Restoring native coastal plants

[page 30]
Budget cuts. By now you are probably tired of hearing about them! So is everyone at Nicholls and in all state agencies. Therefore I will not spend much time on this topic, except to touch on it briefly at the end of this message. Instead I will focus on many of the good activities and developments that continue to occur at Nicholls.

First of all, this spring our students exhibited their courage in approving a self-assessed fee to operate a new recreation center. In an overwhelming vote of confidence in the future of this university, the students voted by 79% to 21% in favor of the fee proposal. Nicholls will now proceed with construction of the recreation center, with groundbreaking scheduled for late fall. Work has already begun on three intramural fields. With the addition of this facility, Nicholls will offer a full range of campus life to both our residential and our commuter students.

Secondly, as we prepare to send Voilà! to press, this year’s capital outlay budget, which is working its way through the Louisiana Legislature, contains funding for planning and design of the John Folse Culinary Institute classroom building. Construction could start as early as Fall 2012. Should that occur, I am very confident that the institute will be poised to go from a small but significant educator of quality chefs to a major player in the nation’s culinary arts. The new classroom building will allow us to expand our enrollment very quickly.

Voilà! is full of great stories about what is taking place on campus. A newly renovated Beauregard Hall opened this summer. Nicholls alumni who took classes in the old Beauregard Hall will be amazed at the transformation of this building into a state-of-the-art science facility. Peltier Auditorium is being completely redone, with new seats, new carpets, a new sound system, and more. Our campus is looking better than it has in many, many years. To see it is to wonder how can we do this with all of the budget cuts we have sustained. The answer is as important as it is simple: All of these projects have been funded with self-generated funds or through the capital outlay budget. None have been funded through the operating budget. We have invested our dollars wisely in building a campus that will attract well-qualified students and a strong faculty. Our future and the future of the region we serve depend on both! We must continue to move Nicholls forward in a strong, positive manner.

Dr. Stephen Hulbert
Voilà!
Nicholls State University
Thibodaux, Louisiana

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Running the Numbers

Folks who remember when Bayou Region residents thought of Nicholls as “Our Harvard on the Bayou” should be pleased to know that students from around the state and nation—and the world—are charting their futures here in 2010. Why is this a good thing? Because people from other places bring different perspectives along with them. Education depends upon the studied consideration of unfamiliar ideas and information.

That being the case, it is interesting to think how many ways the Bayou Region’s lifestyle and culture have been adopted and spread around by students who come here from elsewhere. These days, not just local people know how to make crabfish etouffee or dance the Cajun waltz. They’re doing it all around the world.

Come to Nicholls to earn a college degree, and you’ll learn knowing what the local population knows about living. This is true whether you come here from a shotgun house in the Irish Channel of New Orleans or from a cattle ranch in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Nicholls, the university on the bayou, becomes your home away from home.

6,495
The total number of students enrolled at Nicholls at the beginning of the Spring 2010 semester. As always, most of these students came from either Lafourche or Terrebonne parishes.

3,459
The number of students studying at Nicholls last term from the two local parishes: 1,705 from Lafourche and 1,754 from Terrebonne.

3,036
The number of Nicholls students enrolled in Spring 2010 not residing in either Lafourche or Terrebonne parishes. Where did those 3,036 Nicholls students come from? From the other parishes in Louisiana, mostly.

2,696
The number of students who made their way here in January from places near and far in Louisiana. In rank order, they came from these parishes: St. Mary 651, Jefferson 309, Assumption 269.

217
The number of Nicholls students in the spring semester from the United States who did not call Louisiana home. The top five states are Texas 74, Mississippi 20, California 21, Florida 20, and Alabama 15.

123
The number of students attracted to Nicholls from outside the United States. More than 100 Nicholls students last spring resided in each of the other Louisiana parishes. Parishes sending only 1 student to Nicholls: Calhoun, Catahoula, Franklin, Jefferson-Davis, Lafitte, and Union.

So, 3 regions of Louisiana produced the most Nicholls students in Spring 2010: the Bayou Region, the River Parishes Region, and New Orleans with its adjoining suburbs. This means that most Nicholls students are from communities within 65 miles of Thibodaux.

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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From the editor

A ll summer long, the people of south Louisiana have been dealing with the consequences of oil pouring from an open well deep in the Gulf of Mexico into the waters that feed and protect people, animals, and plants in our state’s coastal parishes. As this issue of Voilà! goes to press in July, the mood of many people is quite somber—even fearful. The emotions are similar to those we felt five years ago, in August 2005, as floodwaters pushed into the city of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina ruined thousands of homes, schools, churches, and businesses and killed people, animals, and plants in numbers almost too frightening to remember. A fragile culture was almost washed away by those waters. Now, the waters of the Gulf, fouled by oil and toxic chemicals, threaten to wash away yet another fragile culture: the one that thrives along the bayous and bays of the region Nicholls State University calls home.

In June, our campus photojournalist, Misty McElroy, flew on a U.S. Coast Guard airplane with journalists from around the world to observe and photograph the situation at the oil leak site, and to see what was happening to the fishing areas and the coastal wetlands. The images she brought back are stunning and raw: varying hues of blue on the open waters of the Gulf, the variations caused by oil on and below the surface; ropes of oil boom outlining a threatened marsh, its wildlife and vegetation protected by barriers that look perilously thin. We placed one of Misty’s images on our front cover because we recognize that the disaster out in the Gulf is a personal surface; ropes of oil boom outlining a threatened marsh, its wildlife and vegetation protected by barriers that look perilously thin. We placed one of Misty’s images on our front cover because we recognize that the disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal disaster out in the Gulf is a personal
Quick Study

Student athletes compete for sales

Nicholls students from the professional selling program in the College of Business Administration competed in the National Collegiate Sales Competition (NCSC) in March at Kennesaw State University in Georgia. The NCSC is the largest sales competition in the world and attracts students from all over the United States as well as from other nations. Nicholls MBA students Theunette Antill from Krugersdorp, South Africa, and Jordan Ogletree from Houston, Texas, won the second round of the graduate student competition in team selling and negotiation. Antill played golf for Nicholls as an undergraduate and Ogletree played football for the Colonels. Overall, the graduate student team from Nicholls placed third in the nation. Nicholls also sent two undergraduate competitors, Ryan Donegan of Thibodaux, the Student Government Association president, and Rachel Spreen of Houston, a Lady Colonel on the volleyball team. Dr. Chuck Vincena, assistant dean, advised the sales team.

Who’s bringing the popcorn?

That old audiovisual standby—the classroom movie presentation—has evolved in a project in the Nicholls Physical Sciences Department. The project involves several chemistry faculty and students and is directed by Dr. Glenn Lo, associate professor of chemistry. Chemistry faculty and students produced a library of short video tutorials on how to solve specific problems in freshman-level chemistry courses. Students can access these videos online as questions arise. Each video covers a bite-sized piece of material at a moderate pace—the emphasis is on areas that commonly cause problems for Nicholls students. (Q. What does the “p” in “pH” stand for? A. No one knows for sure.) It’s like being able to ask the smart kid in the class for help, except this smart kid is always available and is incredibly patient.

