

I also learned that UL Lafayette has top-rated undergraduate and graduate public relations programs. I chose to become an undergraduate again because I felt like I had missed something my first time. I had been too shy, too obsessed with getting As, too afraid. I wanted a second chance.

It did not take long to realize that UL Lafayette would offer me that. It again said, "Bienvenue. We are glad to have you here."

I knew for sure that I made the right choice when I met Dr. Mike Maher, head of the Communication Department. His encouragement and knowledge of public relations were inspiring. He told me about internship opportunities and campaign class work. He showed me what my future could be if I should choose it.

I did choose it and it has been an amazing experience. I have heard profes-

sors explain communication concepts by describing their career experiences. I have professors and advisers who know me, encourage me, seek me out with new opportunities. I have worked in public relations with Hospice of Acadiana and the Games of Acadiana. I have this chance to work on a magazine. Several articles I have written are in print! It is everything I did not have the nerve to attempt before.

I am incredibly grateful for this second chance. A lot of the credit is due to my parents and family who have supported me in everything I have been through. Much is due, as well, to people at this university.

Writing this article has made me think about what I have learned from the curvy path I have taken so far. I learned that fear does not have to control my life. I know that I never want to forget where I come

from. And I learned that the game my mom and I used to play actually meant that each day holds a thousand second chances, a thousand opportunities for a fresh start. Now I know that even as I try to achieve balance, flux will always be there. The trick, I think, is to learn to embrace it.

I'm beginning to see promise almost everywhere I look lately. I see it in my new nephew and godson now. He was born in October, so I know he can't understand me yet, but for practice, the other day I held him close and whispered, "Just so you know, it's always the first day of the rest of your life." Then I pulled a little Ragin' Cajun cap, with its giant red pom-pom, onto his little head. No pressure, I promise. Just enthusiasm. ■

Katie Risher is student editor of La Louisiane.

STUDENTS' SATELLITE EDGES CLOSER TOWARD LAUNCH INTO ORBIT

AS LA LOUISIANE WAS GOING TO PRESS, the immediate fate of a small satellite built by UL Lafayette students was hinging on some final shakedown tests.

The device was undergoing tests in California to make sure it meets standards for vibration, heat and thermal extremes.

Best case scenario: the "picosatellite," which weighs about two pounds, will be allowed to take a ride on a Russian intercontinental ballistic missile in December.

"If we don't pass the tests, we don't go. I'm confident we'll make it," said Dr. Robert Henry, head of the William Hansen Hall Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at UL Lafayette. He has worked with the students on the Cajun Advanced Picosatellite Experiment for the past three years.

The UL Lafayette picosatellite was supposed to have been carried into outer space by an ICBM from the Republic of Kazakhstan this summer. But it got bumped from the flight.

That turned out to be a lucky break.

Henry explained that the ICBM had been launched

successfully about 200 times before. But in July, it crashed 200 kilometers down range of the launch site.

"If our satellite had been on there, it would have ended up in a crater in the Republic of Kazakhstan. So, in one sense, we were fortunate to be bumped," he said.



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"There were about 15 other satellites from around the world that went down in flames."

If the CAPE satellite makes it into outer space and settles into orbit, it will be the first working satellite to be designed, built and maintained by students at a Louisiana university.

It will circle the Earth every 90 minutes at about 17,000 mph while transmitting data. It will travel in Lower Earth Orbit, which is about 60 to 450 nautical miles above the Earth's surface.

The UL Lafayette students will track the satellite on a large display board that has been constructed in Madison Hall.

The CAPE is associated with programs at Stanford University and California Polytechnic State University. Cal Poly conducted the tests that would show whether the UL Lafayette picosatellite could withstand the launch without damaging the missile that would carry it. ■



A team of UL Lafayette engineering students has spent the past three years developing a small satellite with the help of some advisers. Shown, from left, are: Robert Brown; Nick Pugh, adviser; Jonathan Harrist; Jacob Delahoussaye; Jason LaBerteaux; Dr. Robert Henry, adviser; Jonathan Wagner; and Wade Falcon.

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