Voilà!
THE MAGAZINE OF NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY
Our Patients are the Focus of Everything We Do. That is Why We...

- Invest in state-of-the-art facilities
- Acquire the best diagnostic and treatment technology
- Partner with outstanding physicians
- Recruit and retain a caring, competent staff

Recognized as a “Distinguished Hospital” by J.D. Power and Associates for providing an “Outstanding Patient Experience” in Outpatient and Inpatient Services.

Proud recipient of five Summit Awards for sustaining highest level of patient satisfaction for three or more consecutive years.
The Roots of Success …… page 25
by Renee Piper
Learn the secrets of the “Nicholls Numbers Tree.”

Veterans Find Their Niche at Nicholls …… page 30
by Graham Harvey
The Nicholls family proudly counts America’s defenders among its members.

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A treasured partnership

If you know something about the world of higher education, you know the growing importance of partnerships. You know that universities cultivate partnerships with junior and technical colleges, with businesses and industries, and with other universities. Certainly as a university president, I have promoted and encouraged the development of such partnerships. But the most rewarding and meaningful one that I have experienced in higher education is the 43-year partnership that I have enjoyed with my wife, Becky.

From our earliest days as a couple on a college campus, we have shared our thoughts and ideas as we sought to make university life better for the students, faculty and staff we have served. Becky has been my confidante, a source of inspiration and strength. With her great sense of humor and her true concern for others, she has helped to keep me focused on the greater good and on trying to improve the quality of life for those I have been given the privilege of leading and serving. She has dutifully reminded me to keep my speeches short and to the point and to remain committed to fairness in all of my dealings with others. She has also done a terrific job in seeing to it that I do not leave the president’s residence without being properly attired. Yes, she even serves as my fashion supervisor!

Voilà! has chosen to feature Becky in an article in this year’s issue. Although she does not seek the limelight, and may be just a little uncomfortable about being in it, I am delighted to join the Voilà! staff in recognizing just how important a role she plays as first lady of this university. I also know that she is deeply appreciative of the Nicholls family and the citizens of the Bayou Region who made us feel so welcomed when we arrived here just over eight years ago. Like me, she treasures the deep friendships we have developed and the bonds that we have forged with so many people. This has been a great experience and has strengthened our partnership with each other.

We thank you!

Dr. Stephen T. Hulbert

Survey says: student satisfaction delivered

by Renee Piper

Ah, autumn – cooler temperatures, shorter days and a much-needed reprieve from watering and mowing the lawn. On a university campus, this welcome time of year brings to mind scheduling classes and buying school supplies, seeing old friends and meeting new ones, tailgating and cheering the football team on to victory; and, of course, NSSE.

Wait a minute – NSSE, what’s NSSE? Every fall, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information directly from first-year students and seniors. Results of the questionnaire, administered by the University of Indiana, provide valuable information about what is actually going on in the lives of students and the quality of their college experiences. Nicholls students took part in the survey along with 362,000 students at 564 colleges and universities across the United States. The results of the 2010 NSSE overwhelmingly indicate satisfaction among first-year students and seniors at Nicholls.

Survey snapshot:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>percent of students said Nicholls has enhanced their ability to write effectively</td>
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<td>97</td>
<td>percent said they are acquiring a broad, general education and enhancing their ability to think critically and analytically</td>
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<td>96</td>
<td>percent said Nicholls provides the support they need to succeed socially</td>
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<td>95</td>
<td>percent said Nicholls has improved their computing and informational technology skills</td>
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<td>94</td>
<td>percent stated Nicholls offers diverse perspectives from a wide variety of people</td>
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<td>89</td>
<td>percent said it has improved their ability to work effectively with others</td>
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<td>87</td>
<td>percent of students said Nicholls provides the support they need to succeed academically</td>
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<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>percent rated their educational experience as “Excellent.”</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>percent indicated Nicholls was a good value for the money</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>percent provided care for one or more dependents</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>percent said they would definitely attend Nicholls again if they had a chance to start their educational experience over</td>
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<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>percent rated their friendships with other students as friendly and supportive</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>percent spend six or more hours per week commuting to campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>percent of Nicholls students work off-campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>percent rate their classes as “Excellent.”</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>percent said the university encourages contact among students from different economic, social and racial backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>percent provided valuable information about students from different economic, social and racial backgrounds</td>
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Complete survey results can be found at ulsystem.edu.

Did you know?

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University Farm helping restore, preserve coast

The Louisiana Native Plant Initiative (LNPI) has issued its annual report for 2010, detailing the progress and expansion of species cultivation at the University Farm. The LNPI’s mission is to collect, preserve, increase and study native grasses, forbs and legumes from Louisiana’s 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, roadside plantings and the ornamental plant industry.

“Louisiana’s coastal wetlands have experienced significant habitat reductions,” Dr. Quentin Fontenot, head of the Department of Biological Sciences and coordinator of the marine and environmental biology graduate program, says. “The purpose of this annual report is to detail the restorative work that has been accomplished at the University Farm. I do hope that the public will continue to recognize the indispensability of the farm to the LNPI as our faculty and students work to preserve and multiply our native Louisiana plants on the Gulf Coast.”

Co-authors of the annual report – which details species type, geographical acquisition, yields and goals – include Gary Fine, vegetation specialist and research scientist at the Nicholls Farm, and Dr. Alysse Ferrara, associate professor of biological sciences. The complete report is available at nicholls.edu/news/?p=2186.

Shanghai chefs study Louisiana cuisine, culture

The John Folse Culinary Institute hosted 12 visiting chefs from Shanghai, China this spring – the first half of a cultural immersion program to be completed later this year when Chef George Kaslow, associate professor of culinary arts, is slated to visit eastern China. Sponsored jointly by the Southern United States Trade Association and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the annual 15-day SUSTA Food Utilization Program kicked off in May with the arrival of the international guests. The training series features culinary demonstrations, lectures and field trips designed to expose the visiting chefs to the rich traditions of Louisiana, Southern soul, Latin American, Native American and Appalachian cuisines – as well as Cajun culture.

Kaslow says the objective of the program is to encourage the visiting chefs to introduce featured American dishes to China’s culinary markets.

The second half of the 2011 program will begin in September, when Kaslow will travel to eastern China. For 15 days he will conduct demonstrations at trade shows and universities, furthering the overseas exposure of American culinary traditions.