Trashy fish rehabilitated

Graduate students in the Biological Sciences Department are busy in all the environments between the Nicholls campus and the Gulf of Mexico, studying everything within the Lafourche ecosystem. For example, one doesn’t have to go very far to find garfish around Thibodaux. One of the oldest fishes in Louisiana—hurking in three waters since the time of dinosaurs—gar were once considered a “trash” fish. But with the research of Dr. Allyse Ferrara and her students, garfish are gaining respect. Their work has increased knowledge of garfish reproduction, diets, growth, genetics, and even aquaculture techniques to raise gar for commercial purposes. One student’s master’s thesis is titled “Growth, Survival, and Cannibalism Rates of Alligator Gar.” Scientists from Mississippi, Oregon, Great Britain, and Mexico have collaborated on the research.

Turning sugar cane into fuel

Late in 2009, Nicholls was awarded a $1,900,000 contract from the U.S. Department of Energy to research clean energy. The contract supports work at Nicholls for three years as part of the Clean Power and Energy Research Consortium (CPERC) in Louisiana. The research at Nicholls focuses primarily on generating ethanol from sugar cane waste. Sugar cane is a major crop in southeast Louisiana, and every year millions of tons of residues are produced, which are renewable resources. This research seeks to find an economical way to produce ethanol from these residues, providing a renewable energy source and an alternative to open air burning of agricultural residues. Dr. Ramaraj Boopathy, distinguished service professor of biological sciences, is the principal investigator of the CPERC grant at Nicholls.

Surf’s up!

Dr. Graziela Miot da Silva, assistant professor of geology at Nicholls, is working on a three-year study financed by the National Natural Science Foundation of China to create a surf zone-beach dunes interactions model for China. On a sandy beach, the surf zone is the area where the waves break as they come near the shore. It’s the area where swimmers and surfers frolic. The breaking waves are involved in the constant movement of sediment along the shore. Over time, this movement can cause sand dunes to form on the beach. The beach dunes protect the land from storm waves and unusually high water levels. In China, as elsewhere around the world, coastal erosion has serious effects and is an area of intense interest and activity. Hence the grant to Dr. da Silva, who is an expert in coastal geomorphology.
Francis T. Nicholls memorabilia

Francis T. Nicholls (1834-1912) was twice governor of Louisiana and chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. A West Point graduate who served in the U.S. Army, he opposed secession when the Civil War broke out. When the conflict threatened Louisiana, the six-foot-tall lawyer from Donaldsonville joined the Confederate Army and rose to the rank of brigadier general. Battlefields wounded in Virginia cost him his left arm and foot. After the war he worked to stabilize and reform Louisiana politics.

In Thibodaux today, a visitor seeking to learn more about Gov. Nicholls can visit the tomb where he is interred with his wife, Caroline, in the St. John’s Episcopal Church cemetery. His home, called Ridgefield, burned early in the 20th century but has been restored and stands behind the Nicholls Shopping Center on LA Highway 1. And there is Nicholls State University, named in his honor and, along with the Louisiana State Archives in Baton Rouge, one of just a few places in the state where artifacts related to his life are preserved.

Clifton Theriot, head of archives and special collections at Ellender Memorial Library on campus, noted that Nicholls owns a number of items associated with Gov. Nicholls. Many of them belong to the Evans J. Casso Collection, donated by the author of Francis T. Nicholls: A Biographical Tribute, published by the Nicholls Foundation in 1987.

Service recognized

In 2010, for the fourth consecutive year, Nicholls was named to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Launched in 2006, the list recognizes colleges and universities nationwide that support innovative community service and service-learning programs. It is the highest federal recognition a university can receive for service-related commitment.

Helping small businesses

The College of Business Administration has secured $199,500 from the U.S. Small Business Administration to establish a Small Business Development Center at Nicholls and cover three years of operating expenses. The center will assist Bayou Region businesses in such areas as training, management, accounting, marketing, and financial planning.

Lab simulates reality

The American Association of Drilling Engineers Computer Simulation and Distance Education Lab at Nicholls opened in Fall 2009. Funded by an $80,000 grant from AADE—as well as a grant from the Louisiana Board of Regents—the lab enhances hands-on experience for petroleum services students through computer lab simulation exercises embedded into existing drilling, production, and safety technology courses. The lab is housed in the Department of Applied Sciences, part of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Speaking for BP

When the BP oil company needed to communicate with the Vietnamese population on the Louisiana coast during the 2010 oil spill crisis, they turned to Nicholls for help—and received it. Ly Thanh Nguyen, a senior multinational business major, agreed to serve as a translator. Fluent in both Vietnamese and English, Nguyen was recognized as the university’s top international female scholar in 2008.

Nurses know Nicholls

A substantial portion of licensed registered nurses working in the Bayou Region received their degrees from Nicholls, according to the Louisiana State Board of Nursing’s 2009 roster of registered nurses and the Nicholls Department of Nursing’s graduate database. Licensed registered nurses who earned an associate’s or bachelor’s degree from Nicholls make up the majority in four local parishes: Lafourche, 84 percent; Terrebonne, 64 percent; St. Mary, 59 percent; and Assumption, 30 percent.

Information jobs promoted

In 2009, IBM announced a collaboration with Nicholls that introduced new curricula in the university’s information systems program, part of the College of Business Administration. The courses are designed to help students develop skills required for jobs in emerging fields—including electronic medical records, intelligent transportation systems, and smart energy grids. Also in 2009, Nicholls became a member of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance.

Architectural gem

The renovation of the Vernon E. Galasso Dining Hall at Nicholls was featured in the American Institute of Architects’ magazine’s 2009 Architectural Portfolio. Spearheaded by Bitch Kuebel Architects of New Orleans, the 2007 renovation completely updated the obsolete 1964 design. The Architectural Portfolio is an annual competition spotlighting architectural projects that represent America’s most effective learning environments.

In 2009, Nicholls Shopping Center on LA Highway 1 underwent a $10.5 million renovation and expansion, including a 163,000-square-foot addition to the north side of the center. The additional space features 27 new stores, including T.J. Maxx, Macy’s Home Decor, Petsmart, and Ross. The renovation included a new facade for the building, featuring an 80-foot clock tower.

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Faculty members are excited about the upgrades, especially the modern design and updated equipment.

Dr. Earl Melancon Jr., distinguished service professor of biological sciences and 35-year Nicholls veteran, says he is most appreciative that the architects sought input from faculty as they designed the new interior. The collaboration led to such features as individual research labs for each faculty member, a walk-in cooler to keep samples fresh, and two “natural history rooms”—one for animal specimens and one for plants.

Moreover, all physical sciences will now be consolidated in the new Beauregard Hall, whereas they used to be divided between Beauregard and Peltier. Student labs, faculty labs, faculty offices, and a majority of classrooms will all be under the same roof (although biology will still be headquartered in Gouaux Hall).

“Scientists of different disciplines will now be able to interact in the same building,” Melancon says. “This is the way science is supposed to be—interdisciplinary. This is now the norm.”

“The new classrooms are interactive-media-ready, with projectors. Plus, every lab now has data ports with Internet capabilities directly hardwired into the building. It’s outstanding.”

Additional features include at-bench ventilation as well as several extra ventilator hoods, for experiments with noxious chemicals like sulfide.

“There were certain qualitative analysis experiments we simply couldn’t do before, but now, with this equipment, we can do them,” she said.

Other upgrades include fluorometers—used to measure the parameters of fluorescence—as well as expanded walking space, storage space, and increased energy efficiency.

“It’s like going from a Model T to a Cadillac,” Melancon says. “The storage is incredibly efficient.”

