other side of the globe: Nepal.

Situated astride the Himalayas between India and China, Nepal is only about the size of Arkansas but is well known as the location of Mount Everest. Last year it sent 23 students to Thibodaux: 19 men and four women.

Why so many? A few years ago a student from Nepal found his way to Nicholls on his own. Less than a year ago an agent from a student placement firm in Nepal contacted the university, said Marilyn Gonzalez, assistant director for international student services. Prospective students who used the firm’s services were strong academically and the third-party assistance paid off for them. Other Nepalese students made it to Nicholls without help.

Vietnam, with 12 students, ranked second at sending students to Nicholls. Other countries with significant representation here are Canada, France, and India with nine students each; Malaysia, Japan, and Romania, six each; Jamaica, five; and Nigeria and South Africa, four each.

Internationalism, Part Two

Administrators of Nicholls and Hallym University of Chunchon, South Korea, signed a partnership agreement in January.

The agreement stresses improved intercultural understanding and enhanced educational opportunities for students from both schools. Exchanges in all fields of common interest are promoted, including student and faculty exchange, collaborative research, and the creation of educational materials.

Hallym exchange students also gain access to the Nicholls College of Business Administration’s business administration program, provided certain qualifications are met.

“We anticipate further agreements with institutions in Asia, as well as institutions in South America, in the near future,” said Dr. Stephen Hubbert, president of Nicholls.

Service-Learning

Nicholls students, faculty, and staff devoted more than 175,000 hours to community service and service-learning activities in 2008.

“Connecting classroom learning to community projects engages students in learning by serving,” said Cathy Richard, an assistant professor who leads a seminar for freshmen in University College at Nicholls. University College prepares Nicholls freshmen for academic success and personal growth.

Nicholls is earning a national reputation as a leader in service-learning. For the third consecutive year, the university has been named to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Launched in 2006, the list recognizes colleges and universities nationwide that excel in community service and service-learning programs.

“The service-learning that occurs at Nicholls is purely voluntary,” said Dr. Allayne Barrilleaux, assistant vice president for academic affairs. “Nicholls does not have any required courses or credit hours for service-learning, so the output of service from its students, faculty, and staff is truly from a spirit of good will and desire to reach out to the community.”

Nicholls is one of just eight Louisiana colleges and universities on the 635-member honor roll, and is the only member of the eight-campus University of Louisiana System to attain the honor this year.

Spearheaded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the annual honor roll is sponsored by the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Lovebugs

A lovebug by another name may describe the black and red bug that used to live nowhere near Nicholls student Dr. Michael Doucet’s home in Chauvin. The key buzzard, indigenous to southern Louisiana, has the name would look just as good stuck to the front bumper of your car.

Dr. John Doucet’s study of lovebugs here is purely voluntary—he’s a distinguished professor of biological sciences at Nicholls—but also natural history and linguistics.

Like nutria and water hyacinths, the red-and-black lovebugs are an invasive species, and they have been in Louisiana only since the early 20th century. Doucet and his collaborators are testing ideas on their origin, which seems to be southern Mexico.

“If you were the colors of charred meat and salsa,” jokes Doucet, “you’d have moved out of Mexico, too.”

Lovebugs, which are actually flies and not bugs, go by many other names. Early naturalists reported they were called “honeymoon flies” in parts of south Louisiana. Doucet has learned that among the elder generation of French speakers in southern Lafourche Parish, the term “des carences” is sometimes used to refer to lovebugs.

“Careces is the term more commonly used by buzzards or vultures,” says Doucet. He believes that early colloquial French speakers may have borrowed the term because both buzzards and lovebugs are Black-bodied pests. A species known as the turkey buzzard, indigenous to southern Louisiana, has a red head.

Lovebugs have a red torso. “It was called carenochet r’rouge,” says Doucet, “and it may have given its name to the lovebug in the early 20th century in the south Lafourche area.”

Playtime

Remember when your parents told you to go outside and play? Those words are used less frequently by adults today, and the result may be a number of undesirable physical and behavioral effects on children—and the adults they become.

Dr. Lisa M. Lauer, chair of the early childhood education program in the Nicholls Teacher Education Department, is studying a cultural phenomenon called “play deprivation.”

“High-stakes testing combined with the notion that indoor and outdoor spontaneous play are a waste of time have contributed to the condition,” she says. Research by Lauer and her colleagues has identified negative effects on children and adults resulting from play deprivation. These include an increase in violent crimes, decreases in brain and muscle fiber development, and reduction in communication, problem-solving, and social skills.

Further evidence indicates that play-deprived children are at greater risk for aggressive behaviors and have an increased risk of obesity. Lauer says that factors contributing to play deprivation include inadequate and unsafe outdoor spaces and equipment, organized sports, technology, prescribed routines, litigation, violence and abuse, and elimination of play in school curricula.

Homework

Dogs can’t eat students’ homework any more. Textbook publishers now routinely include online homework sites with their textbooks.

In most cases, an electronic version of the textbook is also available on the site. “Online homework” is actually a misnomer for these resources. The sites include tutorials and they enable rapid, automatic feedback. Students get immediate help based on their responses to homework questions. Faculty assistance is not always necessary.

The result: more homework for students, particularly in courses with large enrollments, because instructors spend less time reviewing it. In the past, the time required to grade homework on paper made assigning a pedagogically sound amount of homework prohibitive in large sections.

Although students might not agree, having more homework is to their advantage because problem-solving is best learned by—guess what—solving many problems.

In addition to textbook publishers’ online resources, Nicholls faculty have created their own online homework system in collaboration with an associate professor of chemistry, and a former chemistry professor, Dr. Michael Janusa, developed an online homework system used in the Department of Physical Sciences.

Nursing

In the field of nursing, reports Dr. Sue Westbrook, assistant professor of Nursing at Nicholls and Allied Health at Nicholls, educating more nurses from the minority population can help support equitable and quality care to minority patients. This in turn can help reduce health disparities for the minority patients.

“Matching the patient and caregiver in racial and ethnic characteristics can lead to the patient experiencing a higher degree of comfort, empathy, and communication in the healthcare setting,” Dr. Westbrook said.

The Department of Nursing is working to increase retention and graduation rate among its minority nursing students. Several nursing faculty—Dr. Charlotte Smith, principal investigator; Dr. Tom Smith, Dr. Shereen Lewis-Tabakh, Todd Keller, and Pam Williams-Jones—are involved in Project DINE (Diversity in Nursing Education).

The goal of Project DINE is better healthcare for people of diverse backgrounds living in parishes served by Nicholls. The project’s faculty are obtaining funding from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

Pedagogy

The College of Education at Nicholls produced rookie teachers in 2007-08 whose performance matched that of experienced teachers, a recent study revealed.

The results of Louisiana’s Value-Added Teacher Preparation Assessment Model were presented to the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education at a joint meeting in December 2008. Seven teacher-training programs were evaluated on how well they prepare their graduates to teach mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, and reading.

Nicholls was rated at Level Two, meaning the university prepared new teachers whose students demonstrated achievement in one content area—language arts, in the case of Nicholls—comparable to the achievement demonstrated by children who were taught by experienced teachers.

Louisiana is the first state in the nation to use a performance model to examine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs.

The Environment

Travelling south from the swamps around Thibodaux toward the Gulf coast, one sees the landscape changing from freshwater marsh to salt marsh, then to the coastline and barrier islands.

Future scientists, managers, and conservationists working in these ecologically important—and economically important—environments are being trained in the College of Arts and Sciences at Nicholls. Established in 2002, the master of science in marine and environmental biology is designed to serve the specific needs of state and regional industries and agencies.

To date, the program boasts 100% placement of its graduates in the workforce or in higher education. Current students in the program are busy in all the environments between the Nicholls campus and the Gulf of Mexico, studying the gamut of the Lafourche ecosystem, from molecules to mammals.
Remember the date of the first home football game in 1972? No? That’s all right, because the Nicholls Archives has a framed ticket to the event against Ouachita, September 16. Sixty years of Nicholls history have produced quite a bit of memorabilia, much of which was on display in 2008-09 in the Archives, located behind heavy wooden doors on the first floor of Ellender Memorial Library.

Opening that door during the past year, a very different Nicholls from today’s university was revealed in an impressive array of photographs and rare, tangible artifacts—a veritable shrine to Nicholls in shades of red, gray, blue, and white flecked with colors from the spectrum of campus life since 1948.

Arranged in chronological order along the walls in glass cases—including several floor displays—the items offered visitors the chance to look back in time. For those familiar with the university’s history, the 60th Anniversary exhibit offered a bounty of nostalgia as well as information. For those who knew little or nothing about the Nicholls of yesteryear, the displays presented insights into not only the institution itself, but to the people and culture who built Nicholls and have relied upon it for higher educational opportunity since 1948.

Nicholls archivist Clifton Theriot, who holds a master of library science degree from LSU and is a 1995 Nicholls graduate, said he and his staff “found things we didn’t even know we had,” like a series of sweatshirts from Nicholls’s years as a junior college.

Indeed, if visitors devoted just a couple of hours to touring the exhibit, they still would likely not have been able to take all of it in. The panoply of flags, banners, posters, T-shirts, brochures, group photos, aerial photos, faculty papers, students’ class notes, books, athletics programs, decals, and mugs was too broad to be comprehended in a short visit.

Featured was a floor display containing items belonging to the late Marion Basset, a 1950 Nicholls graduate. Basset’s family donated his class notes, textbooks, identification cards, and diploma—allowing visitors to peer into the past and discover, perhaps, that some things haven’t changed that much.

Another display—the classroom assignment boards of former registrar James Lynn Powell—served as a towering reminder of the university’s pre-Computer Age practices. Powell’s plywood boards, crisscrossed with nails set up the meticulous exhibit in two weeks’ time—work that would usually take a month. But it nevertheless opened on Nicholls’s 60th birthday, September 23, 2008, and remained in place until early May.

“We change our displays once or twice a year,” Theriot said. “It’s an excellent resource for faculty, students, alumni, and community members to get involved in the university, to learn about what we have to offer, and to perform research. Most people don’t realize all that we have. This allows us to showcase it.”