For more information on Nicholls’ SUSTA program – which in previous years has welcomed chefs from India, Russia, Hungary, Mexico, Thailand, Canada, Croatia, Taiwan and several Latin American countries – go to nicholls.edu/culinary.
Prominent ex-officials donate career files to library archives

Reasearchers of politics and history will soon have a vast, new resource waiting for them at Nicholls. Two of the Bayou Region’s most prominent political figures, Hunt Downer and Charlie Melancon, have donated their professional files and memorabilia to the Ellender Memorial Library Archives. The items are currently being catalogued.

Hunt Downer

As a former speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives, retired major general, U.S. Army / Louisiana National Guard, former secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs and a 2010 candidate for Congress, Downer has firsthand experience with recent state history that has resulted in an extensive historical collection for the Nicholls library.

“You have to know where you’ve been, to know where you are, to know where you’re going,” Downer says. ”Researchers will be able to review these files and other materials for decades to come to learn about this period in our state’s history. I am so proud to be a Nicholls Colonel and to have served this region, and I am delighted to help Nicholls in any way I can. Nicholls is the center of gravity for education in this area.”

Materials donated by Downer include legislative and military memorabilia – files, records of correspondence, artifacts, background papers and recordings on issues and policy. Downer says researchers will especially be interested in learning about his role in the rebuilding efforts following Hurricane Katrina, including the challenges with the federal bureaucracy. Correspondence with presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, as well as with several Louisiana governors, are included among his career materials.

Charlie Melancon

A former three-terms U.S. Representative from the Third Congressional District of Louisiana and a former member of the Louisiana House of Representatives, Melancon served the Bayou Region during some of its most difficult days.

“The six years I served in Congress were an eventful period for south Louisiana,” Melancon says. “The records, letters and other papers I am donating provide a firsthand account of our fight to recover from hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike, and the BP oil spill. They describe our work to save our coast, to grow our economy and to simply make life a little better for the people of south Louisiana. I am proud to be partnering with Nicholls and the Ellender Memorial Library Archives to preserve our history for future generations.”

Melancon’s donation includes correspondence with presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama on behalf of Louisiana, the final report of the bipartisan commission that studied the flaws in the official Hurricane Katrina response – a commission on which he served – and numerous letters, press releases, news clippings and recordings on DVD.

The donation also includes briefing materials prepared for the annual, multi-day Congressional working trips that Melancon led to the Gulf Coast following hurricanes Katrina and Rita to highlight the ongoing recovery needs of the region. The three visits enabled members of Congress from around the country to meet directly with local elected officials, community leaders and affected citizens to discuss how Congress could better partner with Louisiana to expedite the rebuilding effort.
Eight-man grounds crew keeps 287-acre campus looking pretty
by Dr. Al Delahaye

To keep nearly 300 university acres clean and inviting, an eight-member grounds staff continually moves plants, fertilizes, waters, weeds, sprays, mulches, trims and prunes. In addition, it spends about 30 work hours each week picking up litter. And it spends yet more hours emptying about 140 trash receptacles displaying the “N” logo.

Director of Grounds John Hunt and horticulture foreman Troy Babin have been transforming the appearance of the campus since fall 2007, when they were hired. Upon the completion of Beauregard Hall renovations in 2010, Hunt reports, about 6,700-square-foot beds were planted. Hunt and Babin’s 30 or so landscaping projects since their arrival have meant the addition of more than 100,000 plants to the campus. Many are in the six beds they established in Rienzi Circle.

In the process, Hunt and Babin introduced to the campus landscape firewood mandarins and bright red Knockout roses. In recent years, Indian hawthorn and Japanese boxwood have become abundant. Early on, they removed from the campus all yucca plants and needle-pointed holly. “They’re dangerous,” Hunt says. Hurricans so badly damaged decades-old glass greenhouses that grounds personnel now rely upon an 800-square-foot plastic greenhouse in the back of the campus where they produce a lot of plants, especially caladiums, coleuses, Mexican heather and crotons.

Nicholls grounds operations are also indirectly part of the local judicial system. Some weeks, non-students in trouble with the law collectively spend as many as 50 hours performing community-service work around the campus, generally picking up litter and pulling up weeds. Nicholls students who are issued tickets for parking violations have the option of paying a fine or doing community service on campus — often with grounds.

“Weather is our No. 1 headache,” Hunt declares. As for occasional poison ivy, sometimes a worker will pull it with his bare hands. “But the more you do that,” Hunt says, “the more sensitive you become to it.”

40 agencies attend safety expo

The John L. Guidry Stadium parking area was the site of the first-ever Bayou Region Public Safety Expo. The five-hour, family-friendly event featured more than 40 agencies offering hands-on education and interaction that included mobile command posts, helicopters, SWAT equipment, K-9 units, motorcycles, patrol units, ambulances, fire engines, patrol boats and more. In addition, the expo had a blood drive, offered health screenings, K-9 demonstrations, interactive training, safety demonstrations and child safety-seat inspections.

Art attracts students

The annual High School Art Day at Nicholls attracted about 190 students from 10 area high schools. The Department of Art’s largest recruitment event of the year gave students an opportunity to learn about the program as well as participate in hands-on activities. Twelve Nicholls faculty members and 15 high school teachers joined 73 art students from Nicholls to conduct 49 workshops in the various studio areas of Talbot Hall. Pictured above are high school students taking turns painting a room-length paper canvas. Students also had the opportunity to attend hands-on workshops in ceramics, printmaking and darkroom photography.

Student recreation center on track

Construction of the Harold J. Callais Memorial Recreation Center is under way. The $15 million, 63,000-square-foot facility is being constructed near Bowie Road and Andoyne Drive.

The two-story facility will include two basketball/volleyball courts, separate cardio and free-weight workout rooms, an indoor walking/running track, racquetball court, wellness center, juice bar, three multi-purpose rooms for exercise and meetings, locker room and laundry facilities, outdoor softball and flag football/soccer fields, and more.

Self-assessed student fees will fund both the construction and operation of the facility, set to open in August 2012.

Nicholls at your fingertips

Nicholls students developed the university’s first mobile smart phone application. Designed as a resource for prospective and current students, as well as Nicholls faculty and staff, the easy-to-navigate app displays a sleek visual design and cutting-edge functionality. Dr. Kent White, associate professor of computer science, oversaw the development of the app that includes an event calendar, campus map, faculty directory, sports scores, news and more.

The iPhone app is available for free download at nicholls.edu.