Beauregard Hall facts
• Size: 52,000 square feet, shaped like an “H”
• Location: corner of Madewood Dr. and Glenwood Dr.
• Namesake: Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard (1818-1893)
• Opened in Fall 1961, the fourth building on campus
• Cost to build in 1960-61: $950,000
• Renovated, refurbished, and reopened in Fall 2010
• Cost of 2009-10 improvement project: $12.5 million
• Cost of new roof after Hurricane Gustav: $94,669
• Value to Nicholls students, 1961 until ?: incalculable

Cindy Lamberty, instructor of chemistry, and Dr. Earl Melancon Jr., distinguished service professor of biological sciences, spent the summer moving into brand new laboratories equipped with the latest technologies.

“Once rundown and outdated, now a sparkling high-tech marvel”

by GRAHAM HARVEY

Beauregard Hall’s post-renovation exterior, with its landscaped courtyards, new paint, and 20-foot steel exhaust vents on the roof, would probably be enough to impress any passers-by.

Renovators didn’t stop there, though. At 49 years old, the 52,000-square-foot facility was the fourth academic building constructed on the Nicholls campus. A complete overhaul was clearly due—and that’s what it received. The result is a new, state-of-the-art science facility wherein Nicholls students will resume classes in Fall 2010.

It’s like going from a Model T to a Cadillac.”

– Dr. Earl Melancon Jr.

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“Scientists of different disciplines will now be able to interact in the same building,” Melancon says. “This is the way science is supposed to be—interdisciplinary. This is now the norm.”

Compared to the old Beauregard, Melancon says, “it’s like going from a Model T to a Cadillac.”

Cindy Lamberty, instructor of chemistry and 16-year Nicholls veteran, concurs.

“This multimedia-equipped classroom in the new Beauregard Hall is one of several, each differing in size for different purposes.”

Faculty members are excited about the upgrades, especially the modern design and updated equipment.

Dr. Earl Melancon Jr., distinguished service professor of biological sciences and 35-year Nicholls veteran, says he is most appreciative that the architects sought input from faculty as they designed the new interior. The collaboration led to such features as individual research labs for each faculty member, a walk-in cooler to keep samples fresh, and two “natural history rooms”—one for animal specimens and one for plants.

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Cindy Lamberty, instructor of chemistry and 16-year Nicholls veteran, concurs.
The Department of Music hosted the second annual Monster Piano Concert in Talbot Hall Auditorium. Eighteen pianists, including faculty, students, alumni, and guests, performed on six Steinway pianos.

“Big government is a fact of life. Student loans, good highways—people like them.”

—Dr. Joseph R. Thysell Jr.

professor of political science, speaking “for the left” April 20, 2010, at an on-campus forum on national politics.

Nicholls among elite with All-Steinway status

by GRAHAM HARVEY

Anyone who might doubt the time-honored reputation of Steinway and Sons need only visit the company’s Web site, where a scanned copy of the following letter is posted:

“I have decided to keep your grand piano. For some reason unknown to me it gives better results than any so far tried. Please send bill with lowest price. Yours, Thomas A. Edison.”

For more than 150 years, the name Steinway and Sons has been synonymous with excellent piano craftsmanship—and Nicholls is on track to becoming Louisiana’s first public institution to boast “All-Steinway” status. The current roster is relatively small, with only about 110 All-Steinway schools globally. They include The Julliard School, Yale School of Music, China Conservatory of Music, and Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Nicholls plans to join the list as soon as possible.

“Steinways are the best-built pianos in the world,” Dr. Carol Britt, associate professor and head of the Department of Music, said. “Each piano requires up to one year to hand-craft, and the result is a perfect instrument with a wonderful sound. As an All-Steinway institution, we will continue to attract top-notch students from across the globe, because they will know what type of institution they are attending—a school that loves the arts. This is a symbol for what Nicholls stands for, and we believe piano players will flock to us.”

She recalled touring the Steinway factory personally in New York City, where many employees remain for their entire professional lives—sometimes even for successive generations. “It’s definitely a labor of love,” she said.

The Department of Music at Nicholls already has four Steinways for practice and performance, totaling approximately $250,000 in value. Future acquisitions will include upright pianos for practice.

Dr. Luciana Soares, assistant professor of music, said the university’s All-Steinway commitment raises the profile of the institution. “It demonstrates the university’s dedication to excellence and makes us more competitive with other institutions in the area and beyond,” she said. “We can now say that our students will have the best instruments to inspire and challenge them as they reach their fullest potential. Steinways are considered to be the best pianos available.”

Funding for the new pianos began with a 2007 grant from the Lorio Foundation totaling nearly $200,000—and continues with fundraising events such as the annual Monster Piano Concert.

Dr. David Boudreaux, vice president of institutional advancement and professor of English, said the Lorio Foundation’s generosity strengthens the university’s recruitment and retention efforts. “Students who want to practice and perform on the finest instruments in the world now have the opportunity to do so at Nicholls.”

Left or Right?

“Americans love socialism but hate the word. We keep offering more and more benefits.”

—Dr. Paul J. Wilson

associate professor of history, speaking “for the right” at the same event.
Almost famous

The field of 11 competitors in the 2010 S. Pellegrino Almost Famous Chef finals in Napa Valley, California, included John Folse Culinary Institute student Johnathan Lynch, who won a $3,000 prize when at-home viewers voted him their personal favorite while watching the event on a live Internet feed. Lynch competed for the national title in California after winning the south central regional competition—the third year in a row that a Nicholls student has won first prize in the regional event. The John Folse Culinary Institute became part of University College in 2009.

A common book

All first-time, first-year students at Nicholls will read Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer in this fall’s sections of UNIV 101—the University College course designed to equip Nicholls students with the tools for success.

Dr. Robert Allen Alexander, associate professor of languages and literature and University College’s director of retention and student engagement, surveyed Nicholls faculty and staff in the spring to select the book from a list of prospective Common Books. Nominated by students, faculty, and staff in Fall 2009, 78 books were narrowed down to five choices by a committee.

“I encourage everyone to read Into the Wild,” said Dr. Alexander, shown here doing just that. He noted that faculty, staff, and upper-level students will participate in class discussions of the book this fall.

A

Divinely enigmatic

As part of the 2010 Jubilee Arts Festival at Nicholls, south Louisiana filmmaker Zach Godshall presented his film God’s Architects here in April. The film focuses on several divinely inspired builders, including the mysterious Kenny Hill, who created the amazing Nicholls Sculpture Garden in Chauvin. Godshall’s film was screened at the sculpture garden’s art studio after the annual Blessing of the Fleet on April 11.

Kenny Hill spent nearly a decade building what some know as “the story of salvation,” an environment of more than a hundred concrete angels, statues, and various other structures, including a 45-foot lighthouse. In the late 1990s, Hill abandoned the property beside Bayou Petit Caillou and disappeared, not to be heard from again. While the property is owned and maintained by Nicholls, Hill’s former neighbor Julian Neil serves as the local expert regarding the sculptures and their enigmatic symbols. Neil is featured in Godshall’s film, which was produced in collaboration with Tulane architecture instructor Emilie Taylor.

The final five

Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana’s Cajun Coast by Mike Tidwell

Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer

The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan

The Soloist: A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship, and the Redemptive Power of Music by Steve Lopez

Song for My Fathers: A New Orleans Story in Black and White by Tom Sancton
Faces of Nicholls

Four decades of service

by RENEE PIPER

It’s a consistent theme in the life of Dr. Carroll J. Falcon, the genial Nicholls administrator with a 43-year career in higher education, over 31 years of service to Nicholls, and a marriage that just passed the 42-year mark.

Falcon recently made a new commitment—to retire. Second in command to the university president for the past six years, he relinquished his role as provost and vice president for academic affairs on June 30, 2010.