“People don’t realize all that we have. This allows us to showcase it.”

“Either you have passion for this business or you don’t.”

“Either you have passion for this business or you don’t.”

“This institute offers a superb education for a bargain price,” Cheramie said. “Moreover, this is the second year in a row that a student from Nicholls has placed first in the regional competition.”

Flato began working in restaurants when he was a high school sophomore and later got involved with the ProStart high school culinary program. "Either you have passion for this business or you don’t," Flato said. "If you have what it takes, then welcome to the kitchen."
Nicholls students win international engineering competition

BY GRAHAM HARVEY

Last fall's budget allocations may have been trimmed, but that hasn't prevented students from bringing home a top tractor-pull award in late May.

In the university's best showing to date at the annual International 1/4-Scale Tractor Student Design Competition—sponsored by the past 12 years by the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers—a team of Nicholls students defeated 24 competing institutions for best overall tractor-pull performance.

Dr. George Watt, associate professor of manufacturing engineering technology and faculty leader of the Nicholls team, said approximately 15 Nicholls students participated in designing and building the tractor—seven from Nicholls and five from Ohio State University.

The victory is clear from Nicholls's perspective, Watt said. “The students can design, build, and manage a project as a group.”

The event also serves as a comprehensive educational experience. Prior to the competition, students receive specifications and rules for building a 1/4 scale tractor, after which they actually build it. Later, as part of the competition, the students submit a written report, complete with cost/benefit analyses, via a formal presentation to a team of professional engineers. The same engineers conduct a thorough, professional inspection of the tractor.

“They approach it like it’s a company,” Watt said. “The students actually apply what they learn in class, which shows prospective employers that they have more than just book learning. They can design, build, and manage a project as a group.”

The manufacturing engineering technology program has an active industry advisory board that meets regularly to advise the faculty on industry needs, emerging industry trends, and curriculum development.

Many companies include: Bollinger Shipyards, Buern Tools, Capen Cutters, Gulf Island, J. Ray McDermott, John Deere–Thibodaux, Mathias, and Northrup Grumman–Avondale.

Nicholls leads state in database usage

“Wow!” Nicholls is the top research university in Louisiana.

That’s what Dr. Anthony Fonseca said and thought in January when statewide library statistics told him that Nicholls is the No. 1 user in Louisiana of electronic research databases. Nicholls surpasses LSU, Tulane, and all other colleges and universities, he learned.

“There’s got to be a glitch somewhere,” doubters told the serials and electronic resources librarian. But Fonseca and others have been unable to find any glitches, he says. That’s probably because the statistics are from the major providers of databases for all 41 academic libraries in LOUIS, the Louisiana Library Network.

The 2008 usage report of EBSCO, the company that provides 41 of roughly 70 research databases to Louisiana academic libraries, shows Nicholls with 16.18 percent of database usage by all institutions in the state. LSU–Baton Rouge was a distant second, with 12.34 percent.

EBSCO’s counterparts reported similar figures. Even in 2007, Nicholls outranked LSU usage, though only slightly. Although Nicholls ranks second or third in the state in some usage categories, still the statistics are surprisingly good for Nicholls.

“Nicholls MathSciNet use was among the lowest in the state. But in 2008 Nicholls ranked third in the state, exceeded only by LSU and McNeese. Nicholls surpasses LSU, Tulane, and all other colleges and universities, he learned.”

Databases cost the university more than $300,000 a year, Mathias says, because they represent thousands of costly professional journals. Mathias considers database costs a bargain, pointing out that EBSCO’s counterparts reported similar figures. Even in 2007, Nicholls outranked LSU usage, though only slightly.

Although Nicholls ranks second or third in the state in some usage categories, still the statistics are surprisingly good for Nicholls. Mathias and Fonseca say back in 2004, Nicholls MathSciNet use was among the lowest in the state. But in 2008 Nicholls ranked third in the state, exceeded only by LSU and McNeese.

Nicholls surpasses LSU, Tulane, and all other colleges and universities, he learned. Nicholls MathSciNet use was among the lowest in the state. But in 2008 Nicholls ranked third in the state, exceeded only by LSU and McNeese.
New Editor Keeps Wheels Turning

Tony Cook, who joined the Nicholls Office of University Relations staff in June 2008, is now editing Voilà! He brings to the position more than 20 years of experience as an editor and writer in university advancement.

Cook likes to tell anyone who will listen about his formative years growing up in a small South Carolina town not far from Savannah, Georgia. His father was the town police chief and his mother was a nurse in the local hospital. As a result, Cook and his older brother were exposed to a wide variety of people and experiences—many of them unusual or just plain weird.

"The entire family worked for the police department," he said. "We knew the names and stories of everybody in town."

Stories—and storytelling—became Cook's primary interest as an adult. In his early twenties he began to write seriously, mainly journalism and short fiction. He edited the campus newspaper in college. After graduating in 1984 from the University of South Carolina, where he majored in history and was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa honor society, Cook won a fellowship in scholarly editing with The Historian. The quarterly is one of the top academic journals in the field.

"That's where I started to become serious about editing as a profession," he said. "I learned that, as much as I liked to write my own stories and essays, helping improve the work of other writers appealed to me as well."

Completing his fellowship in 1986, Cook spent a year teaching writing and studying literature at the University of Toledo, where The Historian was housed, before moving on. He left Toledo with a master's degree in creative writing at Syracuse University, where he received a fellowship to study short fiction. He edited the campus newspaper in summer, but I love to edit."
Fanfare for Nicholls
Composer’s work celebrates his alma mater.

When he was a student in the Nicholls marching band, the stage band, the brass choir, the concert choir, and the chamber choir, everyone knew he was fascinated by sounds.

Wayne movie The Searchers and, more recently, in the Ken Burns documentary The Civil War. Folse used the last four words of the alma mater for the composition title. The first movement, “A Past Celebrated,” begins in a fanfare that dissolves into a dreamlike presentation of the tune, now fuzzy and disguised. In the second movement, “A Future Anticipated,” the tune is simplified and presented in various textures that move to more rhythms and harmony. As the movement progresses, the tune becomes clearer and only at the end is the melody clearly recognizable.

The composer spent a little more than a summer before putting the results into a computer.

When he was a student at Nicholls, Folse’s chair music at the University of Texas at Austin in 1986, he was a Nicholls student in the college’s adjunct instructors, who give studio instruction. When he was a Nicholls student everyone knew he was fascinated by sounds. When he was a student at Nicholls, Folse’s chair music at the University of Texas at Austin in 1986, he was a Nicholls student in the college’s adjunct instructors, who give studio instruction. When he was a Nicholls student everyone knew he was fascinated by sounds. When he was a student at Nicholls, Folse’s chair music at the University of Texas at Austin in 1986, he was a Nicholls student in the college’s adjunct instructors, who give studio instruction. When he was a Nicholls student everyone knew he was fascinated by sounds. When he was a student at Nicholls, Folse’s chair music at the University of Texas at Austin in 1986, he was a Nicholls student in the college’s adjunct instructors, who give studio instruction. When he was a Nicholls student everyone knew he was fascinated by sounds. When he was a student at Nicholls, Folse’s chair music at the University of Texas at Austin in 1986, he was a Nicholls student in the college’s adjunct instructors, who give studio instruction. When he was a Nicholls student everyone knew he was fascinated by sounds. When he was a student at Nicholls, Folse’s chair music at the University of Texas at Austin in 1986, he was a Nicholls student in the college’s adjunct instructors, who give studio instruction. When he was a Nicholls student everyone knew he was fascinated by sounds.
I’m not seeking wealth or fame. I’m just trying to help people with pain and health problems.

This year Woodland is publishing three Elrod books about fibromyalgia with “The Natural Approach to” in the titles, followed in each case by the words “Lupus,” “Chronic Fatigue Syndrome,” and “Arthritis.” Not surprisingly, because he grew up near the northeast Alabama town of Gadsden, Elrod was such an outstanding high school baseball player—All-State in 1959—that a Baltimore Orioles scout signed him for spring training. When he decided to go to college, he got on a bus to Nicholls because the Orioles scout and Nicholls coach Jim Hall knew each other.

When Elrod arrived at the three-building campus in August 1960 with everything he owned in a suitcase, he was immediately impressed by Hall, President Charles C. Elkins, Thibodaux, and the sight of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church.

At Stark Field he met teammates from Missouri, Texas, Arkansas, and Florida. He was soon living in one of five little two-man trailers next to Shaver Gym and later in a small white frame structure sardonically called the Ponderosa (from the TV show Bonanza).

On weekends Elrod and his fellow athletes had access to Shaver Gym and pro shops, and they would shoot at targets in the back of the campus. In his freshman year Elrod helped his class win the parish relay race. He even played basketball under Coach Jack Holley. (He was a stalwart in the “N” Club before and immediately after graduation. In 1982 he received the Gold Glove Award and, in his senior year, the Pete Rose Award.)

Elrod defied the coach by dashing to second base—successfully.

Not until 1993 did the World Health Organization recognize fibromyalgia as a painfull muscle syndrome that causes widespread fatigue, sleep disorders, depression, and anxiety. Elrod maintains that the disease is manageable and reversible.

Elrod’s book was the first on fibromyalgia education, and recreation. At age 28 he became one of 12 original faculty members at Auburn University at Montgomery, Alabama. “We literally built this university on what was a plantation. There was nothing there. Today its enrollment exceeds 6,000.”

After developing athletics, HiFi, intramurals, and serving in many capacities for 11 years, Elrod started his own company, Dr. Joe Elrod & Associates. Such baseball organizations as the Detroit Tigers, San Diego Padres, and the Texas Rangers turned to him as a consultant concerning conditioning, player development, and drug abuse. He has worked with NASA, to say nothing of AT&T and McDonald’s.

Elrod has served on professional and civic boards and committees, including some at the state level. Many of his efforts involved children, Special Olympics, fund drives, senior citizens, and various aspects of education.