Campus goes tobacco free

Nicholls joined a growing list of U.S. colleges and universities when it became a tobacco-free campus Jan. 1, 2011. According to the American Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation, smoke-free colleges and universities exist in virtually every state, with Arkansas and Iowa having instituted statewide bans at all their public colleges and universities. Nicholls is the only smoke-free public university in Louisiana. To date, more than 365 U.S. colleges and universities have tobacco-free policies.
University Police rely on technology, patrolling

by Dr. Al Delahaye

A n inconspicuous camera in a university police car brought about the conviction of someone duplicating and selling Nicholls parking decals. Craig Jaccuzzo, director of University Police and Parking Services, will tell you. While alone in the police car, the accused called his mother by cell phone to say he had been making fake decals, unaware that a video camera was documenting his admission. Technology is a big help to university police. “Exterior cameras can put timelines on when people arrive and leave, and prove that something did or did not happen,” Jaccuzzo explains.

Monitored surveillance cameras on campus have just been increased from 59 to 150, Jaccuzzo says. At their Calecas Hall station, police can see as many as 16 live videos simultaneously – and store the images for 28 days.

University Police issue parking decals – 7,221 in the last academic year that brought in more than $360,000 in revenue; parking and traffic fines brought in an additional $253,000. Police check and monitor 43 emergency call boxes on campus and several emergency systems. They receive training, direct traffic, make arrests and deliver subpoenas. They even change flat tires, unlock cars and jump-start them.

When Sgt. Gary Tuills begins a 12-hour shift, he and his patrol car are loaded with technology and equipment: a cube-shaped camera next to a small screen displaying what the camera sees and can record, a laptop (so sturdy “you can run over it with a car”) for accessing information of all kinds, radar and its remote control device for speed enforcement, a $7,500 hand-held radio that is much more than a radio – it’s also a small audio recording device – a digital camera, a defibrillator and much more.

To emphasize the importance of police patrolling parking lots with great care, Jaccuzzo says off-campus law-enforcement authorities a year or so ago arrested the perpetrators of 110 car break-ins in neighborhoods east and west of the campus, “yet Nicholls with its hundreds of parked cars was never touched.”

He says cameras and increased admission standards help explain the decline of vandalism on campus. Also, students tend to respect new buildings in contrast to old, outdated ones.

Jaccuzzo’s 18-member, full-time staff consists of an administrative assistant, 13 commissioned officers and four who have no arrest powers. The chief says his force is balanced and diverse, citing seven women and three minority officers. On average, they have from 12- to 15-years of experience, mostly in non-academic settings.

A newly hired officer must complete an 18-week training academy conducted by the Terrebonne Parish Sheriff’s Office. All campus police officers must stay current on firearms training, self-defense tactics, CPR and first aid.

The university has about 700 marked parking spaces, and Jaccuzzo is the hearing officer when someone initially protests a ticket. About 12 complainers show up each month to appeal a Jaccuzzo decision. Excuses ticketed offenders give him, he says, vary from “My mother parked the car on campus while I was in class” to "I parked in a handicap space because I was suffering from severe diarrhea."
That's Entertainment

The Nicholls campus is abuzz every year with music and theater drawing thousands of people from throughout Louisiana and beyond.

Nicholls string ensemble debuts

The inaugural performance of the university’s newest student string ensemble, the Nicholls Camerata, took place before an eager audience in fall 2010. The small chamber orchestra is the Department of Music’s 13th ensemble and features students playing the violin, viola, cello, bass and harpsichord. The Camerata was formed under the direction of violinist James Alexander, faculty head of the string program. Alexander and harpsichordist Dr. Luciana Soares, associate professor of music, perform with the group. Pictured above is the Camerata performing for a packed house at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Cut Off.

Rodrigues paves the way

Christiano Rodrigues, the first graduate of the four-year-old string program at Nicholls, began playing violin at the age of four. At 15 he debuted as a soloist with the Bahia Symphony Orchestra in South America and has since been an active soloist and chamber musician.

James Alexander, head of the string program at Nicholls, recruited the João Pessoa, Brazil, native to Nicholls during a master-class program in Brazil. Rodrigues will continue his studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music, in the class of Paul Kantor, a leading pedagogue in his field.

Acclaimed pianist performs

Russian-born Alexandre Moutouzkine, a world-famous, award-winning pianist, performed a solo concert at Nicholls as part of the 13th annual Jubilee: A Festival of the Arts and Humanities.

Swamp Stomp – a cultural showcase

In March, Nicholls hosted the third annual Louisiana Swamp Stomp Festival, a three-day musical celebration showcasing south Louisiana culture. Fast becoming a Thibodaux tradition, the festival promotes authentic Cajun/Creole culture through education, music, arts, crafts and food.

Festival attendees danced to performances by Curley Taylor and Zydeco Trouble; the Bruce Daigrepont Cajun Band; Grammy-nominated Feufollet; Foret Tradition; Grammy-nominated Cedric Watson and Bijou Creole; Ryan Brunet and the Malfoiteurs; Lost Bayou Ramblers; Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys; Tab Benoit and Waylon Thibodeaux; Grammy-nominated Chubby Carrier and the Bayou Swamp Band; T’Canaille; Amanda Shaw and the Cute Guys; Grammy-nominated The Pine Leaf Boys; and Geno Delafose and the French Rockin’ Boogie.

‘A Lesson Before Dying’ staged

In spring 2011, Nicholls thespians brought 1940s Cajun country to life. Under the direction of faculty member Daniel Ruiz, the Nicholls Players performed “A Lesson Before Dying” as part of the 13th annual Jubilee: A Festival of the Arts and Humanities.

Written by Romulus Linney and the Southern Writers’ Project, and based on a novel by Ernest J. Gaines, the play tells the story of a young black man condemned to the electric chair for the murder of a white shopkeeper. Although the accused had not been armed and had not pulled the trigger, the verdict and penalty in 1940s Louisiana would be certain.
From military brat to first lady

by Dr. James Stewart

St. Augustine said, “The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.”

Applying St. Augustine’s reckoning, Becky Hulbert is extremely well read.

The wife of university President Stephen Hulbert first learned the joy of travel growing up as a self-described “military brat.”

Her father flew bombers over Europe for the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II. He was recalled during the Korean War and made a career with the U.S. Air Force.

As a result, travel was a constant for the family. “I have done nothing but travel all of my life,” Mrs. Hulbert says. “That was part of growing up and being part of an Air Force family.”

“We just had planes and took off, and we went places,” she adds. “I don’t know anything else.”

The desire to explore remains with her. “I like to meet new people,” she says. “I like to do new things. I love to have a chance to see what our world really looks like.”