It was August 1967 when the 26-year-old Falcon first arrived on the Nicholls campus to teach animal science. He moved to Thibodaux from Kentucky, where he had recently earned his doctorate and met his soon-to-be wife, Deanna.

His path to Nicholls and marriage was not by design, but by destiny. “That’s how it is in my life,” he said. “A lot of things that have happened to me, have happened almost by accident. Going to school at Kentucky was an accident. I really wanted to go to Iowa State or Texas A&M. But, had I not gone to Kentucky, I never would have met Deanna.”

Growing up in Rayne, a small town in south central Louisiana—the self-proclaimed “Frog Capital of the World”—Falcon wanted to be a farmer. But, as a college student at the University of Southwestern Louisiana (now University of Louisiana at Lafayette) he discovered a desire to teach, thanks in part to an unsuspecting professor. “I enjoyed observing my college professors, but there was one in particular who wasn’t very good. I kept thinking to myself: I could do better than that.” Years later, he ran into that not-so-good teacher, and Falcon told him that he inspired him to become a college professor. “I didn’t tell him it was because he was so bad. That’s true, but I didn’t want to hurt his feelings,” Falcon said.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in animal science, Falcon applied to Texas A&M and Iowa State for graduate assistantship positions. He received a call from Iowa State, but they could not offer him an assistantship because his application arrived late. They were impressed with Falcon and suggested he apply for an assistantship at the University of Kentucky.

“Come to find out, the people at Iowa State knew the faculty advisor at Kentucky,” Falcon said. “They assured me that the advisor was well respected, so I decided to check it out.”

Sure enough, Falcon was offered the assistantship. Because he had no other offers at the time, he accepted. “I wouldn’t know it, a few days later I received the call I had been hoping for, from Texas A&M,” he said. “They offered me a position, but I had to turn them down. It was really tough. I had my heart set on going to Texas A&M, but I had already made a commitment.”

While at Kentucky, Falcon not only earned his master’s and doctoral degrees in animal science, he met his future wife.

He also refined his Cajun cooking skills. “When I moved to Kentucky, and the people there learned that I was from south Louisiana, they said: You’re Cajun, you must know how to cook. So, I started cooking the few things I knew how to prepare.”

Falcon’s cooking brought him and his wife together. “When I first met Deanna, I was cooking a gumbo. She was supposed to go on a date that night with someone else, but she broke it off so she could have gumbo with me instead.” That was in June 1967.

By then, Falcon had completed his studies and was searching for a full-time faculty position. While attending a conference in New Orleans, he was introduced by a friend to Dr. Donald Ayo, head of the Department of Agriculture at Nicholls. That meeting led to a job offer. Two months later, he packed his bags and moved to Thibodaux. As he settled into his job teaching animal science, he maintained a long-distance relationship with Deanna. “I proposed to her over the Thanksgiving break, and we were married five months later, on April 6, 1968,” Falcon said.

From 1967 to 1978, Falcon was promoted to department head, then to dean of the College of Life Sciences and Technology, a position he held for 15 years. In 1993, he left Nicholls to accept a prestigious position with the University of Louisiana System: senior vice president and chief academic officer. For three of his 11 years with the system office in Baton Rouge, Falcon was the UI system’s acting president and board secretary. In July 2004, Falcon returned to Nicholls as provost and vice president for academic affairs, the position he held until his retirement.

Now, Falcon is committed to enjoying retirement to the fullest. “I’m traveling a lot these days,” he said. “Deanna and I like to explore the little towns throughout Louisiana. There’s so much to see and discover in this state.” Falcon also is learning more about his genealogy. “I’ve always loved researching my family’s history. I plan to take some time while I’m exploring Louisiana to meet and visit my relatives.”

Also on Falcon’s retirement agenda: woodworking projects. “I really enjoy woodworking,” he said. “In fact, I made our front porch swing out of found cypress.” He said he intends to do lots of woodworking in retirement and perhaps take up woodcarving.

No doubt, Falcon will make the most of his retirement—which is sure to include time in the kitchen cooking Cajun food and enjoying his family. The Falcons have two children, David and Anna, and three grandchildren, ages two, four, and six.

Although more than four decades have passed since they shared their first bowl of gumbo, Falcon still enjoys cooking for his wife. ■

Dr. Falcon was senior vice president and chief academic officer of the University of Louisiana System, 1993–2004.

Dr. Carroll Falcon relaxes on the front porch at his home in Thibodaux. His 31-year career at Nicholls ended when he retired on June 30.

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Stompin’ on the swamp
Adventurous librarian organizes annual bayou party
by GRAHAM HARVEY

Anke Tonn dances with a partner at Swamp Stomp 2010.

...Cajuns welcome you in.... That’s what I love.

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For 12 years the exhibit was an annual event. Then, university administrators approached her about expanding the exhibit into a full-blown festival — she and Brenda Haskins, director of auxiliary services at Nicholls and co-chair of the festival committee, took the reins and made Swamp Stomp a reality.

Tonn said the festival’s success results from the hard work of many people, including Haskins; Dr. Eugene Dial, vice president for academic affairs and coordinator of the marine and environmental biology graduate program; and Dr. Gary Kastner, associate professor of biological sciences, who served as a consultant to the festival committee.

The 1991 Nicholls graduate comes from a family of teachers. Born in Thibodaux, she is a daughter of two Nicholls band directors. After receiving a master’s in applied math the year before.

Nevertheless, Nicholls reference librarian Anke Tonn is doing just that. She is one of the driving forces behind the university’s Louisiana Swamp Stomp Festival, now entering its third year. The spring festival spotlights local and regional bands; features a variety of south Louisiana foods; offers several presentations on the history, culture, and economic development of the region; and showcases artisans demonstrating their crafts and selling handmade items. All festival activities are distinctly Cajun, which is Tonn’s primary object.

“We are trying to help preserve the music and the language of this region,” she said. “We especially want the younger people of the area to come back to their roots.”

It is a natural fit for the jovial Tonn, whose earliest professional goal was to become a music librarian and historian. She said she grew up loving music festivals, so it stood to reason that she should one day help found one.

“And I love Cajun culture, especially the music and dancing,” she said. “The rhythms, the colors, the instrumentation, the smiling people. Cajuns welcome you in. People just don’t get that.”

Tonn was first introduced to Cajun culture in 1994, when she was offered a job at Tulane University in New Orleans. Some of her colleagues took her out dancing at Tipitina’s nightclub after work one day, and she immediately discovered her new passion.

Two years later Nicholls hired her as a cataloging librarian, and it was in this capacity that she planted the seeds of the Swamp Stomp festival by creating the Cajun Zydeco Exhibit in Ellender Memorial Library. Her goal was to reach younger generations whose ties to their heritage were planted the seeds of the Swamp Stomp festival by creating the Cajun Zydeco Exhibit in Ellender Memorial Library. Her goal was to reach younger generations whose ties to their heritage were

For four and a half years teaching elementary math methods, Robichaux researched math anxiety and sought to relieve it in her students, all of them master’s-level and planning teaching careers. “Their anxiety went beyond fear,” she said. “Some of them would become nauseated. I had to help them get past the anxiety so they could become effective teachers.”

“My method was simply offering the students a safe, friendly environment to practice math skills.”

One method she used was solo testing. The student took her test with no one present except Robichaux, so there was no fear of group pressure. She also gave tests verbally, and found that students’ anxiety was diminished this way.