During six years at Alabama A&M University Elrod developed a master’s degree program. In the decade that started in 1994, he was busy as an author, speaker, and consultant, making radio and television appearances, conducting seminars, and going on book-signing tours. Since 2007 he has been at Alabama State University in Montgomery as an HPS& adjunct professor and as an HPS& consultant.

Elrod was especially busy in the first half of 2009 inviting athletes of the 1960s and their spouses to a June reunion in Thibodaux to renew friendships and to recall great times. Elrod is still awe of the greats of teammates Ray Ferrand—hands, he says, which allowed Ferrand to fly out to help him nail the pinball machine at the College Inn.

But his most cherished memory of Nicholls is a game Tulane was winning 5-4 when he hit a homer in the tenth inning and knocked in the tying run.

Elrod defied the coach by running home and stealing second—successfully.

In his sophomore year at second or third base, sometimes left field. In a game Tulane was winning, Elrod ran from the left-field fence to throw a Tulane runner out at home plate to tie the game. Then he hit a homer in the tenth inning for a Nicholls triumph. And there was the time, he remembers, when he hit a grand slam to win a game against Nicholls. “We were a state team consisting of many of his boyhood friends.”

After Nicholls, Elrod became a teacher-coach at Thibodaux High and then at Ascension Catholic High in Donaldsonville. In 1969 and 1972 he completed LSU degrees in health, physical

Elrod says, was finding a supportive family of coaches, teammates, faculty, and staff. Neither of his parents ever watched him play baseball when he was a youngster or a young adult. But he says he knew his mom had been when he was a Nicholls student and she sent him $5 every week from the $35 she earned as a store clerk.

A memorable day, he says, was when Coach Hall told him in his freshman year to go down to Cotton’s clothing store and pick out a suit, a shirt, and a tie. For decades he wondered who had been so generous to him. Not until he tracked down Hall by telephone a few months ago about “the clothes of the 1960s did he learn the identity of his benefactor: President Elkins.”

The people here are amazing. They are genuinely nice and supportive. Everyone at Nicholls is always more than willing to help you,” she said.

While bayou-style food, music, and fun didn’t eradicate her new home-away-from-home for Kefu, the Nicholls faculty, staff, fellow students, and Colonel fans did.

“The people here are amazing. They are genuinely nice and supportive. Everyone at Nicholls is always more than willing to help you,” she said.

Getting accustomed to new places is nothing new for Kefu. She called both Arizona and Utah home before her family settled in Houston. At that point, though, the journey that eventually would bring her to the Nicholls campus to play women’s basketball with a full scholarship was just beginning.

“As long as I can remember, I’ve always been the biggest kid in my school,” said Kefu, who is 6’3” tall. “And in middle and high school, that helped me succeed in sports.”

At Dobi High School, she began an impressive career as the only freshman on the varsity squad, helping take her team to the district championship while earning honorable mention all-district accolades. Over the next three years Kefu earned six varsity letters in basketball and volleyball. She was named to the all-district squad in both sports all three years, and as a senior she was key in her basketball team’s trip to the state finals for the first time in school history.

But the court wasn’t the only places where Kefu shined. Named female athlete of the year as a senior, she also was named the homecoming queen and friendliest girl.

That friendliness endeared her to teammates. Even though her teams at Nicholls never attained the on-court success that her high school teams did, Kefu kept on smiling and having fun.

“I love all of my teammates,” she said. “Win or lose, we still had fun!”

With her playing days at Nicholls now behind her, and only a semester to go before she receives her engineering degree, Kefu said her head Coach Dolfe Plaisance has the women’s basketball program headed in the right direction.

“Coach Dolfe is gonna get it done!” Kefu said. “She is a great coach and she has the support and loyalty of her players.”

Like thousands of students before her, Funki Kefu’s time in Thibodaux is drawing to a close. Even after she returns to Houston, she plans to keep supporting her team and her alma mater. “I love this place now. I’ll always come back and support it.”
**An Eye for Beauty**

*Let no one think that real gardening is a bucolic and meditative occupation. It is an insatiable passion, like everything else to which a man gives his heart.*

—Karel Čapek, *The Gardener's Year*

Dr. Ridley Gros Jr., the retired Nicholls dean who repeatedly got business administration programs nationally accredited, delights in growing hundreds of flowers and plants in the backyard of his 75-year-old Thibodaux home. But he also photographs them with a digital camera and loves sharing the photos with friends and relatives.

On many summer days, the self-taught gardener spends about two hours watering mammoth hanging baskets, about 80 bromeliads, lots of crotons, and a variety of rare and common plants and flowers, to say nothing of cast iron plants, camellias, and azaleas.

All are thriving in sunlight or shade, among a variety of trees and shrubs, sharing space with fountains, bricked areas—and even an authentic sugar kettle with a population of brightly colored fish, big and little. The garden is a place of enchantment and serenity.

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY DR. RIDLEY GROS JR.**
Martin Folese, owner and president of HTV-10, was between interviews with Dr. Laura Badens, the director of the LCWG, and broadcaster Connie Chung, the event’s keynote speaker, when Piper approached him to ask about interviewing a Nicholls faculty or staff member once a week on his station’s Bayou Time program. Folse responded with great interest, and offered to meet with Piper and Harvey to work out the details.

Folse generously offered the two Nicholls reps 15 minutes of live airtime once a week to talk about whatever they wanted—academics, athletics, research, events, fundraising, student life, service-learning—anything at all. The only caveat! Folse wanted a “Nicholls correspondent,” either Piper or Harvey, to host the show.

A bit uneasy about being on camera, but certain of the amazing opportunity for Nicholls that they simply couldn’t pass up, Piper and Harvey agreed. The discussion continued and the trio determined that the first Nicholls show would go live at 7:10 p.m. on Monday, May 12, 2008. (The show later moved to Tuesdays.)

Plunging headfirst into unknown waters, Piper and Harvey, acting in their new roles as co-producers of a television show, immediately began working to fill the weekly 15 minutes of airtime. They invited university faculty, staff members, and student leaders to join them on the show to talk about their areas of expertise. The slots filled quickly, and leading the way was Dr. Stephen Hubbert, president of Nicholls. He was the first scheduled guest for the newly launched show.

With the stage all set, the university was now in the business of television production with HTV-10.

The partnership has provided a priceless opportunity for Nicholls to share its vast expertise and knowledge with residents of the Bayou Region. The willingness of university faculty, staff, and students to share their insights and information with viewers is the driving force behind the ongoing success of the show.

During the show’s inaugural year, over 60 guests volunteered their time to represent the best of Nicholls State University.

An Opportune Partnership

The partnership between Nicholls and HTV-10 began in March 2008 at the Louisiana Center for the Arts and Humanities, when then-chancellor Martin Folese met with Dr. Laura Badeaux, director of the LCWG, to discuss the idea of a television show.

With the stage all set, the university was now in the business of television production with HTV-10.

The Entrepreneur’s Vision

Martin Folese always had a passion for television. “As long as I can remember, I always wanted to be involved in television—acting, producing, owning, you name it,” Folse says. So, when he had an opportunity to meet with the CEO for Vision Cable during a vacation to New York City, Folse jumped at the chance. He asked if he could buy a channel from the company. Vision Cable agreed, and HTV was born.

Folse was only 25 when HTV began operations in 1986 as a one-man shop. “I used to film, edit, do announcing, sell (advertising), and clean the offices,” Folse recalls. “I always tell people when they come in that I would not ask them to do anything that I would not do myself. That means anything, including climbing towers.”

Twenty-three years later and still owned by Folse, the only television station in the city of Houma broadcast Dr. Laura Badens, director of the LCWG, and one in Morgan City—and broadcasts to over 500,000 viewers in south Louisiana. HTV has 13 employees and streams programming live, 24 hours a day, online at www.htv10.tv.

Located at 1202 St. Charles Street, just 20 minutes south of the Nicholls campus, HTV is the area’s only local source for televised news and other stories. That distinction comes with a huge responsibility. Before, during, and after hurricanes, residents of Lafourche, Terrebonne, St. Mary, Jefferson, and Assumption parishes rely on HTV for comprehensive, locally-oriented coverage.

Tonight’s Guests

The more than 60 different guests who have appeared on the Nicholls HTV show during its inaugural year have shared a breadth of knowledge on a wide variety of topics. While some guests have made a one-time appearance, others have made multiple appearances, making them unintended local celebrities.

Discussions on the show are always informative and can range from fun and light-hearted to serious and critically important. From ghosts on campus to campus safety, the topics range across the map of the Nicholls landscape.

With so much progress being made toward improving the Nicholls physical plant, it is no surprise that Mike Davis, assistant vice president for administration, has been a frequent HTV guest. Davis’s interviews have focused on campus safety initiatives, such as the installation of a siren system; campus facility improvements, such as the opening of three new residence halls and renovations of Beauregard Hall and Ellender Library; and one of the most anticipated events in Nicholls’s history, the demolition of Long Hall last November.

Event promotion is a popular reason for guests to appear on the show. No stranger to bright lights and cameras, Chef Randy Cheramie, associate dean of the John Folse Culinary Institute and a well-known regional stage performer, has appeared to promote Bite of the Arts, the Culinary Institute’s annual fall fundraising dinner.

Angela Hammertime, distinguished service professor of education and coordinator of Jubilee: A Festival of the Arts and Humanities, was a guest on the show several times, promoting such events as the Jubilee Jambalaya Writers Conference and performances by the Singers of United Lands.

Besides Davis, other members of the Nicholls administration have appeared on the show to discuss important topics. President Hubbert talked about guns on campus, facility renovations, and budget cuts; Larry Howell, associate provost, examined the university’s regional economic impact; Dr. David Boudreaux, vice president for institutional advancement, promoted the Manning Passing Academy, Women’s Night Out, and the A+ Sponsor a Scholar
Voilà! the Magazine of Nicholls State University

Food and Wine Extravaganza; and Dr. Laynie Barrellas, assistant vice president for academic affairs, discussed commencement exercises.

From negative to positive—hurricane damage and budget cuts to economic impact and rising enrollment numbers—the Nicholls HTV show highlights everything Nicholls.