It’s a passion she has shared with Dr. Hulbert throughout their 43-years of marriage. “We’ve gone all over the world,” she says, mentioning trips to Alaska, the countries of the Caribbean, Scandinavia, South America, Greece, Turkey and St. Petersburg, Russia.

Career paths have also contributed to the pair’s wanderings, with job stops in Greeley, Colo.; Slippery Rock and Mansfield, Penn.; and elsewhere.

In addition to several years of service in elementary-school systems, Mrs. Hulbert spent 16 years working with Greek organizations – eight at the University of Northern Colorado and eight at Slippery Rock University.

Her math and financial skills got her involved in Greek life. A product of a boarding school and an all-women’s college, Mrs. Hulbert had never been a part of the Greek system.

Starting college as a math and finance major, she earned an elementary education bachelor’s degree with an emphasis in math and science from Keuka College in New York. But she decided to concentrate in counseling and student professional services as she earned her master’s in education from the University of Massachusetts, because those fields were more people-oriented.

At Mansfield University in Pennsylvania, a friend, knowing of her financial background, asked her to help a sorority that was having trouble managing its budget.

She would go on to become a member of Zeta Tau Alpha – an international women’s fraternity – later becoming a chapter adviser at Slippery Rock and eventually holding a national office as province director (essentially a vice presidency with the organization).

The organizational skills that she developed along the way have also come in handy in her role as the first lady of Nicholls State University.

The Hulberts host about 40 functions each year in the president’s home, ranging from parties for the coaching staff, to a large Christmas reception, to commencement luncheons. These events require her to juggle concerns such as seating, menus and budgets. She also has to be aware of other functions that may create scheduling conflicts. She plans the schedule about a semester in advance with Audrey Dozar, the president’s
“You can’t find a warmer, more generous set of friends than we have here.”

administrative assistant, who keeps the president’s master calendar.
While a number of events are annual, she likes to keep things fresh. For example, while the couple has traditionally held an afternoon reception for administra-
tive assistants, this year they held a luncheon.
In addition to the official functions at their home, the Hulberts keep a full schedule of univers-
ity-related events. Mrs. Hulbert says she especially likes going to basketball and volleyball games.

Night with a clear calendar are a treat for the pair. Mrs. Hulbert says they celebrate the end of
each semester by spending a quiet evening at home with a Pepper’s pizza.

Mrs. Hulbert is also active with civic organi-
zations such as the Bayou Country Children’s
Museum, the Lafourche Education Foundation
and Restore or Retreat. She explains that she very
much enjoys her work with the organizations, and
that her involvement has helped her get to know
the community.
Bridge is another avenue Mrs. Hulbert has
used to develop friendships since her arrival in
Thibodaux eight years ago.
“I have wonderful bridge friends here,” she says.
She began playing bridge at the age of 10 with
her younger brother and parents.
“My parents were excellent bridge players –
master’s points – the whole nine yards,” she says.
think I spent more time playing bridge my fresh-
man year in college than I did going to class.”
She says it’s the social nature of the game that
appeals to her.
“I like to talk to people,” she says. “I like to visit
with people.”
Through the years, as she and Dr. Hulbert have
moved to new communities, bridge has allowed
her to meet a cross section of her new neighbors.
When the couple lived in Colorado, she was a
member of a bridge group that included a sheep
rancher’s wife and a woman who owned three res-
taurants. She says these are friendships that have
lasted through the years.
The next planned move for the couple is Arizona
after Dr. Hulbert’s retirement, a date that has not
been announced. The couple already owns a home in
Prescott. Their son Scott, daughter-in-law, Kate, and
4-year-old grandson, Rowan, live in nearby Phoenix.
I think it’s the most unique typography within
an eight- to nine-hour drive in the world,” she says,
explaining how the land quickly transitions from
arid desert to cool mountains.
And yes, retirement will mean the opportunity
to travel.
She says that Australia is at the top of her must-
visit list. She explains that her son spent his sopho-
more year in high school there as an exchange
student and came back a very mature young man.
She has long held a fondness for the Aussies, hav-
ing housed a number of exchange students from
there through the years.
She says Australians have the same strong ties to
family and community that she discovered upon
her arrival in Thibodaux.
And she has formed strong ties with the Nicholls
community as well.
“You can’t find a warmer, more generous set of
friends than we have here,” she says.
“We’ll be back,” she adds. “We keep our friends.”

Faces of Nicholls

Voilà!

A grounded mountain climber

“Y ou can’t find a warmer,
more generous set of
friends than we have here.”

by Dr. Robert Allen Alexander Jr.

r. Leslie Jones likes to climb mountains. In south Louisiana.
“There are mountaintop and valley experiences,” she says metaphor-
ically, reflecting upon the rewards and challenges of preparing future teachers and administrators.
As associate dean and professor in the College of Education, Jones plays a major role in the
recruitment and preparation of candidates for primary and secondary school teaching and
administrative positions in the Bayou Region and beyond.
As a teacher of teachers, Jones says she is consis-
tently driven to research and to reflect on what
draws someone to a career in education and what
are the characteristics of those who succeed.
Never far from her thoughts are her own humble
beginnings as an undergraduate tutor in math at Nicholls. That experience taught her that she had
a passion not only for a subject but also for help-
ing others learn. And it also helped her to realize
how important teaching experience is – even if
only in a one-to-one tutoring session – for help-
ing someone determine aptitude and desire for
becoming a professional educator.
Knowing from firsthand experience how
challenging teaching can be, Jones is commit-
ted to seeing that Nicholls teaching candidates
get as much field experience as possible. What
candidates need to be able to do, she says, “is
unify theoretical frameworks and practices.” One
without the other is insufficient.
Jones also emphasizes the importance of field
experience for potential administrators.
“It is beneficial,” she says, “for administrators
to be aware of the challenges faced by teachers in
the classroom.”
Such experience cannot come simply from
a textbook or from observation. It should also
come from practice. Having taught high school
math for five years and having served as an
assistant principal and principal at an elemen-
tary school before embarking on her career as a
college professor, Jones knows what it means to
experience those challenges firsthand.
Someone who aspires to climb mountains, after
all, must be able to look up to the summit while
keeping both feet planted firmly on the ground.

by Dr. Robert Allen Alexander Jr.
As Nicholls alumnus Kevin George walks into the Thibodaux High School administration office, he cheerfully greets a student near the secretary's desk, saying, “How’s it going?” “Great!” the student responds.

Beginning his fifth year as the school’s principal, George says he is naturally jovial, and he thinks that the students, faculty and staff “want to see a positive person” running the show. Yet, he says he doesn’t need to force himself to be this way because he truly loves his job, even if the hours are long and the job is sometimes difficult.