She delivered papers at conferences and published her research findings in a variety of journals — she is a co-editor of the journal Contemporary Issues in Education Research. Her mother became a collaborator, as well as Dr. Leslie Jones, assistant professor of education. The two Nicholls faculty members asked Robichaux to help them examine attitudes of Nicholls students toward learning.

After returning to Auburn to work on a National Science Foundation research grant, Robichaux joined the Mississippi State faculty in 2007.

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Thibodaux native Susan Talbot Hoffmann began flexing her artist skills at an early age—focusing on portraits of local children, cats and dogs, and Barbie-esque fashion designs. At age 16, when she enrolled at Nicholls under the High Ability Student Program, her drawing took on a more scientific style. As a chemistry major, Hoffmann put her artistic ability to good use: illustrating university lab manuals with drawings of organisms she viewed under the microscope. Her skillfully illustrated manuals were highly coveted by chemistry students and handed down to underclassmen, year after year.

“I’ve known I have a God-given gift since the age of five or so,” Hoffman said. What she did not know is that the full extent of that gift would not be realized until decades later.

Hoffmann graduated from Nicholls magna cum laude in 1976 and was accepted into the clinical chemistry program at the LSU Medical Center in New Orleans. During her time as a graduate student, Hoffmann was a member of the research team that received the 1977 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine. After earning master’s and doctoral degrees in clinical chemistry, she embarked on a career as a biochemist at the National Institutes of Health and Tulane University Medical Center.

Hoffmann had a pivotal year in 1989. At age 34, she began experiencing significant hearing loss in her right ear. Doctors told her that she had a baseball-size tumor pushing against her brain, and it required emergency brain surgery. During the 10-hour procedure, Hoffmann suffered a massive stroke that took away her ability to speak, walk, talk, or eat. Over the next three years, Hoffmann endured intensive physical and speech therapy to relearn these basic life skills.

In an effort to improve the dexterity of her right hand, Hoffmann enrolled in art classes at Nicholls. The classes opened the floodgate of her undeveloped artistic abilities. Class after class, semester after semester, she excelled—at etching, painting with watercolors and oils, printmaking, and embossing. In 1999, she earned a bachelor’s degree in fine arts, cum laude.

Since then, Hoffmann has created countless works of art that have been showcased across the country and received a bevy of awards. What does she rely on to get her creative juices flowing, day after day?

“I see beauty in nature. When I see the beauty, I see God,” she said. “There is nothing so beautiful as sunlight on flowers.”

Fortunately, Hoffmann need not look far for inspiration. She and her husband, Dr. Andrew Hoffmann, and her constant companion, a dog named Charcoal, live in a picturesque Victorian-style home that is surrounded by lovely, freely blooming flower gardens that are often the subjects of her artwork.

What’s next for Hoffmann? “Living out God’s plan in my life every day,” she said. Hoffmann believes that her brain tumor and subsequent stroke were a great blessing for her: “I don’t believe that anything occurs by coincidence. It’s all part of God’s plan.”

Susan Talbot Hoffmann was a member of the medical research team that received the 1977 Nobel Prize.
What does Sara Zeringue, an 18-year-old Nicholls student, have in common with Muhammad Ali, Walt Disney, John Lennon, and an estimated 10 to 15 percent of people on the planet? Like them, she has a learning disability called dyslexia. Dyslexia is an inherited condition that makes it extremely difficult to read, write, and spell. It is neurologically based and interferes with the brain’s ability to capture and process language.

A dyslexic person involuntarily uses the right hemisphere of the brain instead of the left to read and spell. The brain’s left hemisphere is very skilled at matching a letter with its appropriate sound. The right hemisphere is responsible for processing the concepts of space and patterns, and doesn’t know how to process parts of speech, or keep track of letter-order in spelling. Therefore, the results of trying to read using the right hemisphere instead of the left can create processing chaos in the dyslexic person’s brain.

A common misconception about people with dyslexia is that they see letters or words scrambled or backwards. This is not true. Dyslexia does not cause visual misreads; it causes phonological (sounding) problems. Related disorders include: attention deficit disorder; an attention and concentration disability; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; hyperactivity and impulse disorder in addition to the attention and concentration disability; and dyscalculia, a math learning disability.

In the not so distant past, students like Zeringue who could not keep up with their peers because of learning disabilities had a difficult time succeeding in college. That’s no longer the case at Nicholls thanks to the professionals at the Louisiana Center for Dyslexia and Related Learning Disorders.

“If I didn’t have the center to help me, I definitely wouldn’t do as well in school. I have trouble studying alone, and I need the center to keep me on task, to keep me focused,” Zeringue said.

The center is located in the heart of the Nicholls campus for easy access. Its mission is to provide specialized educational services to members of the community and Nicholls students who are dyslexic or have other related learning disorders. It is the only center of its kind in Louisiana.

“When we opened our doors in the early 1990s, we were providing services to about five Nicholls students per semester. Today, we average 120 students per semester,” Karen Chauvin, center director, said. “It’s not that the number of people being diagnosed with dyslexia and related learning disorders has grown, it’s that people are finding out that we’re here, and we can help.”

Dyslexia does not discriminate. Anybody can have it. Although it is an inherited disorder, no correlation has been found between the incidence of dyslexia and ethnicity or nationality. It’s quite likely that someone you know has been diagnosed with dyslexia.

Common characteristics of dyslexia are problems learning the names of the letters of the alphabet, difficulty learning to write the alphabet in the correct sequence, difficulty learning to read and with reading comprehension, repeated erratic spelling errors, delayed motor milestones, delay in learning to talk, and a family history of similar problems.
Voilà!

“Knew college would be a different world compared to high school—and because I’m dyslexic, I knew I would need all the help I could get,” said Ryan LeCompte, a 2005 Nicholls graduate. “The center was a determining factor in my college decision. In fact, it’s why I choose Nicholls.”

“It’s remarkable how the center helps students,” LeCompte said. “Once you become a part of the center, they stay with you throughout your college career. After your freshman year, they’ve got you all figured out. They know how to translate the classroom information into something that you can understand—if you need charts, they’ll make charts; if you need a discussion, they’ll discuss. It’s specialized learning. I believe I’m capable of learning anything now, because the center staff taught me how to learn.”

LeCompte is employed at Fletcher Technical Community College as the coordinator for the Academic Learning Resource Center, and he attributes his career success to the skills he learned at the center. “Some of the students I work with have learning disabilities and some do not, but I’ve come to the conclusion that I can teach any subject to anyone. Using methods and techniques that I learned at the center, I can now help my students learn. I’m proud to be able to pass on the gift of learning to others.”

The effects of dyslexia vary from person to person, but for Zeringue dyslexia has been a lifelong challenge. “Grammar school and middle school were really tough. I can remember my second-grade teacher being really hard on me. She thought I was lazy and unmotivated,” she said. “My third-grade teacher recognized I had a problem. She told my parents that she thought I had ADHD and dyslexia. My parents took me for testing and discovered the teacher was right. A lot of kids made fun of me because they thought I was dumb. I wasn’t dumb; I just have a different way of learning.”

The dyslexia center is one of the reasons Zeringue chose Nicholls. “I knew they understood how I learn,” she said. Thanks to the center, all eligible Nicholls students can get the help and assistance they need to succeed despite dyslexia. “To qualify for the center’s services, students must have a current learning-disorder diagnosis along with average or above average intellectual ability. They meet all regular requirements for admission, including ACT scores.”