Lights, Camera, Action

The 15-minute Nicholls segment airs every Tuesday at 7:10 p.m. during HTV’s Bayou Time program. The station’s local news and sports broadcast, Bayou Time airs from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. The two-hour show’s format features an HTV anchor interviewing a variety of guests and fielding questions and comments from telephone callers.

Although the Nicholls show is scheduled to begin at 7:10 and end at 7:25 p.m., those times can vary. During the segment of Bayou Time that precedes the Nicholls segment, Jimmy Dagate, the HTV Tuesday night anchor, usually takes calls from viewers. If the calls are particularly entertaining, that segment may run a little longer and push the Nicholls segment back a bit.

One week prior to their scheduled appearance, Nicholls guests are asked to provide a list of seven to ten questions they want the Nicholls correspondent, either Harvey or Piper, to ask them during the show. The guests are asked to arrive 20 minutes prior to air-time. Upon arrival, they wait in a small, dimly lit area that is in view of the Bayou Time producer, Jason Sertgny. HTV staffers wearing headsets scurry around, performing tasks to ensure the show runs smoothly and on time.

While waiting for the show to begin, guests are given pointers and are briefed on what to expect during the interview. For example, Avoid looking at the camera when you answer the question; look at the person who asked it.

The studio phone is ringing non-stop, the wall-mounted television is tuned to Bayou Time and the volume is set at concert level. This is the point where many first-time guests tend to get a bit anxious.

Dagate says, “We’ll be back after this commercial break with our Nicholls State University show.” The producer enters the waiting room and ushers the Nicholls guests through two glass doors and down a short, dark hallway, emerging on the set.

In stark contrast to the waiting area, the set is brightly lighted and completely quiet. Seated at the elegant, 22-foot dark wooden desk is Dagate, the anchorman, who is a practicing attorney by day.

Smiling, Dagate greets the Nicholls people with warm Southern charm and asks, “How y’all doing tonight?” His relaxed disposition spills over the studio and the guests, once anxious, are soon at ease. The thermostat is placed at a frigid setting the cold helps keep the host and guests alert.

In the 30 seconds before Bayou Time is back live, the Nicholls red “N” logo appears on the three flat-screen monitors behind the desk. Piper or Harvey takes the seat between Dagate and the Nicholls guest, the cameraman offers each guest an HTV mug filled with water, and the producer synchs the desktop digital clocks. The clocks—there are four of them strategically placed on the desk—count down the remaining time until a commercial break, helping the anchor and guests stay on schedule.

And we’re back,” Dagate tells the viewers. And the Nicholls segment begins. Some of the Nicholls shows feature one guest and cover one topic, while others have multiple guests and cover two topics. Changing guests in the middle of the show is seamless to the viewer because the 15-minute segment is actually two seven-minute segments with a one-minute commercial break in the middle. When necessary, guests for the first segment are replaced for the second segment during the commercial.

The Future Looks Bright

Even though the Nicholls HTV partnership is still quite young, it is evident that a long, prosperous future is ahead.

Folse, recently purchased a building on the corner of Main and Barrow streets in Houma. Once home to Dupont’s department store, it has been vacant since 2003. After extensive renovations are complete, the site will be home to a new, state-of-the-art HTV-10 television studio, preparing Folse to continue to serve the region for years to come.

Nicholls doesn’t plan to let this valuable marketing opportunity slip away any time soon, according to Piper. “In fact, we’re always searching for ways to add to and improve our show. We’d like to start including live performances—showcasing the many talented students and faculty members at Nicholls,” Piper says. “As the university continues to grow and flourish, there’s sure to be subject matter for the foreseeable future. Our goal is to create an informative show that viewers are eager to watch.

“In light of the ongoing budget crisis, Nicholls needs this marketing communications tool now more than ever,” Piper adds. “It is important for the public to know how crucial our university is to the Bayou Region and the state of Louisiana. The Nicholls television broadcast is a highly effective tool as we strive to maximize the positive, public image of the university.”

Lighting designer’s attention to detail ensures the show is on time. Upon arrival, they wait in a small, dimly lit area that is in view of the Bayou Time producer, Jason Sertgny. HTV staffers wearing headsets scurry around, performing tasks to ensure the show runs smoothly and on time.

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Who is Martin Folse?

Martin Folse is a Nicholls alumnus. He graduated from Nicholls in 1981 with a bachelor’s degree in mass communication. His studies concentrated on broadcast and print journalism.

Folse is a song writer and singer. Although best known for his time spent in the HTV anchor chair, he has written and recorded almost 70 original songs—most of them belonging to the contemporary country genre.

Folse is a filmmaker. “I have always been intrigued with cameras,” he says. His fascination with film started when he was just 10 years old and he purchased his first Super 8 movie camera. Folse was just 22 when he made his first movie, a monster/horror flick entitled Nuttie Man Mauled (Titled Tenor in the Swamp).

Folse is a community supporter. HTV partners with the Thibodaux Lions Club each December to sponsor the Bayou vs. River Showdown—a charity football game held in John L. Guidry Stadium on the Nicholls campus. Event proceeds are donated to Nicholls for student scholarships. The December 2008 game raised $9,000 and provided funding for 18 scholarships.

Folse is passionate about history. That would explain his sincere, almost child-like enthusiasm about purchasing an old, rundown building. “A place like Dupont’s department store holds a lot of memories for the people of Houma,” he says. “It killed me to see a historic place sitting there for so long. I feel like we are resurrecting part of our city’s history, and I’m proud to be a part of that.”

Folse is focused on the people of the Bayou Region. I thank we (HTV) basically do programming that caters to our area,” Folse says. Referring to the major network affiliates based in New Orleans, he adds: “We don’t try to be WWL, and we don’t try to be WVUE. We’re HTV. Keeping it local is the station’s focus.”

From negative to positive—hurricane damage and budget cuts to economic impact and rising enrollment numbers—the Nicholls HTV show highlights everything Nicholls.
Accelerated Learning
An MBA program for working professionals meets goals fast.

BY GRAHAM HARVEY

Nicholls has offered a Master of Business Administration program for nearly 40 years. But many area professionals who might otherwise have sought the degree were unable to do so because of their busy schedules.

In 2007, the College of Business Administration remedied the problem by launching the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program. In a relatively brief period of time, it has attracted a diverse enrollment of non-traditional students, from engineers to business owners.

“The EMBA program was created to meet the needs of working professionals,” said Dr. Luke Cashen, EMBA program director and assistant professor of management. “The program addresses the specific needs of those individuals who do not have the time to devote to the structure of the traditional MBA program. Offering classes on alternate Saturdays and online allows participants to balance the rigors of their work responsibilities with the demands of their professors.”

EMBA participants do not spend eight hours listening to lectures based on textbook readings. Rather, faculty members use a variety of instructional methods depending on the nature of the course and the learning objectives of the specific class.

Courses are delivered sequentially, in a lock-step program wherein students begin and complete the program together. This system allows for lasting professional networks and long-term friendships.

“The delivery method of the EMBA program allows participants to obtain their MBA in 17 months, which is incredibly attractive considering that the traditional route might take as long as three and a half years, if done on a part-time basis,” Cashen said.

Required courses include 12 hours covering the language and tools of business analysis, nine hours devoted to the organizational process, markets, and employees, nine hours concentrating on competitive success, and a three-hour elective chosen by the student, based on options provided by the faculty.

In the classroom, professors combine case studies and research with their own business experiences and research findings to lead lectures and discussions.

Students, meanwhile, share their professional experiences with one another, a critical learning opportunity that sets the EMBA program apart from more traditional programs.

Study groups capitalize on students’ diversity, and much of the coursework requires students to prepare presentations and reports in teams. Participants take the lead in their group when working on a project pertaining to their area of expertise, and they learn from their peers when conducting projects on less familiar topics.

“The goal of the EMBA program is to provide graduates with the perspectives and tools necessary to handle the challenges facing business leaders in today’s dynamic global economy,” said Dr. Shawn Mauldin, dean of the College of Business Administration. “Based on feedback from the first EMBA class, I believe we are accomplishing that goal and that there will continue to be a strong demand to educate future business leaders and entrepreneurs in this format.”

“The College of Business Administration has offered an MBA degree for almost four decades,” Mauldin added. “Therefore, it was an easy transition to create an Executive MBA program. Both programs are nationally accredited by AACSB International, and they are very important to the overall credibility and quality of the College of Business Administration.”

The EMBA program classes are conducted in the Barker Family Executive Classroom, a newly remodeled executive-style facility in the Duhe Building in Houma. Situated next to the Houma- Terrebonne Civic Center, the building features computers that are electronically linked to technology on the Nicholls main campus.

Named for the family of Nicholls Foundation board member Dickie Barker, a 1955 Nicholls graduate, the classroom opened on June 20, 2008. It accommodates 15 students in a boardroom environment. Suitable for case discussions, seminars, and lectures, the room encourages interaction among students and professors via state-of-the-art, user-friendly technology.

Teaching tools include a viewing monitor that allows interactive writing and recording on the screen, ceiling-mounted surround speakers, and a high-resolution projector.

“Throughout my adult life I have recognized what Nicholls means to this community and to this region,” Barker said. “The growth and development of Houma and Thibodaux have paralleled the growth and maturity of Nicholls. An executive MBA program that is accessible right here at our doorstep helps to make us more competitive in a global economy.”

The total cost of the Nicholls EMBA program is $21,200 including tuition, fees, books, materials, Saturday lunches, refreshments, and graduation regalia. Although sponsoring companies may pay program costs or reimburse participants, the participant is responsible for direct payment to Nicholls.

“We are currently recruiting for our next EMBA class, which begins in February 2010,” Cashen said. “I have spoken with quite a few potential students for the program and all have found the format and time-frame very attractive. When potential students combine these features with the solid curriculum, highly qualified faculty, and AACSB accreditation held by the College of Business Administration, they quickly recognize the excellence of the program.”

Many backgrounds, a common goal.

The ten members of the first class of the Nicholls Executive MBA program received their graduate degrees at the 2009 spring commencement. In their footsteps are the twelve members of the second EMBA cohort, who began their program on January 17, 2009. Much like their predecessors, members of the current class have diverse backgrounds including engineering, financial services, manufacturing, management, and education.