George believes that he is a decision-maker more so than problem-solver or counselor. He says he makes informed decisions promptly because people need answers and not delays.

George earned a B.G.S. in general studies in 1996, a B.S. in marketing in 1999, and an M.Ed. in administration and supervision in 2003, all at Nicholls. Despite trying his hand at math, engineering and accounting majors because of his high aptitude for math, George says he learned more though his general studies degree since it offered him “the best of all the colleges.” The degree has allowed him to deal with the multitude of subject areas taught at THS, he says.

His two additional Nicholls degrees have only broadened his skill set. The marketing degree helps him run the school like a business, and the master’s degree has helped him put the “finishing touches” on his education philosophy, George says.

He remembers his professors fondly. Dr. Patricia Gablindo, Dr. Leslie Jones, Dr. Norman Norris, Dr. Chris Cox and Dr. Cleveland Hill “taught me lessons that I still implement today,” he says. “Professors went out of their way to have conversations and coffee with students in the student union. It created a sense of a close-knit family, and that’s what I work to create at Thibodaux High School.”

While George attributes his professional success to his faith and family, he says Nicholls gave him the tools to be effective as a high school principal. In turn, George says he wants to give his students what he values most – “a rigorous education so that they can succeed at a post-secondary facility, like Nicholls.”

Some students may balk at working so hard, but he tells them, “I’m sorry. You can relax when you die.” George says his students, Thibodaux High School’s main product, are the biggest contribution that he can give the local community. “These students may not remember the Pythagorean theorem, but they will most certainly contribute to the overall economic growth of this area, and I’m proud of that.”

In June 2011, George was named secondary-education curriculum supervisor for the Lafourche Parish school system. His responsibilities include overseeing curriculum and instruction, extra-curricular activities and athletics for the district’s three high schools.
The web he weaves

“Tucked away in a small office in the Student Publications Building, amid an array of printing equipment, is the office of James “Jess” Planck, the university’s web manager. His office is as humble and unassuming as the man himself. As one of the few remaining “old school” webmasters in the Louisiana university setting, Planck provides an invaluable service to Nicholls. He describes his job very simply as the “management and production of the public website and some of the applications associated with the website” – but this description oversimplifies the many facets of his position.

Planck is the system’s administrator, database administrator, designer, programmer and occasional content editor for the entire Nicholls website. Planck grew up in rural Louisiana “hunting, fishing and playing with computers.” He discovered a passion and propensity for art at a relatively young age and went into graphic design after serving in the U.S. Army. “I literally fell into the web after graduating from Louisiana Tech in 1995,” Planck says. “I was working for a small design studio where I built a website for the first time, and I discovered that I had an aptitude for art and computers,” he says modestly. Planck worked for a couple of regional Internet service providers before accepting a job at Nicholls in 2003. When he first came to Nicholls, the university was operating a simplistic “static” website, composed of individual files. He has since worked to create a website that allows for a tremendous amount of collaboration. Before this transition, Planck had piles of papers bearing copyediting marks that required page-by-page modification. Updates allow for a more collaborative experience, giving Planck more time to focus on major issues.

The willingness of other members of the university community to help him is something for which he is extremely thankful. “I’ve got some people helping me out, and without them I’d be lost,” Planck says. “If I didn’t have the users that I’ve got doing as much as they can to change the content, I’d probably be completely buried under work.”

The creative part of the job is the most enjoyable for Planck, and he is heartened to discover that his work has made someone else’s life a little easier. “Making sure the interfaces I’ve put together have gotten people what they needed without a problem or a fuss” is what makes his job so rewarding, he says.

From day-to-day web maintenance and web design to fending off hackers in the midst of Hurricane Katrina (yes, really), Planck literally does it all. And while he says he just “fell into” his job here at Nicholls, it is fair to say that the university community would be lost without him.

If you don’t see yourself in these pictures, we’re missing you.

Join the Nicholls Alumni Federation TODAY.

For more information, e-mail liz.iver@nicholls.edu or call 985.448.4111.
Photo Gallery

by Misty Leigh McElroy

These images, a collection of letters found throughout the Nicholls campus, were shot using the Hipstamatic app for the iPhone. See if you can guess where each letter is located.
Nicholls by the Numbers

The Roots of Success

Nicholls by the Numbers

The year was 1948. Harry S. Truman was president, the crossword game Scrabble was introduced, Candid Camera made its television debut, and the first McDonald’s restaurant opened in San Bernardino, Calif. And on September 23 of that year, classes began at Francis T. Nicholls Junior College.

Today, nearly 63 years later, Nicholls is deeply rooted in the south Louisiana community and committed to providing higher education opportunities for the people of the Bayou Region and beyond.

The numbers on these pages provide a glimpse into the diverse and sometimes unusual accomplishments of Nicholls faculty, staff and students—and although the numbers don’t tell the complete story, it’s clear that Nicholls will continue to break new ground in academic achievement while reaching new heights in student satisfaction.

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Veterans find their niche at Nicholls

Serving those who served
by Graham Harvey

When Houma native Jordan Fabre returned to the United States in June 2003 after a five-month combat tour in Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps, he experienced what he now calls “culture shock.”

Fabre says the peace of civilian life at home was wholly different from his wartime experience in the desert, especially the firefights in Nasiriya. Once home, he felt alone because he could not adjust.
Faculty and staff veterans speak out

"Life in the military and academia are similar in that both emphasize ongoing education and training. Learning should never stop, when that attitude is lost the value of education diminishes." - LeRoy Zemlin, custodian for Pehler Hall, was a U.S. Marine from 1956 to 1958, serving in Korea as well as Okinawa and the Caribbean and Mediterranean seas. He states many of the most important things he learned in the military. Zemlin is also the head custodian in the Veterans Affairs Office, and has been at Nicholls State University for almost 40 years.

"Our current and future veterans need to be taken care of, and our kids need to be taught patriotism and respect for the flag. Veterans in leadership positions can make sure that happens." - Dr. Stephen Mielke is an associate professor of history and the head of the history department.

"I emphasize to my students that it is up to them to make their lives what they can. Their eyes open up. They're paying attention. They know I'm not simply reading from a book. They say, 'Here's the real, live source.'" - Dr. David Boudreaux, vice president for institutional advancement, was a U.S. Army officer for 28 years until his retirement from the Army Reserve as a lieutenant colonel in 1998. During the Vietnam War, Boudreaux wrote command information briefs and pamphlets, penned a weekly column and edited various military publications.