Once eligibility is confirmed and the student pays the $325 per semester fee, helpful services are available through the center’s College Program. These include a support system that helps students integrate into university life; remediation tutoring in English, math, and reading; academic planning assistance with scheduling and registration; access to the center’s specialized computer lab; and assistance with academic accommodations.

The $325 fee is a very good value, Chauvin said. “There is no limit to the number of hours a center student can receive tutoring. Staffers read tests aloud to the students. They have access to cutting-edge software in the center-dedicated computer lab. And they can make unlimited photocopied scans on the center’s copy machine.”

One of the specialized software programs the center’s students have access to is the Kurzweil program: a reading, study skills, and writing program that translates text into speech. Using a scanner, students simply scan their textbooks into the computer and the program reads the text back to them, highlighting the most important information.

The center stays abreast of the latest tutoring and teaching techniques for students with learning disabilities by attending conferences and workshops. “The tutoring offered to our students is tailored specifically to their needs. Traditional tutoring speaks a different language, if you will, a language our students have trouble understanding,” said Rachel Hebert, College Program coordinator.

In addition to receiving specialized learning-disorder training, the center staff are trained as master advisors by the university. The master advisor training enables the staff to help students with scheduling. “We provide an extra layer of advising for our students,” Chauvin said. “First, the center students go to their assigned university advisor to determine their scheduling needs so that they stay on track to graduate. Next, they bring that information to us and we help recommend the best schedule for them and their particular needs.” The staff usually advises students to avoid scheduling classes back-to-back. Having a break between classes provides time to study and process the information from the first class before the second class begins.

The center staff also assists students with academic accommodations. These include extended time to complete assignments, taped lectures and textbooks, tests read aloud, and preferential seating. “Something as simple as reading a test aloud can make a huge impact on a student’s success,” Chauvin said.

The center not only helps students successfully navigate their way through all areas of the university experience from enrollment to graduation, it teaches them the skills to be independent along the way.
With the first decade of the 21st century now part of history, those of us who were born in the 20th century and perhaps lived our formative years during that dearly departed era are now feeling like guardians of a number of sacred treasures. These treasures are not so much material objects as they are intangibles, like knowledge of arcane technologies and ways of living no longer in wide practice.
Speaking of social change: This writer remembers a time when university faculty members seemed to move about in a rather atrophied atmosphere that undergraduate students were incapable of penetrating. They, and most of the students, probably would have been mortified had their bubble been popped—or even prickled too seriously.

Today’s technologies make yesterday’s campus protocol seem quaint.

In 2010, the Internet site ratemyprofessor.com enables students to publicly, if anonymously, not only assess, but also to alter those judgments with those judgments with those judgments with those judgments with those judgments with those judgments...
One of the first issues the Massachusetts-born educator faced at Nicholls was both a superficial and a highly symbolic one: the appearance of the Nicholls Colonels sports mascot, Col. Tillou. To most folks born and raised in Louisiana, the white-bearded, grey-coated Tillou seemed nothing more than a whimsical representation of a revered Southern archetype: the gentleman soldier. To other Louisianians, African-Americans, the old Colonel seemed to celebrate an era when their human and political rights were denied.

Hulbert, with characteristic decisiveness, banned the old Colonel from the university and tasked student leaders to work on a suitable replacement. That process lasted six years. The new Col. Tillou leads the cheers at sports events in 2010 wearing a bright red uniform topped off with a contemporary-style military officer’s cap. Working together in focus groups and committees, Nicholls students brought their athletics mascot from the 19th century into the 21st.

Although he purposely remained on the sidelines of the mascot project, Hulbert took criticism—and continues to receive it—as the Northerner who took away a cherished symbol of the old Nicholls, which honors several Southern gentleman soldiers in its name and the names of campus buildings such as Polk Hall.

Such is the paradox of life in 21st century Louisiana, where honoring the past seems to be much less essential than preparing for the future, even while that past remains starkly evident in the present day.

The list of preparations for the future of Nicholls under the leadership of Dr. Hulbert is long and growing. While he and his administrative team have been forced to deal with unprecedented budget reductions in recent years, something that requires very undesirable, double-edged cuts—eliminating programs and reducing the number of university employees—progress is being made at a rapid pace.

Another paradox, but so it goes. Nicholls students in 2010 enjoy an essentially brand-new science facility in Beauregard Hall; new residence halls that opened amid the chaos of Hurricane Gustav’s landfall; a renovated main dining hall that looks like an Architectural Digest photo spread; and many impressive campus-wide aesthetic improvements—not the least being waste cans emblazoned with a big red Nicholls “N.” Construction of the long-awaited student recreation center is about to get started, and financing is coming together to build a new complex for the ultra-successful John Folse Culinary Institute—something Nicholls developed as a result of its location in the Bayou Region and that makes the university world-renowned.

Among advances in student achievement are the growing freshman retention rates, bolstered by the support services centralized in University College—a Hulbert-era innovation. Scholarship funding also is charting upward. The president’s background includes expertise in student services, and he has been diligent in keeping himself and his team informed about students’ needs and their perspectives on the quality and value of a Nicholls education.

Undoubtedly, Nicholls will always be a remarkably friendly place. As one student commented at studentsreview.com, “Nicholls is a home away from home. If you need help all you need do is ask.”

Change, at whatever pace it may take—the smart money is on fast—definitely is coming. Nicholls, placid as its magnolia-scented campus may seem on a sunny morning in the summer of 2010, is part of that rapidly advancing future.
This artificial dune, along with its mini-crop, is part of the Louisiana Native Plant Initiative (LNPI)—a multi-institution effort that includes Nicholls. The initiative’s mission is to collect, preserve, increase, and study native grasses, forbs, and legumes from Louisiana ecosystems. In doing so, researchers hope to conserve a vanishing natural resource and help jumpstart the development of a native seed industry that will supply plant materials for restoration, revegetation, road-maintenance plantings, and the ornamental plant industry.

The sea oats and Gulf bluestem on the Nicholls Farm’s artificial sand dune are but two plants among many that Nicholls researchers hope can be used to curb the rapid loss of land and habitats on Louisiana’s coast.

Dr. Quenton Fontenot, associate professor of biological sciences and coordinator of the marine and environmental biology graduate program at Nicholls, says the major problem is the lack of commercially available plant material adapted to Louisiana’s coastal environment.

Researchers agree that in order to achieve long-term sustainability, conservation projects require plant materials that are native and adapted to the particular area in question. Unfortunately, the native plants that are needed—those that weather the summer stress, produce sufficient biomass, tolerate high levels of precipitation and humidity, and possess flowering dates, seed set, and dormancy initiation that are in sync with local wildlife—are not available in sufficient quantities for restoration projects in south Louisiana.

The solution, naturally, is to identify and cultivate as many tough, adaptable, wild native plants as possible. “We need as high an amount of genetic diversity as we can maintain,” Fontenot said.

To that end, the Nicholls Farm’s greenhouses and outdoor crops are full of specimens which, researchers hope, will soon be commercially available—thus resulting in substantial ecological and economic benefits for the state.

Specimens include live oaks from Grand Isle, black mangroves, and other plants.

Researchers are restoring the state’s native plants to their native places

by GRAHAM HARVEY
When is a rose not a rose?

While plant species native to south Louisiana are commercially available, they are grown in places that have a different environmental regime. For example, someone from North Dakota is still human, but probably doesn’t tolerate a south Louisiana summer as well as a human who has grown up in Louisiana. A species like switchgrass is found in south Louisiana as well as other parts of the country. If we take commercially available switchgrass from, say, Arkansas, it will not survive our summers. Therefore, we are finding wild stands of switchgrass in south Louisiana, and propagating those plants. —Dr. Quenton Fontenot

Funding is provided via grants from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation.