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Reed Davison

Kansas City native Reed Davison, a ship surveyor for the American Bureau of Shipping, began his EMBA studies in January 2009.

“The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy graduate spends his workdays off the coast of Port Fourchon inspecting ships for seaworthiness. He said he wanted to attain an advanced degree in order to become more upwardly mobile in his employer’s management structure.

A resident of Bayou Blue, Davison said he “couldn’t afford to take off work for two years in a traditional program,” so he was pleased to have found the Nicholls program—especially with its “perks.” Among these, Davison concluded, are the hybrid schedule, the one-on-one attention provided by faculty, and the affordable, all-inclusive cost—much of which his employer is shouldering.

“It’s an adult-based program,” Davison said. “We’re on a first-name basis with the professors, and the curriculum is oriented toward people of differing backgrounds.”
Gwen Luc

With two young daughters and a husband, plus a home-based business to run, Gwen Luc of Morgan City lacks the time to pursue an MBA in a traditional graduate school setting. Luc is co-owner of Payroll and Business Solutions Inc., a family-run payroll and accounting firm, with clients ranging from restaurants to oil and gas companies.

She and her husband had been discussing her desire to attain an advanced degree for several years, but she did not wish to sacrifice an inordinate amount of her personal and professional life in the pursuit of her educational goals.

“I didn’t want to join a program that was entirely online,” Luc said. “I wanted there to be an interactive element, both with professors and students.”

Finally, the 1994 graduate of the Nicholls College of Business Administration received a mailing from her alma mater advertising an informational seminar for the EMBA program. She attended the seminar, was recruited, and is now slated to graduate in May 2010.

Luc said her professors and peers have “opened her eyes” with regard to how the wider business world operates.

She not only found the hybrid nature of the program perfectly suited to her circumstances; she said she is especially gratified that the academic quality remains “top-notch.” She said she can now make better sense of her clients’ reports, ask questions she did not know to ask before, and as a result, serve her clients better.

“Moreover, the faculty are highly dedicated to the individual student’s needs,” Luc said. “They seem to stop everything they’re doing to provide personal support.”

Stephen Lowery

Stephen Lowery, an electrical engineer for DynMcDermott, a U.S. Department of Energy contractor in New Orleans, said he was attracted to the EMBA program because of its nontraditional structure.

Having earned a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from Louisiana Tech, Lowery joined DynMcDermott a year and a half ago—and his work schedule is intense.

“I was looking for a flexible, versatile MBA program that fits my schedule,” he said. “This program is highly convenient for a Kenner resident who travels a lot.”

Lowery serves as a liaison between DynMcDermott’s headquarters and field sites, administers engineering projects from conception to completion, and conducts presentations on safety and facility upgrades.

In addition to the EMBA program’s manageable structure and engaging, cordial atmosphere, Lowery said the curriculum has already contributed to his success at work—especially when performing cost-benefit analyses.

“I use these exact tools in my job;” he said. “It coincides perfectly with what I do”

Lowery is slated to graduate from the program in May 2010.

Lou Estay

Lou Estay, B.S.N., a nurse and a 2009 EMBA graduate, has been director of surgery at Terrebonne General Medical Center for 15 years. She leads four departments, maintains the competencies and continuing education of a large staff, oversees operating and capital budgets, and coordinates with surgeons and interdisciplinary departments on a daily basis.

“As much as I love being a nurse and patients’ advocate, there is a huge business side to my role,” Estay said. “The EMBA program at Nicholls was very inviting.”

A wife, mother, and grandmother whose prior business experience included her husband’s shrimping operation, Estay was recruited via a Nicholls presentation at the hospital.

“The EMBA program has given me a broad organizational perspective of the whole hospital community,” Estay said.

“I don’t live in a silo any longer. The knowledge I’ve gained helps me in my day-to-day work. I’m more involved with the budget, I’m working more closely with our accountants, and I have learned about the intergenerational characteristics of my coworkers.”

Such characteristics, Estay said, include the younger generation’s reliance on Internet communication—a shift from the face-to-face preferences of her own generation. Recognizing and appreciating such differences helps her to understand, in turn, the organization’s human resources functions, she said.

A breast cancer survivor and self-described “lover of life,” the Dulac resident said the camaraderie she experienced in the EMBA program—especially in group-work projects and one-on-one faculty interaction—contributed heavily to her success. She emphasizes this when she pitches the program to peers and friends.

“I would recommend the EMBA program to anyone. Indeed I already have, many times, especially to those whose lives do not allow for a traditional program,” Estay said. “The professors are knowledgeable, engaged, caring, and compassionate. Plus, I learned about different companies and met people with varying life experiences. They will all be a part of my life forever.”
Sweet, Sweet Sugar

BY DR. AL DELAHAYE

Sugar institutes conducted at Nicholls each summer could be mistaken for meetings of the United Nations. For all, student accents vary as much as their names and their international addresses.

For the second institute of the summer of 2008, Heidi Aulsten and Mikko Helska journeyed from Finland, Ewander Ali and Haseeb Taqui came from Canada, and Agnieszka Musial and Serah Heidha journeyed from Canada, Argentina, and the states of Georgia and Texas. Everyone received academic or continuing education credit.

Instructors from Louisiana, Georgia, New York, and England focused on 14 topics, including energy economy, centrifugals and their operation, operational computers, and high- and low-grade crystallization. On the weekend, most participants visited New Orleans on their own or took a swamp tour.

Falgout took participants on four scheduled field trips in south Louisiana. During the bus rides, he mentioned that Louisiana had six refineries in the 1960s but now only two, and that the state in 1968 had 43 raw-sugar mills but today only 11. Nonetheless, he always makes this point: "We have the same amount of sugar being produced now as in the mid-1960s, because the mills are bigger and the farms are more efficient and yield more sugar per acre."

On the second to last day of the 2008 refiners' institute, a four-member panel of experts spoke and answered questions. One explained how to find any relevant paper published since 1944, commenting that "somebody has run into your problem and has written about it". Another advised, "Don't blame everything on the lab. " Yet another gave this advice: "Make sure the truck driver sees you take the sample, otherwise you may get a bad shipment of lime."

One panelist called the sugar industry "a nice outlet" because "you can walk into any sugar factory and get help". Unlike in the oil industry where, he said, workers in various units are forbidden to talk to workers in other units. Panelists included Chung Chi Chou, whom Falgout identifies as the co-author of the Cane Sugar Handbook, now in its 12th edition. He calls that volume, which sells for about $600, "the bible for cane sugar manufacturers and their chemists."

Falgout proudly says that Chou, also the co-author of The Sugar Industry, has taught at Nicholls institutes for 25 summers. He is originally from Taiwan but lives in New York where he is president of Chou Technologies Inc.

Dr. Robert Falgout has directed the Nicholls sugar institutes for 32 years.

A worldwide industry depends on Nicholls

Institute participants each received binders containing about 1,000 pages of notes prepared by instructors. Only institution students are allowed to have them, Falgout says, they are not for sale to others, even those offering as much as $300.

On the first night, participants enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and local food, including fried alligator. The sessions were informal with much discussion and many questions. Participants were tested on each topic presented. Falgout began the institute with an overview of the sugar industry. The other nine faculty members included two Nicholls alumni, Walter Simoneaux of Labadieville, who, like Falgout, has been with the sugar institutes from the very beginning, and Dr. Charles Richard of New Orleans.

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Field to Refinery
The process of cane sugar production.

BY TONY COOK
Sugar production is a highly mechanized industry. Cane fields around Thibodaux are tended year-round using specialized machines, some of them built locally. The harvested cane is turned into raw sugar in mills that fill the air with steam plumes and an odor, familiar to every Bayou Region resident, that is the smell of new money being made from the cane crop.

Sugar cane is harvested in the fall. Harvesting machines are manufactured in Thibodaux by John Deere, formerly Cameco.

Cut into small pieces by the harvesting machine, the cane is collected in a wagon that hauls it out of the field to waiting trucks.

Trucks bring the harvested cane to the mill for processing into raw sugar. This mill is in Raceland. Similar mills are in Thibodaux and ten other sites in south Louisiana.

One by one, trucks are unloaded and their contents are readied for “grinding,” the local term for the process of making raw sugar from the sugar cane plant.

Raw sugar, piled up like sand dunes, is loaded into trucks that take it to the refinery. Sugar refineries are located in Arabi and Gramercy, as well as in Texas and Georgia.

Trucks bring the harvested cane to the mill for processing into raw sugar. This mill is in Raceland. Similar mills are in Thibodaux and ten other sites in south Louisiana.
Sugar cane, a crop that has been grown in Louisiana for centuries and remains an important part of the state's economy, has to be moved to a mill that is usually located close to the area of cultivation. Railcars and trucks take the harvest from field to mill.

In a sugar mill, sugar cane is washed, chopped, and shredded by revolving knives. The shredded cane is repeatedly mixed with water and crushed between rollers; the collected juices contain ten to 15 percent sucrose, and the remaining fibrous solids, called bagasse, are burned for fuel. Bagasse makes a sugar mill more than self-sufficient in energy; the surplus bagasse can be used for animal feed, in paper manufacture, or burned to generate electricity.

The cane juice is next mixed with lime to adjust its acidity. This mixing arrests sucrose's decay into glucose and fructose, and precipitates out some impurities. The mixture then sits, allowing the lime and other suspended solids to settle out, and the clarified juice is concentrated in a multiple-effect evaporator to make a syrup about 60 percent by weight in sucrose. This syrup is further concentrated under vacuum until it becomes supersaturated, and then seeded with crystalline sugar. Upon cooling, sugar crystallizes out of the syrup. A centrifuge is used to separate the sugar from the remaining liquid, or molasses. Additional crystallizations may be performed to extract more sugar from the molasses; the molasses remaining after no more sugar can be extracted from it in a cost-effective fashion is called blackstrap.