Korea

LeRoy Zemlin, custodian for Pehler Hall, was a U.S. Marine from 1956 to 1958, serving in Korea as well as Okinawa and the Caribbean and Mediterranean seas. Promis is the most important thing you ever accomplish in your life. You need to take care of others, and that's what life is about. It's about taking care of others. If you want to have a good life, you have to take care of others. That's what life is about. It's about taking care of others.

Iraq

Dr. Stephen Mielke, associate professor of history, followed family tradition and served in the U.S. Marine Corps for a few years after graduating from high school. Later, at age 40—after completing three master's degrees and a doctorate—he re-enlisted this time in the U.S. Army. He is the head of the history department, and he is the head of the history department. He is the head of the history department.

Vietnam

"I emphasize to my students that it is up to them to make their lives what they can. Their eyes open up. They're paying attention. They know I'm not simply reading from a book. They say, 'Here's the real, live source.'" - Dr. David Boudreaux, vice president for institutional advancement, was a U.S. Army officer for 28 years until his retirement from the Army Reserve as a lieutenant colonel in 1998. During the Vietnam War, Boudreaux wrote command information briefs and pamphlets, penned a weekly column and edited various military publications.
Students gain education through real-world experiences

by Dr. Morris Coats

Gerard Zeringue puts aside his Crawfish Day food, places foggy goggles over his eyes, steps into a golf cart and away he goes— with the impaired vision of a drunkard. But the Raceland petroleum services senior is actually sober while discovering how and why alcohol and driving don’t mix, thanks to special goggles that simulate driving under the influence. It’s all part of a Nicholls service-learning project.

Service learning is a teaching method that marries traditional classroom instruction with meaningful community service. This approach allows students to get involved in activities that address local needs while increasing the student’s academic skills and fostering civic responsibility.

By assisting the community and helping residents solve real-life problems, they not only experience practical applications of their studies, they also learn to recognize their responsibility to their community and, ideally, become life-long, active citizens in it.

“Adding a service-learning component to a course curriculum offers students a more effective learning environment.”

Combining traditional textbook- and lecture-based learning with service is not new; after all, medical, nursing and dental schools have long used both methods when teaching future healthcare providers.

“Learning the skeletal system requires students to spend quality time with an anatomy textbook,” Dr. Sue Westbrook, dean of the College of Nursing and Allied Health, says. “There is no better way, however, for our nursing students to develop a compassionate bedside manner than in a true, clinical setting with a patient.”

Likewise, sociology students can learn about the effects of poverty from a lecture, but seeing hunger in a child’s eyes at a local community center or shelter provides for a deeper, more meaningful level of education.

At Nicholls, service learning has been utilized for years. In the late-1980s, Dr. Elizabeth Lafleur, faculty member in the College of Business Administration, was using service learning in her business research and advertising classes before service learning had a name. She would select a non-profit group or governmental unit that would become the class’s client. Her students would identify the client’s problems, develop research questions and propose solutions—all by semester’s end.

A quarter of a century later, service-learning projects are a part of just about every college and department on campus, and many projects continue to benefit non-profit or governmental clients.

“Nicholls is committed to providing service-learning opportunities for our students,” Dr. Stephen Hulbert, university president, says. “Community leaders, students and educators everywhere are discovering that adding a service-learning component to a course curriculum offers students a more effective learning environment.”
Examples of service-learning projects undertaken in recent years are numerous.

St. Luke’s Church
As part of a local cultural heritage project, Dr. James Butler’s sociology students document the historical significance of St. Luke’s Baptist Church and cemetery in Chackbay.

Le Cirque
Family and Consumer Science students, in a program known as “Le Cirque Living Skills,” promote family cohesion and overall wellness to impoverished, at-risk children and families living in Houma’s Senator Circle housing development. The services provided by FACS students and faculty members also address the prevention of long-term mental illness, crisis intervention and the prevention of youth crime through diversion projects and counseling. In addition, the children receive help with homework, tutoring and preparation for standardized tests.

Degree of Debris
Students in Dr. Alyse Ferrara’s biology classes participated in a Beach Sweep program that involved collecting, categorizing and cataloging trash along a 500-meter section of Grand Isle. The students performed two sweeps—one to provide a clean slate and a second, several months later, to measure the amount of debris deposited on the beach at a daily rate. The data is added to the Ocean Conservancy’s international marine debris database.

Recently, Ferrara expanded the scope of the project to include other Nicholls faculty members and classes. Dr. Gary Lafleur Jr., associate professor of biological sciences, had his coastal landscape photography class document the sweep with their cameras, and another biology colleague, Dr. Quentin Fontenot, led his scientific writing class in composing the technical documentation for the project.

Across campus in the art department, Michael Williams’ sculpture class crafted art from the collected trash, and Trisha Dubina’s graphic design class created signage and other documents that explained the sculpture and the ecological problems caused by ocean trash.

While these projects illustrate service learning, they represent only a fraction of what is being done as a matter of course at Nicholls. Through classes with service-learning components, Nicholls students are conducting research, tutoring area children, designing advertising materials for area non-profits, conducting hearing and speech tests and providing treatment for area residents.

Books, the Internet and lectures will certainly enhance classroom learning in a service setting. However, service learning is used as a component of a planned curriculum—a tool to advance and deepen a student’s subject knowledge and capacity for critical thinking through the application of classroom learning in a service setting.

For example, if students collect trash from the banks of Bayou Lafourche, they are providing a valuable service to the community as volunteers. If students collect trash from the banks of Bayou Lafourche, they are engaging in service learning.

Nicholls earns national recognition for service-learning initiatives
Nicholls offers students more than 40 service-learning courses in which to enroll, earning the university national recognition for its innovative community service and service-learning programs.

Four times in the past five years, Nicholls has been named to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the highest federal recognition a college or university can receive for its commitment to voluntarism, service learning and civic engagement.
Power to the people

The year 2008 was certainly one of the worst in the history of Nicholls. That was the year Gov. Bobby Jindal informed Nicholls, along with every other public university and college in the state, that severe budget cuts were coming and that they probably would keep coming, and coming.

Of course, the budget-cut story started long before 2008 when the state legislature approved – not through a deliberate approval process, but the result is just as harmful – that the only two areas of the state budget not to be constitutionally protected from cuts were higher education and health care.

Fast forward to Dec. 13, 2008, when Gov. Jindal revealed his plan to cut higher education in an attempt to balance the state budget. What followed was the expected: harsh cuts, lost jobs, programs eliminated, and students, faculty and administrators on high anxiety.

