



We debated whether UL Lafayette's response to victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita should be the cover story of this issue of *La Louisiane*.

That may surprise some readers. After all, Katrina alone was the biggest natural disaster in the history of the United States. Then Rita came along, multiplying the misery that Katrina caused. Although the hurricanes physically damaged southwestern and southeastern portions of Louisiana, it's not an exaggeration to say that everyone in the state has been affected by them in some way.

From that standpoint, an article related to such cataclysmic events warrants being featured on the cover.

But we were concerned that readers might be experiencing "hurricane overload" by now. The consequences of the storms have dominated the news for months. Many of us don't need a magazine cover to remind us of the fallout; we're still living it, as we continue to provide support for displaced friends and family, and almost constantly worry about how and when Louisiana's economy will recover.

As I was writing about UL Lafayette's hurricane relief efforts, I had an epiphany of sorts. It occurred to me that the way students, faculty, staff and administrators responded to hurricane victims says so much more about this university, as a whole, than any single article I've ever written for *La Louisiane*.

We often claim that UL Lafayette has a friendly campus, that faculty care about students, and administrators and staff sincerely want students to succeed. But in today's marketing-driven world, those words sometimes sound hollow. Every university says the same.

I believe the cover story of this issue reveals something deeper – the character of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. It is that character that sets UL Lafayette apart.

We hope our account of how UL Lafayette reacted to two natural catastrophes, in combination with other articles in this issue, will be enlightening and uplifting.

– Kathleen Thames