Given recent budgetary constraints, noted Fontenot, the LNPI has reached maximum production and development of local ecotypes. Additional funding is therefore necessary to secure needed infrastructure and permanent, full-time staff.

The Louisiana Native Plant Initiative (LNPI) team is responding to the catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

As the crisis unfolded in May, Dr. Quenton Fontenot said 3,000 mangrove plants were ready for coastal restoration efforts related to the oil spill’s effects. University personnel prepared several acres at the Nicholls Farm to aid in cultivating additional locally adapted coastal plants to replace plants killed by the oil.

Nicholls also set up a temporary animal rehabilitation center at the farm to assist the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, with a barn for recovering animals and two 12-foot circular tanks for marine life.

mangrove, and various grasses and wildflowers, among other vegetative and seed-producing plants. In 2008, the university dedicated a total of 25 acres for salt-tolerant trees and shrubs, from which seeds are to be harvested for restoration.

“It’s also important to understand that we are looking for plants with wildlife value,” says Dr. Allyse Ferrara, associate professor of biological sciences at Nicholls. “We’re not necessarily looking for the quickest growing plants or the tallest plants—but those that can live in sync with the entire ecosystem, all year long.”

Together with Fontenot, Ferrara is the primary LNPI researchers at Nicholls. They also recruit students to help operate the farm facilities—including graduate students working on their master’s theses, internship students, and students involved in service-learning projects.

Gary Fine, vegetation specialist and research scientist, manages the day-to-day operations of the university’s LNPI effort.

In addition to Nicholls, organizations in the Louisiana Native Plants Initiative—structured within the past six years—include the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, McNeese State University, and University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Specially shaped pots force plant roots to grow vertically, which helps with planting. Graduate student Billy Finney, left, and vegetation specialist Gary Fine examine a plant growing in their care.

Live oak acorns, foreground, will join others already planted on the 25-acre Maritime Forest Preserve at the Nicholls Farm. From left are Gary Fine, Dr. Allyse Ferrara, and Dr. Quenton Fontenot.
Gary Fine, vegetation specialist and research scientist at the Nicholls Farm, spearheads the day-to-day operations of the Louisiana Native Plant Initiative. Fine started working with the Nicholls research team after retiring from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In 2009, he received an honorary doctorate, the highest form of recognition offered at Nicholls. Recipients are honored for achievements relevant to the university, but their influence must extend beyond the Bayou Region.

Nominated for that high honor by Dr. Allyse Ferarra, associate professor of biological sciences, Fine has overseen the production of tens of thousands of coastal and upland plants for a variety of restoration and research projects within the LNPI.

He has also assisted Nicholls faculty with the implementation of nearly $380,000 in restoration grants and worked with approximately 60 Nicholls students on internships, research projects, and service learning projects.

Fine brings to his work a “tremendous pool of experience and knowledge that he has acquired during his 30 years in plant materials,” Ferrara said.

An artificial sand dune at the Nicholls Farm hosts plants that can help restore Louisiana’s damaged wetlands. Research scientist Gary Fine expertly cares for the plants.

**Plant maven**

**Former USDA expert nurtures thousands of native plants at Nicholls**

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Misty McElroy, a 2003 Nicholls graduate, is the university’s campus photojournalist. She’s an expert with the digital SLR camera and enjoys using new tools such as the Hipstamatic app for the iPhone, which produced these photos.

“...from a series I am doing for the Nicholls Facebook page,”

—Misty McElroy
Nicholls is coach’s second family

By BRANDON RIZUTTO

To say that Nicholls State University head football coach Charlie Stubbs is well traveled and brings a lot of success and experience to the Colonels program is an understatement. The Charleston, S.C., native is a veteran who has been in and around the collegiate game for over 30 years.

Stubbs, 54, has served as the offensive coordinator at seven different schools including the University of Louisiana (2007), the University of Tulsa (2002-06), the University of Alabama (1996-2000), the University of Nevada-Las Vegas (1996-97), the University of Memphis (1994-95), and Oregon State University (1985-90). His start in the collegiate football coaching business came at his alma mater, Brigham Young University, where he was a graduate assistant in 1983-84.

Through the course of his career, Stubbs has worked with some of game’s greats, such as Shaun Alexander and Andrew Zow at Alabama, Harry Douglas and Beatin Brash at Louisville, Isaac Bruce at Memphis, and Steve Young at Brigham Young.

His teams earned many accolades including numerous bowl game victories, the National Championship at BYU in 1984, Conference-USA Championship in 2003 with Tulsa, and Southeastern Conference Championship in 1999 at Alabama—the season that Stubbs was named the SEC Offensive Coordinator of the Year.

Stubbs is also a published author of three books, all on the subject of how to install and execute a wide-open offensive attack. His most recent book is 101 Playmakers and Special Plays, published earlier this year.

Despite decades of experience, impressive accolades, and his well-received books, Stubbs had never been the head coach of a program before arriving at Nicholls. He received offers—even sparked some interest on the NFL level. But he never held the top job until now.

“Why?”

“The timing really was never right for me to be a head coach,” Stubbs said. “My family always comes first, and I did what was best for us, not just for me. I have been around and have seen what this profession can do to a family, and I love them all too much to take any risks. It would not have been fair to them.”

Stubbs and his wife Sandy have been happily married for 34 years and have four children: Troy, Jay, Kimberly, and Kyle. The couple vowed from the beginning to put the family first always, and have never gone back on their decision.

Stubbs tells a story exemplifying that commitment. While working as offensive coordinator at Memphis, a head coaching opportunity became available. However, his son Troy was entering his senior year of high school.

“It would not have been right for me to be selfish, uproot the family, and move when Troy had worked his entire life to be his school’s starting quarterback. It would have gone against what I have taught my children and players, which is to stay the course and work hard for what you want. Troy had worked hard, he deserved his time in the spotlight.”

Many times throughout the coach’s career, the Stubbs family voted on whether or not Charlie would take a new job forcing the family to move. Another prominent program was looking to hire Stubbs when son Jay was entering his senior season on the prep level.

“Like Troy, Jay was a very good quarterback in high school, and I could not let him sacrifice for my professional advancement,” Stubbs said. “I love my children and wife—I love them more than anything—and I wanted Jay to have his time to shine as well.”

Stubbs tells a story exemplifying that commitment. While working as offensive coordinator at Memphis, a head coaching opportunity became available. However, his son Troy was entering his senior year of high school.

“Troy went on to play collegiate football at the Air Force Academy, while Jay played at Alabama.

Now that all his children are starting families of their own or are in college, Stubbs can finally pursue an opportunity to be at the helm of a program—at Nicholls.

But having the “head coach” title is not what attracted Stubbs to the Colonels. He is also his new team’s offensive coordinator. Being able to do things the right way, building a program from the ground up, was the attraction that landed him in Thibodaux.

“The local area and the state of Louisiana have always produced great student-athletes,” Stubbs said. “I’m excited to be here. The head coaching opportunity offered me a chance to build something from the ground up.”

Stubbs and his well-received books, Stubbs had never been the head coach of a program before arriving at Nicholls. He received offers—even sparked some interest on the NFL level. But he never held the top job until now.

“Why?”

“The timing really was never right for me to be a head coach,” Stubbs said. “My family always comes first, and I did what was best for us, not just for me. I have been around and have seen what this profession can do to a family, and I love them all too much to take any risks. It would not have been fair to them.”