Raw sugar has a yellow to brown color. If a white product is desired, sulfur dioxide may be bubbled through the cane juice before evaporation; this chemicals bleaches many color-forming impurities into colorless ones. Sugar bleached white by this sulfitation process is called "mill white," "plantation white," and "crystal sugar." This form of sugar is the form most commonly consumed in sugar cane-producing countries.

Voilà! Grinding Sugar Cane between rollers; the collected juices contain ten to 15 percent sucrose, and the remaining fibrous solids, called bagasse, are burned for fuel. Bagasse makes a sugar mill more than self-sufficient in energy; the surplus bagasse can be used for animal feed, in paper manufacture, or burned to generate electricity.

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YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

The Nicholls dietetics program promotes better nutrition and health.

BY FARREN CLARK

Louisiana has slipped to 50th in overall healthcare status, just below Mississippi, in the 2008 edition of an annual study by the United Health Foundation. The study indicates that high rates of obesity and preventable hospitalizations are two factors that contribute to Louisiana’s poor healthcare status.

And it will take more than a pill to improve the status of healthcare in Louisiana. The dietetics program in the Nicholls Department of Allied Health Sciences aims to positively impact the status of healthcare in southeast Louisiana by promoting healthy eating habits for treatment and prevention of diseases and other aspects of poor health.

While Nicholls is home to a renowned culinary program that approaches food as an art, the university’s dietetics program focuses on food as a science, according to Dr. Colette Leistner, associate professor and director of the dietetics program. Leistner points out that creativity is required in both fields, just applied in different ways. “For example, in a hospital setting, if you don’t eat, you die.” Leistner says. “You might not die without the surgery. But if you don’t eat, you die. Sometimes dietitians face limitations because of the patient’s health concerns. In order to get that person to eat, you have to come up with something new or different.”

A growing profession

The Nicholls dietetics program prepares its students to become leaders in the field. At least 90 percent of graduates obtain an internship or a dietetics-related job within a year after graduation. Also, at least 80 percent of alumni within a five-year period become registered dietitians after passing the required exam. Leistner says that program produces 10 to 12 graduates a year.

Although the program is relatively small, the faculty and students have a familiar relationship that fosters a strong foundation of learning. “We don’t want them to get lost in the shuffle,” Leistner says. “That’s typical of bigger universities. The students like that we have a smaller group. We know them. I visited a larger university during the spring and I saw that a professor couldn’t name one of her students. That’s the way large schools are.”

Dietetics is a broad field that offers various career opportunities. Leistner has held a number of positions including school lunchroom manager and weight control instructor. “You’ll find a job in dietetics,” she says. “You’ll be able to get something you want.” The field also focuses on everyday life and making healthy choices before needing a hospital stay.

With 20 years of teaching experience, Leistner recalls her journey from working with patients as a clinical dietitian to educating college students in dietetics, and the professional opportunities the field offers. “Whether it’s teaching individual clients, or a classroom of students, dietetics is about teaching,” she says.

The Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that during the next five to seven years the dietetics profession will grow about 10 percent each year across the nation. “But those statistics were created before we knew the extent or severity of the obesity epidemic,” says Simone Camel, assistant professor and coordinator of the dietetics program. Camel has 20 years of clinical practice and 13 years of teaching experience. She says that attracting well-qualified professionals to the Bayou Region is difficult and the demand for dietitians will continue to increase. Leaving the area to gain internship experience is a common choice for the Nicholls program’s graduates, according to Camel. “Louisiana doesn’t fare well in healthcare,” Camel says. “We’re dead last, and we need the bright minds to come back and share their ideas.”

Camel herself returned to Louisiana from Texas Woman’s University in Houston in 2005. Her research focuses on how poverty and food insecurity—the lack of sustainable access to enough good food—interact to create the poor state of health in Louisiana and elsewhere across the nation. For example, following Hurricane Katrina, many of the affected areas did not have adequate grocery stores within a reasonable distance. Therefore, residents’ food choices were limited...
to what was available, affordable, and not necessarily healthy. Camel suggests that edible landscaping be factored into community planning in order to encourage healthy eating. "I would love to see satsuma trees in every housing development, so that the kids can eat while they’re playing outside and choose to eat what is naturally provided as part of their daily routine."

Teaching better eating habits

As her high school graduation drew near in the spring of 1998, Jamie Luke of Donaldsonville had to make a decision about her future. "At that time, I didn't know what a dietitian was," she says. "A girl who graduated a year before me was going into dietetics. I was always interested in nutrition, health, and exercise. So I figured it would be a good path for me." That fall, she enrolled in the Nicholls dietetics program. She became a member of the Lady Colonels track and field and cross-country teams. Luke completed her degree in dietetics in the spring of 2002. Today, she manages dietitians at Terrebonne General Medical Center in Houma.

Luke describes the role of a dietitian not as a strict food manager who demands sudden food limitations. But it’s all worth it when you’re teaching them to pose and present themselves. "Down here, you tell a patient to cut back on everything and they’re like, ‘You must be crazy! Can I still have my boiled crawfish?’"

"People eat a cup of rice with their crawfish stew. They eat three cups. They don’t understand that they have to watch their portion sizes. In Louisiana, it’s hard to get people to understand you can enjoy the foods you love here, and still be healthy or control your diabetes or hypertension," Luke says.

Dietitians seek to educate their patients and clients about the difference between eating food and overindulgence. Stephanie Abadie, a 2007 dietetics graduate, has always liked to cook. She remembers how her father enjoyed a cake she baked when she was very young. "I forgot to put eggs in it and he ate the whole thing!" Abadie says. "He would eat anything."

Abadie, who wanted to work with food and interact with the public, enrolled at Nicholls intending to study culinary arts, but soon changed her major to dietetics after taking nutrition classes with Leistner. She recalls interacting with the community by creating a food bank, demonstrating recipes, and compiling health benefits of those recipes for a local audience.

On a broader front, dietitians are concerned about taking preventative action in order to improve the health of the nation. "We’ve got so many people who need to be treated after the fact. But if our country moves toward a healthcare system that prevents diseases, in the long run, it will be cheaper to provide healthcare,” Abadie says. Abadie completed an internship at LSU’s Pennington Biomedical Research Center while working on her master’s degree at the University of Southern Mississippi. Currently, she is pursuing a doctorate in dietetics at Southern Miss.

Sowing the seeds of change

Brigett Scott, a Nicholls assistant professor of dietetics and a Chackbay native, completed her degree in dietetics from Nicholls in three and a half years. She then completed her master’s and is currently finishing her Ph.D. at the University of Southern Mississippi. Family is a primary reason for choosing dietetics, Scott says. "I always had an interest in medicine and having children. So I did research in something that would allow me to have the flexibility to be a mother at home."

She did not walk across the stage to receive her master’s degree because she was pregnant with her twins, Nicolas and Seth. "Twins run in my family, so it wasn’t a shock," Scott says. She and her husband, Tyler, also have a daughter, Sabrina."

Adapting to change has been a necessity for Scott. Due to the recent state budget reduction at Nicholls, post-baccalaureate internships are no longer offered through the dietetics program. Scott coordinated the internship since its inception in 2003. She is teaching in the dietetics program this fall and is completing a dissertation concerning breastfeeding and the social stigma attached to the act.

The health implications of breastfeeding—or the lack of breastfeeding—are what interests Scott. "We’ve got a low breastfeeding rate here;" Scott says. "Oregon, Washington, and California show at least 95 percent of mothers breastfeed. But in Lafourche Parish, only 13 percent do it. Is this why we’re so unhealthy compared to people in other states? It’s a socially unacceptable thing here."

Scott says that nutrition education and physical activity are key ingredients for a healthy lifestyle. She says people should reconsider their perceptions of costs and benefits. For example, she says, "Running is the punishment sport. We teach that, rather than teaching people how to jog for 30 minutes," Scott says. "Or you’ll see people parking next to their classroom, and then driving to their next one. It’s really not that far to walk."

"People need to change, but they don’t want to change," says Christina Lapeyrouse of Houma. The Nicholls dietetics program has served as a stepping-stone toward her career in sports nutrition and exercise physiology. A 2009 dietetics graduate, Lapeyrouse enjoys figure competition, versions of bodybuilding.

Lapeyrouse got involved with "figure" in 2006. In 2008, she took part in four shows, including the National Physique Committee (NPC) Southern Classic, in which she placed third overall in the figure competition. “I am competitive. I like succeeding and reaching my goals,” Lapeyrouse says.

Lapeyrouse says she enjoys helping people and the sense of accomplishment that figure competition provides. "Currently, I train five women, teaching them to pose and present themselves. I recently took over their diet. Figure requires huge sacrifices: no drinking and a number of food limitations. But it’s all worth it when you’re standing on stage with 10 gals, and your name is called."
Through the years, more than 300 widely known performers and speakers have been booked by the university or student entertainment officials. Sometimes students and ticket buyers showed up in small numbers—predicting the success of a given concert bill is not an easy task. Nonetheless, most concerts got favorable reviews from the campus newspaper, the yearbook, or both.

There were several no-shows, too. In fall 1967, the non-appearance of singer Dionne Warwick, internationally famous at the time for songs like “Walk on By,” disappointed 2,300 fans who had packed Shaver Gym; miscommunication resulted in no one meeting her at the New Orleans airport to bring her to Thibodaux. And, sadly, singer-songwriter Jim Croce of “Bad, Bad Leroy Brown” fame died in a plane crash a month before his scheduled fall 1973 appearance.

Performers can be unpredictable. Comedienne Lily Tomlin in fall 1976 got a standing ovation after her first show in Peltier Auditorium. But she walked off the stage ten minutes into her second show, a first for her. She decided that the performer-audience “chemistry” was not there—and she willingly went unpaid. All went well when George Carlin of seven-dirty-words fame presented stand-up comedy on campus in fall 1971 and fall 1987—especially when he referred to prominent Nicholls administrators by name to get big laughs.

Booking performers was usually a challenge for student leaders, partly because taste in entertainment varies from group to group and from time to time. And fads and popularities could change in only a few months.

Big names. Celebrities. Manque idols. Stars and superstars. Hundreds of them have performed for and spoken to audiences at Nicholls over the years.