These cuts came in spite of the fact that Nicholls is the only four-year institution in what is called “The Bayou Region,” where eight of 10 nurses and four of five teachers are Nicholls graduates.

But 2008, while extraordinarily difficult, will also be remembered as the beginning of something better than good, maybe even great. We are seeing the fruits of that year being harvested right now, and I suspect we’ll continue to see them well into the future. I am referring to the students, instructors, administrators, businesses, friends and neighbors of Nicholls who have all recognized the importance of our university to the eight-parish area we call home.

These are the people who stood up, and continue to stand up, for their university and what it represents. These are the folks who recognize that a solid education is the greatest insurance any person,
Dr. Lloyd Chiasson Jr. is a two-time Fulbright Scholar and a Distinguished Service Professor of mass communication.

**THE NICHOLLS FAMILY PORTRAIT** – T-shirts with “Nicholls. I Care. You Should. Here’s How: www.nicholls.edu” were purchased by the Nicholls Alumni Federation and the Nicholls Foundation and given to over 700 university employees. The employees wore them for a “family portrait” taken in December.

and any state, can have. These are the people who united behind the simple idea that education ensures growth in business, science, medicine, transportation and communication. In short, it is the only way for a state to prosper, which is really the only way to ensure the future.

These are the people who didn’t give up. They formed action groups and involved their friends, families and co-workers. They printed and distributed T-shirts, brochures, yard signs and stickers. They created videos and a Facebook page. They wrote letters to legislators and newspaper editors. They attended town-hall meetings. They used their connection and communication. In short, it is the only way for a state to prosper, which is really the only way to ensure the future.

After wrapping up his playing career at William Carey University and coaching at Pearl River Community College and Southeastern Louisiana, Thibodeaux arrived at Nicholls in 2008 as an assistant under Durham. In his first season, Thibodeaux put together an aggressive lineup in the Southland Conference, as Nicholls led the league in triples (27) and finished second in stolen bases (81). In 2009, the Colonels nearly doubled their overall and conference win totals, and outfielder Chris Murrill, recruited and coached by Thibodeaux, became the first Colonel position player to be selected in the Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft.

**Program architect Thibodeaux becomes head baseball coach**

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In 2011, Thibodeaux has continued to build on his reputation as a tireless worker and program architect. And if his past is any indication, the Colonels baseball team’s best days remain ahead of them.

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**by Charles Gillingham**

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The Piper Principle: Toughness Wins

by Mike Wagenheim

Colonel Pride

Call it the Piper Principle from Principal Piper: toughness and a sense of family permeate every aspect of the Nicholls men’s basketball program.

That’s been the way of life for the team for most of head coach J.P. Piper’s seven-year tenure. It is a philosophy built out of necessity. The reality is clear: the Colonels aren’t well funded compared to their competition and their facilities aren’t nearly as modern. That makes it difficult to draw top-flight talent to the campus.

It is an existence that makes having a consistently strong program an immense challenge. Yet, the Colonels have reached the Southland Conference tournament in each of the last three years, a feat accomplished only one other time in program history. The 2010-11 club defeated LSU and Tulane for the first time ever, with the historic victory over the Tigers in Baton Rouge making waves throughout college basketball. Meanwhile, of the players who have exhausted their eligibility, all but one has graduated during Piper’s era.

Piper believes he has found a key strategy to competing in the college basketball arms race without any of the heavy artillery.

“Toughness wins,” Piper says bluntly. “It seems simple, but it’s quite complex when you start thinking about what toughness means. It means getting up for a 7:30 a.m. class, it’s diving for a loose ball, getting a rebound when you’re six-one and your opponent is six-eight. There’s not a drill or technique to do that. You just have to be tougher. Going on the road for six days and still getting your assignments turned in; getting your butt chewed out by the coach and still being able to look him in the eye and say ‘yes, sir.’

The direction of the program was once as unclear as the direction of the man who now helms it. After a stint as an assistant coach at East Ascension High School in Gonzales, Piper had an eight-year run at The Dunham School in Baton Rouge, where he piloted the Tigers to the Class A state title in 1998 and returned them to the final four in 1999. His last three years at the private school were also spent as the principal, an experience that fastened Piper’s exit from school administration.

“The most discouraging part of being principal was the isolation, ” Piper says. “It seems simple, but it’s quite complex when you start thinking about what toughness means. It means getting up for a 7:30 a.m. class, it’s diving for a loose ball, getting a rebound when you’re six-one and your opponent is six-eight. There’s not a drill or technique to do that. You just have to be tougher. Going on the road for six days and still getting your assignments turned in; getting your butt chewed out by the coach and still being able to look him in the eye and say ‘yes, sir.’

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“The most discouraging part of being principal was the isolation,” Piper says. “When I was a teacher and coach, 10 or 15 kids would eat lunch with me every day in the school cafeteria. Once I became principal, none of those students came near me. That’s what pushed me away. What feeds me are the interactions and the encounters. For me, it’s that coach and still being able to look him in the eye and say ‘yes, sir.’

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Unhappy and looking for a better way to provide for his family, Piper applied to law school just as Nicholls was naming Ricky Blanton as its new head coach. Piper knew Blanton through their basketball recruiting network – and in a congratulatory message, Piper offered his assistance if Blanton ever needed it.

“A week later, Piper got the call. “Are you serious about helping?” Piper recalls.

Blanton asking. “No, but I can get serious real quick,” Piper replied. “For a moment, I forgot I was married with children, and I jumped at the chance,” Piper now recalls. “My wife told me I needed to figure out what I wanted, because my plans were changing by the day.”

After deep introspection, he decided coaching was his life’s calling, and so he joined Blanton’s staff as an assistant. Just two years later, the wisdom of Piper’s career choice was tested. The program was struggling on the court, and an NCAA infractions case forced Blanton to resign just before the 2004-05 season.

Piper was fully prepared to leave, too, out of loyalty to Blanton. But, as Blanton departed he told Piper that this might be his only chance to be a Division I head coach and that he needed to go for it. After some initial hesitation, Piper pursued the position, as did a more experienced candidate. When several of Piper’s players endorsed his bid, they tipped the pendulum swung in Piper’s favor.

Piper believes he has found a key strategy to competing in the college basketball arms race without any of the heavy artillery.

“What those players did – that was the biggest compliment paid to me in my life,” Piper says. “It shows that players and coaches are not merely connected by basketball. They are a family, and they won’t let just anyone in.”