Stubbs and his wife Sandy have been happily married for 34 years and have four children: Troy, Jay, Kimberly, and Kyle. The couple vowed from the beginning to put the family first always, and have never gone back on their decision.

Stubbs tells a story exemplifying that commitment. While working as offensive coordinator at Memphis, a head coaching opportunity became available. However, his son Troy was entering his senior year of high school.

“Troy went on to play collegiate football at the Air Force Academy, while Jay played at Alabama.

Now that all his children are starting families of their own or are in college, Stubbs can finally pursue an opportunity to be at the helm of a program—at Nicholls.

But having the “head coach” title is not what attracted Stubbs to the Colonels. He is also his new team’s offensive coordinator. Being able to do things the right way, building a program from the ground up, was the attraction that landed him in Thibodaux.

“Here I will have more insight into what is going on. Serving as the offensive coordinator and head coach allows a hands-on approach, rather than being more of an administrator,” said Stubbs. “I’m excited to be here. The local area and the state of Louisiana have always produced great student-athletes.”

—Charlie Stubbs
Offensive line coach Keith Uperesa has done it all in his career as a football player and coach. His collegiate success at Brigham Young University under Coach Charlie Stubbs led to the NFL, where he played at Oakland and Denver. In 2005, he was an assistant coach under Urban Meyer at Utah when the Utes went 12-0.

Uperesa has made other stops along the way, including stints at Southern California, Idaho State University, and the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. At USC, he was a member of the coaching staff when the Trojans won the 2003 Orange Bowl.

The Honolulu, Hawaii, native also has been a collegiate head coach, guiding Utah's Snow College to a 35-8 record over the course of four seasons, 1995-99. “Everywhere I have been, there has been a challenge. If you are a coach and in it for the right reasons, you enjoy challenges,” he said.

Aside from football, Uperesa’s biggest challenge has been facing and defeating cancer—twice. The first bout came in 2006 when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer while working at UNLV. “I was told right before we started our spring camp, and it caught me off guard tremendously,” he said. “I went through with the surgery, and everything went well with it. I was fortunate.”

Uperesa then went cancer-free for three years until February 2009 when he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Meeting with his doctor, he learned that because they caught it early, he had a better chance of beating the deadly disease. “This last time, I took a beating with the radiation therapy,” he said. “UNLV is outstanding in allowing me to work my way back. I was also very fortunate to have my wife stand by my side. She’s my rock.”

Uperesa and his wife, Kaipo, met in high school and have been through much together. When cancer struck him the second time, he again turned to her.

With his radiation treatments well underway by the time UNLV started fall practice in 2009, Uperesa faced a dilemma. He wanted to continue coaching, but had trouble sustaining the energy to stand through practice. UNLV approved a golf cart for him to use during practice, and Kaipo became his driver. “My wife, children, and family have been there for me through all of this. I could not have done it without them. I had a great deal of people support me,” said Uperesa.

With numerous coaching accolades, a stint in the NFL as a player with two teams, his children grown, and after two battles with cancer, that would seem to be enough for any man to retire. Not Uperesa.

“Like I said, it’s a challenge, and football is football,” he said.

“When I learned that Charlie Stubbs was going to be the head coach at Nicholls, I became intrigued. The area reminds my wife and me of where we grew up, and I’m working with good people who are in it for the right reasons,” he explained.

Head Coach Charlie Stubbs was appointed to the post in January 2010, and has assembled a high-quality staff, Uperesa being a prime example.

“Keith and I go back to BYU, and when I heard that he was available and willing to come to Nicholls, I was very excited,” said Stubbs. “He is a grounded man, and you could see in spring practice that the players really respect him. The guys love him and so do we.”
Expressions 2010

“Up the road from Bayou Drive”

by Dr. John Doucet

When you look at a satellite image of southeast Louisiana, you may notice a particular site about a third of the distance from Donaldsonville to the Fourchon where Bayou Lafourche divides into the first of many small bayous. Over the course of several thousand years, floods of these bayous helped create the land of the Lafourche Basin. Interestingly, that particular site—a prehistoric delta of the Mississippi River—is the site of present-day Thibodaux.

We see such a satellite image every day on televised weather reports. When I see this image, I imagine these small bayous as the long, thin fingers of an old, eerie hand reaching out to the Gulf. I was born and raised on one of those fingers—the longest one, in fact—Bayou Lafourche.

Golden Meadow is my hometown. Named for its lush farmlands, fields of yellow wildflowers, the town during my childhood was a bayouside fishing village, with tall booms of moored trawling boats, occasional church steeples, and one small water tower rising above the ribbon of Succession shotgun houses and Cajun cottages. The town also served as a service hub for the burgeoning oil industry, with supply houses, boat companies, and notable restaurants and bakeries mingled among the homes that lined Bayou Lafourche.

I was raised in Golden Meadow in a house along North Palmetto Lane. One by one, following successive high school graduations, each of their five children, carrying bags of oversized texts and spiral-bound composition books, boarded a parish school bus at six o'clock in the morning to Nicholls—up the road from Bayou Drive all the way down Palmetto Lane, where we caught the bus to Nicholls.

Dr. John Doucet in his hometown, Golden Meadow, Louisiana, where he caught the bus to Nicholls.

Bayou Lafourche at Golden Meadow.
Thank you!

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St. Martins establish Helen Professorship. This fall, Nicholls will add a new title to be awarded to one of its history faculty—the Mark Thomas Nolen Endowed Professorship in History, named for a professor emeritus of history who had a distinguished career at the university. Mr. and Mrs. Louis St. Martin of Houma donated $60,000 to the Nicholls Foundation in February to establish the professorship, fulfilling the eligibility requirements for an additional $40,000 in state matching funds. The St. Martin’s also agreed to contribute an additional $10,000 over the next two years, after which the investment itself will fund the position. Pictured from left are Dr. David Boudreaux, vice president for institutional advancement at Nicholls, and Linda and Louis St. Martin,

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Sponsor A+ event funds scholarships. Dr. Judy Theriot, left, professor emeritus, and Dr. Aliney Barrilleaux, interim vice president for academic affairs, examine some of the items donated for the silent auction held as part of the Nicholls Foundation’s 15th annual Sponsor A+ Food and Wine Tasting Extravaganza in October 2009. With funds raised at the annual event the Nicholls Foundation this year raised $120,000 to secure an $80,000 match from the Louisiana Board of Regents, thus creating a pair of $100,000 endowed scholarships. At the recommendation of Dr. David Boudreaux, vice president for institutional advancement, the scholarships will be named in honor of the late George Picou and the late Norman Swanner. Both men contributed to the growth and success of the Sponsor A+ scholarship fundraiser, which benefits Nicholls students with outstanding grades and leadership ability.
Bistro program moves to local hotel. Students prepare the dining room at the John Folse Culinary Institute's new Bistro location at the Carmel Inn in Thibodaux. The Bistro program moves to local hotel.
Fundraiser supports women’s athletics. Associate Dean Randy Cheramie of the John Folse Culinary Institute, left, assists with the auction during the 11th annual Women’s Night Out, which took place May 6 at Cypress Columns in Gray. The event raises an average of $60,000 a year to assist women’s athletics at Nicholls. These funds have financed scholarships for women’s soccer, an infield and dugouts for women’s softball, lockers for women’s basketball and women’s volleyball, and javelins for women’s track and field. Additionally, the event has enabled women student-athletes to attend summer school on scholarships. 

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