Those audiences have sometimes been huge. Five thousand fans cheered the rock band Kansas when they performed in Stopher Gym in fall 1983. A crowd of 9,000 applauded in spring 1984 when the Beach Boys filled Guidry Stadium with the sounds of “California Girls.” And in fall 1984, the rock band Chicago drew a crowd of about 11,500 to the football practice fields to hear the band’s hits “If You Leave Me Now” and “Hard to Say I’m Sorry.”

The following semester, the Pointer Sisters sang “I’m So Excited,” “Jump,” and other hits in fluorescent green, orange, and pink dresses before fireworks lit up the sky for 6,500 rain-soaked concertgoers in Guidry Stadium.

Big-name concerts were not unusual at Nicholls in the 1960s, ’70s, and ’80s. Today, contract costs are outrageously high, and top performers are generally unwilling to appear at regional universities. So, student fees for entertainment go mostly to Crawfish Day, Winterfest, and other events. However, in November 2008, Nicholls students once again brought big-name, costly performers to town, dropping Winterfest in favor of a double bill at the Thibodaux Civic Center with the rock band Yellowcard and R&B star The Dream, BET’s 2008 best new artist.

Chasing fleeting fame

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Put it in writing

Then, too, contracts could specify more than just payment. When the rock group Wet Willie performed at the Thibodaux Civic Center in 1979 under Nicholls sponsorship, a contract rider called for a lot more than just $6,000 for a stage brought in from Nashville, an extra generator, an electrician, and a clean-up crew. (The Thibodaux Civic Center was unavailable, so the Student Programming Association leaders lucked out when they booked rock group Wet Willie for a Shaver Gym performance because, at the time of its spring 1986 concert in Shaver Gym, the band’s latest release, “Sara,” was No. 4 on the music charts. The SPA was less fortunate two months later, reporting a Kool and the Gang concert loss of $50,000.

Variety adds spice

Big names first began appearing at Nicholls in the final years of the Charles C. Elkins presidency, when three Pulitzer Prize winners spoke on campus: biographer Margaret Coit, newspaper editor Hodding Carter, and novelist Shirley Ann Grau. When a string quartet arrived with credit cards—but no cash—long before Thibodaux restaurants began accepting credit cards, Nicholls audiences were eager to hear them, a faculty member fed the musicians at his home.

In 1975, and then 10 years later, Nicholls audiences heard Charlie Daniels and his band promise “The South’s Gonna Do It Again.” Southern rockers Lynyrd Skynyrd first performed “Free Bird” at Nicholls in 1974 and returned in 1992, getting rave reviews both times in the campus newspaper from Tommy Lyons of Houma.

Student Programming Association leaders locked out when they booked the rock group Starship because, at the time of its spring 1986 concert in Shaver Gym, the band’s latest release, “Sara,” was No. 4 on the music charts. The SPA was less fortunate two months later, reporting a Kool and the Gang concert loss of $50,000.

In spring 1965, the Artists and Lecturers Series brought to the campus the Russ Carlyle Orchestra, famous for ballroom music, and the Dave Brubeck Jazz Quartet, of “Take Five” renown. Clarinetist Pete Fountain of New Orleans and “Autumn Leaves” pianist Roger Williams also performed in the mid-1960s.

Among the ten or so attractions brought to the campus in 1971-72 were Christine Jorgensen, the sex-change personality; Dick Gregory, the comedian and anti-war activist, and Rick Nelson of song, TV, and movie fame.

Some performers were little known when they came to Nicholls, such as comedian Albert Brooks in the late 1960s and comedian Howie Mandel in the mid-1970s. Robert Klein, Sam Kinison, and David Steinberg have also done stand-up comedy at Nicholls.

Robert Penn Warren, who won Pulitzer prizes as a novelist and as a poet, lectured in Peltier Auditorium in spring 1985; President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan sent him an 80th-birthday telegram in care of Nicholls.

Speakers in recent decades have included Gen. William Westmoreland, Julie Nixon Eisenhower, Watergate figures G. Gordon Liddy and John D.

Ehrlichman, Ted Koppel and Cokie Roberts of ABC News, and sports figures Willie “Pops” Stargell and Dan Pastorini.

Some music performers and groups were well known when they appeared during the Elkins and Vernon Galliano presidential years, which ended in 1983. Air Supply, the Chambers Brothers, Cheap Trick, the Cowsills, Eddie Money, the Four Freshmen, the Four Seasons, Harry Simonee Chorale, Mac Davis, Neil Diamond, Erroll Garner, the Lettermen, the Metters, Carlos Montoya, New Christy Minstrels, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, the Platters, Gary Puckett, Rare Earth, Buddy Rich, Kenny Rogers, Serendipity Singers, the Temptations, Gino Vanelli, and We Five.

Since that time, Nicholls audiences have heard Anita Baker, the Black Cowses, Cowboy Mouth, Exposé, Everclear, the Four Tops, Ronnie Milsap, REO Speedwagon, Third Eye Blind, and Travis Tritt.

Through the years such Louisiana artists as Irma Thomas, Doug Kerraw, Gatemouth Brown, Professor Longhair, and Dr. John have played to Nicholls audiences. Louisiana symphony orchestras, choirs, and choirs have appeared at Nicholls many times.

Over the decades Nicholls has offered great variety, ranging from the Harlem Globetrotters in Shaver Gym to The Miracle Worker in Talbot Theater, starring Mercedes Ruehl in the role of Annie Sullivan, Helen Keller’s teacher. (That was about 16 years before Ruehl would win a Hollywood Oscar and a Broadway Tony in 1991). And there have been dance groups, music ensembles, and hypnotists.

Not every notable who visits Nicholls performs or speaks. Actors Jason Robards and Louis Gossett Jr., while in the area making movies years apart, shopped in the Nicholls bookstore. Marjorie Lawrence, the opera star and polio victim who was the subject of the 1955 Hollywood movie Interrupted Melody, attended a New Orleans Symphony concert in Shaver Gym. •
Runners Pursue Dreams

For Kenyans, Nicholls is a cherished home away from home.

BY BRANDON RIZUTTO

On August 16, 2006, two young Kenyan women, Marion Chebet and Imma Kosgei, went to the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, bound for college in the United States on track and field scholarships. Chebet was heading to the University of Wyoming; Kosgei’s destination was Lubbock Christian University in Texas.

Although both athletes left the same day from the same airport with very similar future experiences ahead of them, neither of them knew the other. The two Kenyans did not meet until they both transferred to Nicholls.

“We talk about it all the time, how we both left on the same day but didn’t know each other until two years later,” said Chebet. “Most people who see us on campus think we are sisters because we are always together.”

Both took different routes to get to Nicholls, and now the two 23-year-old women find comfort in having someone from their native country to study with and compete with—something they didn’t have before their acceptance into university. With the other, each found someone to speak Swahili, and someone who understands the obstacles they had to overcome to study in the United States.

“When they arrived, they were shy and kept to themselves,” said Nicholls track and field coach Scott Williamson. “Together they have become a lot more social, and they are a great attribute to our program and to Nicholls.”

Life back in Kenya wasn’t easy for either Kosgei or Chebet—to say the least.

“Life back in Kenya wasn’t easy for either Kosgei or Chebet—to say the least.”

Kosgei grew up in a one-room house with no electricity or running water—certainly there was no air conditioning, or other amenities customary to the typical American lifestyle. Chebet was dealt a similar hand growing up, but was fortunate to live in a two-room house.

Food was scarce in both households, and some nights they would sleep hungry. Sometimes there would be nothing waiting for them when they came home for lunch to run back to school with an empty stomach.

“I’m so very thankful for three meals a day,” said Chebet, seconded by Kosgei. “That was rarely ever an option for us back home, so having that option every day is such a blessing.”

Although Kenyha has its downsides for both Chebet and Kosgei, it is still home, though neither has returned to Kenya since departing three years ago. Both have plans for college after returning home; they are currently working on their degrees, further delaying the return home to see families and friends.

“After finding a close contingent of friends in high school, Fryou found something else: running. Fryou shared his story with a writer through two laptop computers, one across the table from the other, relying on instant messaging as the means of communication.

“Sometimes it gets aggravating not being able to communicate with people, but it’s good when there are family riots,” typed Fryou with a grin ear-to-ear. “I have to be able to shut my eyes, and I can block it all out.”

Even though the Berwick, Louisiana, native is able to charm anyone with his personality, times were not always easy for him. Growing up hearing impaired was lonely and hard; meeting people and making friends was not easy.

“I owe a lot to my parents. They know who I am and what I can be capable of, and never stopped pushing me, they never let me feel sorry for myself,” typed Fryou. “A lot of times, they were the only ones who believed in me when no one else did. I’m very glad and also very fortunate for that.”

Fryou was also fortunate to find a group of friends at Berwick High School who looked beyond his disability, and saw who he really was.

“I have an outstanding group of close friends at Berwick High School who looked beyond his disability, and saw who he really was.”

After a close contingent of friends in high school, Fryou found something else: running. Running served as his solace, his escape from reality, and it was something that was totally dependent on him.

Fryou recalls his first race very well.

“The first race I ran in while in high school, I was dead last. I watched everyone pass me, and I knew I was last,” recalled Fryou. “At that moment, I was running for me—just for me—and I promised myself I would cross that finish line, even if it killed me.”

“I promised myself I would cross that finish line, even if it killed me.”

With his last-place finish as a freshman, Fryou knew the sky was the limit. He worked hard to perfect his skills and was an all-district selection as a senior in 2007. Fryou was also an important part of Berwick’s district championship in the two-mile event that year.

He was also starting to garner some interest from colleges for possible scholarships. However, most of the offers fell through.

“Other schools were skeptical, and backed off of me because of my hearing,” typed Fryou.

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The transition to college wasn’t an easy one for Fryou. Coming to Nicholls not knowing anyone, and most importantly, not knowing anyone who could sign him up.

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“When I got hit in the parking lot, it all happened so fast that I didn’t get a chance to see the license plate or anything,” typed Fryou. “It took me out of running for two months with a swollen left quad and knee. It made me realize things happen and you just have to face it as best you can.”