The principles upon which Piper’s program is built assure that quality men are consistently recruited, a respectable program will continue to progress and former players will go on to a successful life after basketball, while always remaining part of the family. It is that bond which keeps many former Colonels in touch with Piper and the program.

“When we host a recruit on campus, the message of the day is, ‘You’re about to make a life-changing decision,’ Piper says. “I will take the place of your parents and your teammates will become your brothers. You need to ask yourself, ‘Do you want these people to be your family?’ If you don’t feel that way, don’t come here. Honestly, there’s nothing special about our gym or locker room, but there is something very special about the people in our program. I tell the recruits, ‘When your girlfriend breaks up with you or you fail a test, material things like fancy locker rooms and gyms aren’t going to make you feel good, but your coaches and teammates will. Your family will.’

“Teachers and coaches work to serve the people in our charge,” Piper adds. “What you get in return are lifelong connections. Even 20 years down the road, we reconnect like it’s yesterday. I could call my high school coach today, and there remains a deep, meaningful connection there and that’s what I seek to have. Let your daily task be to make a difference in their lives. It’s been rewarding, I tell the parents that my paycheck is the relationships that form.”

“If it were just about winning games, then what sustains you when you lose?” Piper asks. “I can lose a game but still be proud, hold my head up and feel good about who those young men are and what they’re becoming.”
I’m in my 64th year to heaven, to misquote a line from the poet Dylan Thomas. My age is also part of the Beatles’ lyric I drank to when I supposed myself to be a long-haired social rebel in my 20s: “Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I’m 64?”

But this is not about my age. Or that in my youth I was sure that I’d look like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and be living in swaddled retirement when I reached old age, which I was sure back then had to be around 64. This, as you’ll see, is about one of my favorite topics.

I was asked to write this backpiece for Voilà! not because I am a writer but because I am believed by some to be a wearer of many hats at this university. I’ve been an English teacher, a novelist in residence, a keeper of policy manuals, a department head and something called an interim assistant vice president. (Whatever that last one is, my mother, Belle, sure is proud of it.)

Indeed, literally and figuratively, I have quite a collection of hats. And perhaps my number of hats has given me a slight advantage when it comes to closing this unique issue.

It is a unique issue, isn’t it? In any one of my many hats, am proud to be in the company of these writers and the subject matter they have chosen. These writers are my colleagues and friends: Lloyd Chasson, Morris Coats, Al Delahaye, Allen Alexander, Renée Piper and James Stewart, among others. I take all of my hats off to them.

Their subject is also my subject: this scrappy little university. This big-hearted survivor, which is not only a place for bayou folks like me to get an excellent education, but is also a decent place to work.

You see, I crossed a line around the year 1985. Before that year, I was a 1969 graduate who knew Nicholls and the heart of the matter: the kind of special place we Nicholls employees make, without even trying, by way of our daily commitment to doing our chosen work.

With each visit I made for United Way, I understood all over again that there’s just something I like about this place. If I didn’t, I probably wouldn’t get out of bed most mornings. Or as another writer, Kurt Vonnegut, once said, “Id maybe just as well be a rattlesnake.”

Employees have to hunt, just like the mothers and fathers and family members of all students at Nicholls, for a place to park to get to their jobs. Not only that. We have to pay for a decal just to be able to start to look for a place to park to get to our jobs.

That’s one of the most important hats anyone gets to wear in life. We all have to go to work.

And if you don’t like going to work, you’ve got yourself one miserable life, yes.

Don’t get me wrong. I’d probably prefer staying home most mornings after I drag myself out of bed. I’m dumb in a lot of ways, but not in that way.

However, once I get to my office, I feel pretty good about where I am and about the people who are around me and about the students who visit me after having had just as much trouble parking as I had.

You could be working in a sausage factory or in the office of a university dean, which by the way is the hat I wear now.

If you don’t like work once you get there, you’re missing out on something important.

Work is sometimes a struggle, for sure. It’s a job, a livelihood, a practical way to get pennies to buy clothes and put sausage on family plates. But it is also an enriching complement to family, to community, and even to the late night sky we’re smitten by as we roll our garbage cans to the side of the street in subdivisions built on land that used to be under water.

Most recently, I got to be chairman for our United Way charity drive here on campus. As part of that drive I got to meet my fellow workers all over again. I met with administrators, administrative staff, faculty, professional staff, you name it. Through it I came asking for money, everywhere I went I was welcomed.

Even in these difficult economic times, we at Nicholls exceeded our United Way contribution goal this year. Nicholls, my place of work, really does believe it has a responsibility to the people of the region who maybe can’t put sausages on their plate.

But because I am believed by some to be a writer, I asked you to consider about us who teach them and hand them financial forms and smile at them when we call the next person up from the front of one of those endless lines that social institutions around the world breed endlessly. Every day we Nicholls employees get out of bed and drive in bicycle or walk or bus ourselves to work.

That state of employee-hood is not because I am a writer that in my youth I was sure that I’d become a writer and something called an interim assistant vice president. (Whatever that last one is, my mother, Belle, sure is proud of it.)

That state of employee-hood, a practical way to get pennies to buy clothes and put sausage on family plates. But it is also an enriching complement to family, to community, and even to the late night sky we’re smitten by as we roll our garbage cans to the side of the street in subdivisions built on land that used to be under water.

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I’m sincere about what I just said. To make work what I said strike home a little better, think again about the Voilà! articles you just read.

They really are about the heart of the matter: the kind of special place we Nicholls employees make, without even trying, by way of our daily commitment to doing our chosen work.

With each visit I made for United Way, I understood all over again that there’s just something I like about this place.

If I didn’t, I probably wouldn’t get out of bed most mornings.
President’s Recognition Honor Donors. With nearly 165 scholarship donors, recipients and additional guests in attendance, the annual President’s Scholarship Reception allowed scholarship recipients to meet their benefactors. Pictured is Stephanie Grasgeb, biology pre-med senior from Norco, La., speaking to attendees about how her scholarship benefitted her and her family. Nichols students received nearly $4.9 million in scholarship funds in 2010-11.

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Woodmen of the World Lodge
Wine and food extravaganza benefits students. The 15th annual Sponsor A+ Scholar Wine and Food Extravaganza attracted a record number of guests – more than 830 – and generated more than $37,000. Proceeds from the event benefit Nicholls students with outstanding grades and leadership ability. Nearly $400,000 has been raised since the fundraiser began in 1996, with more than 200 Nicholls students receiving scholarships as a result. Pictured is Renee Piper, director of university relations, displaying one of the many live-auction items – an NFL helmet autographed by quarterback Peyton Manning.

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