

## Veteran Leader

New vice president will tap federal experience

**F**OR 25 YEARS, DR. ROBERT Stewart guided one of the nation's preeminent institutions of wetlands science. Now, he's applying his skills in a broader arena as UL Lafayette's new vice president for Research and Graduate Studies.

The former director of the USGS National Wetlands Research Center replaces Dr. Duane Blumberg, who became Louisiana's deputy secretary of Economic Development on Jan. 1, 2004, after retiring from the university.

UL Lafayette's vice president for research and graduate studies is responsible for overseeing sponsored research, graduate studies, technology transfer and other economic development activities, and the operation of most research centers on campus. In addition, the vice president works closely with local, regional, state, and national business, governmental, and industrial leaders to secure funding, equipment, services and other resources.

"Dr. Stewart brings a wealth of experience and knowledge that can be applied to every aspect of this vice presidency," said UL Lafayette President Ray Authement.

Stewart's federal career started with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1974, where he worked on national energy policies. In 1979, he became the leader of the service's National Coastal Ecosystems Team, which evolved into what is now the National Wetlands Research Center. The center, which is in University Research Park near the Cajundome, has about 200 employees.

In February, Stewart received the Distinguished Service Award, the highest employee recognition given by the U.S. Department of the Interior. He was cited for his vision in using research and technology for scientific issues,



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**Dr. Robert Stewart, vice president for Research and Graduate Studies**

especially wetlands. Other career accolades include being named a Gulf Guardian by the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program in 2004 and the 2004 Professional Conservationist by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation.

Stewart said he's impressed with UL Lafayette's research and graduate studies programs. "We have fantastic resources and faculty who've accomplished many things and I'm ready to see what we have to do to raise the bar."

He also wants to continue the work of agencies and centers at UL Lafayette that promote economic development across Louisiana. "The university is continually trying to help local communities and every area of the state with business development ideas. I want to continue to offer this help, including how to do business with the federal government."

As vice president for Research, he

intends to increase the community's awareness of the significant scientific work conducted at UL Lafayette. He cited coastal wetlands renewal and restoration as examples. "We should be very proud of the role our university engineers, socio-economists and ecologists have played in battling coastal erosion in Louisiana.

"I want people in the community to know what we do and why we do it. I want the community to know why science and research are so important in our everyday lives and our future."

Stewart also noted increased competition among universities for graduate students and stressed the need to continue to use technology to attract and retain students seeking advanced degrees.

He holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Jamestown College, and master's and doctoral degrees from North Dakota State University in Fargo. ■