After his accident, Fryou refused to be isolated even further. He became more outgoing in his efforts to meet people and make friends. His first step was to become closer to his teammates.

He slowly but surely started to come out of his shell, and as Fryou’s process found his true passion in life—cooking. Starting this fall, Fryou will be majoring in culinary arts, and could not be more excited about his hopes of opening his own French restaurant one day.

“I think that coming to Nicholls has been the best opportunity that I have ever received. Not a lot of dear friends get the chance to go to college, and that’s huge for me,” typed Fryou. “This experience with a degree in the end gives me a better chance at supporting myself and living a normal life.”

A Long, Lonely Road
Unable to hear, an athlete faces many challenges.

BY BRANDON RIZUTTO

 nicholls

student-athlete Joseph ‘Joby’ Fryou, a junior who competes in cross-country for Nicholls, tells a great story about him- self. He tells it with wit and humor, not one hint of sorrow.

Fryou shared his story with a writer through two laptop computers, one across the table from the other, relying on instant messaging as the means of communication.

“She could have left us on the street or with our siblings,” said Fryou with a grin ear-to-ear. “I have to be able to shut my eyes, and I can block it all out.”

Even though the Berwick, Louisiana, native is able to charm anyone with his personality, times were not always easy for him. Growing up hearing impaired was lonely and hard; meeting people and making friends was not easy.

“I owe a lot to my parents. They know who I am and what I can be capable of, and never stopped pushing me, they never let me feel sorry for myself,” typed Fryou. “A lot of times, they were the only ones who believed in me when no one else did. I’m very glad and also very fortunate for that.”

Fryou was also fortunate to find a group of friends at Berwick High School who looked beyond his disability, and saw who he really was.

“I have an outstanding group of close friends at Berwick High School who looked beyond his disability, and saw who he really was.”

After a close contingent of friends in high school, Fryou found something else: running. Running served as his solace, his escape from reality, and it was something that was totally dependent on him.

Fryou recalls his first race very well.

“The first race I ran in while in high school, I was dead last. I watched everyone pass me, and I knew I was last,” recalled Fryou. “At that moment, I was running for me—just for me—and I promised myself I would cross that finish line, even if it killed me.”

With his last-place finish as a freshman, Fryou knew the sky was the limit. He worked hard to perfect his skills and was an all-district selection as a senior in 2007. Fryou was also an important part of Berwick’s district championship in the two-mile event that year.

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Amid a series of sordid settings, *The Missing* details the quest of south Louisianaan Sam Simoneaux to find a kidnapped girl, following his return from war-torn France. Reviewing the novel for *The Advocate*, Greg Langley praises Gautreaux as "a polished, complete writer"—and a *Publisher's Weekly* review designates the novel’s protagonist as "a refreshingly candid voice, brimming with a lyrical intensity that graces some of the best of Southern literature."

"Idols," which can be read in its entirety at www.newyorker.com, has a distinctly Southern flavor as well. It chronicles the efforts of Julian, a typewriter repairman, to restore an abandoned Mississippi mansion that he inherited from distant relatives.

Gautreaux received high praise from critics and readers for his 2003 novel, *The Clearing*, which novelist Annie Proulx called "the finest American novel in a long, long time." In an interview published in the journal *Southern Spaces*, Margaret D. Bauer of East Carolina University characterizes Gautreaux as the "cartographer of Louisiana back roads."

"Resisting simplistic labels of ‘Cajun’ and ‘Southern,’ Gautreaux’s storytelling reveals an intimate understanding of southern Louisiana’s white, working-class people and culture," Bauer says. "Often drawn from his own background, Gautreaux’s characters are shaped by a range of experiences, from working on steamboats and fighting in world wars, to struggling in the 1980s oil bust."

"If a story does not deal with a moral question, I don’t think it’s much of a story." Gautreaux said in an interview for *The Atlantic* in 1997.

The writer in residence at Southeastern Louisiana University before his retirement, the Morgan City native received his doctorate from the University of South Carolina, after which he launched a career as an academic and fiction writer. In addition to *The New Yorker*, Gautreaux’s work has appeared in *The Atlantic, Harper’s*, and *GQ*. His novels and short stories have earned a variety of awards as well, including the 1999 Southeastern Booksellers Association Award, 1999 Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance Book Award, 2003 Mid-South Independent Booksellers Association Award, and 2005 John Dos Passos Prize.

Photographs by Misty McElroy
From Louisiana to Florida, a Journey in Time

Recreation, and Tourism in Baton Rouge for several years after earning his master's degree. By summer 1998, Clune had earned a Ph.D. in history from LSU, where his studies focused on Latin America, early modern Europe, and cultural geography. His dissertation on Cuban convicts during the Enlightenment era became his first published book.

While working on his doctorate, Clune went to Pensacola to study archaeological sites in the area related to the early Spanish period of Florida history. "There is very little evidence of the first Spanish settlement above ground in Pensacola," he says, "but there is a lot of it below ground." The University of West Florida hired him as an assistant professor of history in the fall of 1997 and gave him additional responsibilities as project manager for its Archaeology Institute. Although he taught history, Clune put his business background to good use as an administrator. He soon became the coordinator of his department's program in historic preservation.

"My marketing studies at Nicholls have come in handy throughout my career," Clune says. The Spanish achieved, then abandoned, their first Spanish settlement, 1559-1561; the first Pensacola, alternately controlled by Spain and by France, 1698-1719; a period of Spanish rule marked by devastating hurricanes and conflict with other European powers, 1722-1763; British Pensacola, 1763-1781; and the final period of Spanish dominance, 1781-1821. The years after war, of course, are the American period.

Although the fact is not widely known, part of today's state of Louisiana once belonged to the English colony of West Florida after Spain turned over ownership of the region to England in 1763. Had those early borders remained in place, people living in Kenwood and Covington, Louisiana, would today be residents of Florida. So would people living in present-day south Mississippi and Alabama.

"People look to universities to be leaders in educational growth, information exchange, and technological improvements."

By BRANDIE M. TOUPS

The author is director of the Nicholls Office of Continuing Education.

How many names can one department have? In my ten years here at Nicholls, the Office of Continuing Education has had four official names, including Camps and Conferences, Lifelong Learning, and Continuing Non-Credit Education and Conference Services.

Sometimes I laugh, because the name my co-workers call this office that I affectionately refer to as my "second home" depends on when that person started working at Nicholls. (Those who know me well may be thinking right now: Are you sure it's not her first home? In Continuing Education, we work a lot outside regular business hours, but it is a rewarding experience.)

Why so many different names? To answer this is also to answer another question: What role does the Office of Continuing Education play at Nicholls State University?

I often hear newcomers to our community say that when they decided to move here, they chose Thibodaux because of Nicholls. Many other Americans do the same: they choose to live in "college towns." That fact points to the importance that continuing education plays at colleges and universities across the country.

People look to universities to be leaders in educational growth, information exchange, and technological improvements. At Nicholls, I am proud to say, we do all of this with a personal touch.

Adult non-credit programs, for credit non-degree programs, conference services, summer camps—our office does all that, and more. Each program is an integral part of our mission, which supports the university's larger mission of providing learning experiences in our region through education and community service.

The Continuing Education office acts as an agent for Nicholls in providing quality educational programs and conferencing services to a wide range of clients.

One function of the Office of Continuing Education is to offer adult non-credit programs and specified credit programs. Non-credit programs are of two major types: professional enrichment and personal development. These programs are generally open to the public and do not require that participants have a high school diploma. Most classes are scheduled in the evenings or on Saturdays.

Community enrichment courses are primarily special-interest classes designed to expand knowledge and create new opportunities, or spark interest in a given subject. These courses are held year-round, including evenings, weekends, and holidays.

Youth programs are my favorite. They are the hardest because we have two client groups to please—the parent and the camper—but also the most rewarding. Parents want to know that their children are safe, having fun or learning something worthwhile, and they are eager to hear what they paid for. The children simply want to have fun and not be bored! We make sure all of our clients are happy through unconditional dedication. This is hard to do, but as I said, the rewards are plentiful.

As my tenth summer in the Office of Continuing Education ends, I look back and I am thankful for the opportunity to work at this wonderful institution. The relationships built over the years with co-workers and visitors on this beautiful campus are some of my most treasured memories. I look forward to more years and exciting programs to come.
Voilà!

Voila! The Magazine of Nicholls State University

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Homecoming Events
Friday, September 25
8 a.m. Golf Tournament, Bayou Country Club
10 a.m. Parade
10:30 a.m. Homecoming Reception and Pep Rally
8 p.m. Football Game vs. Lafayette

Saturday, September 26
Nicholls Tennis Courts
6 p.m. Additional information about Homecoming 2009 can be found at dues-paying alumni. Nicholls will also find this information online at www.nsulalumni.org along with the Homecoming T-shirt design.

Renew Your Membership
Watch your mail for instructions on renewing your Nicholls State Foundation membership. Your support is critical to help fund projects such as Vida! magazine, scholarships for deserving Nicholls students, and alumni and university-related events.

Upcoming Events
October 31, 2009
Family Day featuring Nicholls vs. McNeese State at 1 p.m.

April 10, 2010
Nicholls Alumni Reunion and Alumni Crawfish Boil

What's New with You?

Please complete this form and return it to the address below:

Name:

Home Address:

City: __________________________ State: __________ Zip Code: __________

Nicholls Major: __________________________ Graduation Year: __________

Home Phone: __________________________ Cell Phone: __________________________

E-Mail Address: __________________________

Employer: __________________________

Job Title: __________________________

Spouse's Name: __________________________

Spouse's Nicholls Graduation Year and Major: __________________________

Accomplishments: __________________________

Do you have news to share—a new job, milestone, achievement, wedding, baby, or recent move? We want to know about it and share it with your Nicholls friends in the Colonial Notes section of the Alumni Federation’s magazine, The Colonial.

Are you Ready for Homecoming?

Join us on Saturday, September 26, as we honor the Class of 1959 and celebrate Homecoming 2009! Come experience “Tillou Dancing through the Decades” when Nicholls hosts the Jackson State University Gamecocks.

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