



**The** other day, a friend was telling me how much he enjoys Ragin' Cajun sports. He tracks the progress of every team throughout the year.

"But, you know," he said, "what really enthralls me is CajunBot." He was referring to a sophisticated remote-controlled vehicle that captured national attention last year when it competed in a race against similar vehicles from well-heeled universities like Carnegie Mellon.

Wouldn't it be interesting if we could show our support for academics in the same way we show support for athletics? When my friend said he was a CajunBot fan, I instantly got a mental image of a lab in Abdalla Hall filled with people who are cheering as faculty and students do whatever they do with algorithms to make CajunBot go. It made me smile.

It also reminded me of how difficult it is for the average person to show support for academics. So we go to Ragin' Cajun® athletic events instead. The good news: UL Lafayette teams' efforts and success help shape the public's image of the entire university.

There are some folks who believe that college sports, in general, get too much attention – at the expense of academics. But when the Ragin' Cajun basketball team almost defeated the No. 4 team in the nation during the NCAA Tournament in March, for example, people across the country noticed.

And CajunBot and the Ragin' Cajuns sent the same message: UL Lafayette deserves to compete in the national arena – in academics and athletics.

Many of us can't afford to fund an endowed scholarship or endowed professorship. But we can afford to buy a season ticket for women's basketball or football or another Ragin' Cajuns sport.

If successful athletic teams get the attention of other universities, venture capitalists or top high school students who are trying to decide which university to attend, is that so bad?

We hope you enjoy this issue of *La Louisiane*.

– Kathleen Thames