

Double Honor

Authements receive prestigious alumni awards

WHEN DR. RAY AUTHEMENT WAS honored with the UL Lafayette Alumni Association's Outstanding Alumni Award in late October, he expressed his appreciation, then deflected the attention.

Like a polite guest who takes a hostess gift to a dinner party, Authement offered some announcements about UL Lafayette's most recent success.

He just learned that its Mathematics Department was ranked by the National Science Foundation as one of the top 100 university math departments in the country.

And, pay raises awarded this fall mean that UL Lafayette's faculty are earning the

average salary paid by universities in 16 states who are members of the Southern Regional Education Board. With the pay hikes, UL Lafayette faculty are in the same salary league as universities such as Georgia Tech and Baylor, Authement reported.

The NSF also ranked UL Lafayette's Computer Science Department in the top 60 university computer science departments in the nation. Authement said that recognition was especially rewarding because the university began developing its renowned computer science program years ago, when the school's budget was tight.

"But now we have money. We have money thanks to you, thanks to the UL Lafayette Foundation and thanks to the governor and legislature. This has been the best year ever in the history of the university. . .

"I thank you so very much for this honor and I don't really deserve it. You do, because you have done so much for the university," he told Alumni Association members.

Authement also thanked his wife, Barbara. "What a magnificent partner and lady who has helped me in so many crises," he said.

The Alumni Association paid tribute to Barbara Authement, too, by surprising her with its Honorary Alumni Award. It is presented to individuals who are not UL Lafayette alumni but deserve recognition for their "loyalty, service and support of the university," said Alumni Association President Martin Audiffred. The award has been presented only three times in the past 15 years.

Barbara Authement thanked the Association. "It has been a wonderful journey and all of you have made it possible," she said.



Ken Ardoin

In April, Authement announced his intention to retire. His successor is expected to be chosen by the University of Louisiana System in December.

Dr. Steve Landry, vice president of Academic Affairs at UL Lafayette, gave an update on the university, which he said "is incredibly healthy in almost every academic way, every support way. . . It has been Dr. Authement's mantra for the past 15 years to insure raises for the faculty because it's his mantra that academics comes first. . ."

Ken Ardoin, executive director of University Advancement, noted that Authement has affected the lives of thousands of people. He described the university president as caring, sacrificing and unselfish. "Probably the biggest compo-



A brick bearing the university president's name is near Moody Hall. He graduated from Southwestern Louisiana Institute in 1950.

ment of all, he has a big heart."

Ardoin was president of the UL Lafayette Alumni Association from 1987 to 1988. He worked closely with Authement to create the Walk of Honor, a path on campus made of bricks bearing the names of all graduates of the university.

Authement received a bachelor's degree in physics from Southwestern Louisiana Institute in 1950 and went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees in mathematics. He taught at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, La., and Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, La., before joining the SLI faculty in 1957.

Among his accomplishments as president are the following.

- USL changed its name to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

- Academic admission standards were implemented.

- The university's endowments rose from about \$500,000 to more than \$120 million.

- UL Lafayette has been recognized by the Carnegie Foundation as a "research university with high research activity," which placed it in the same research category as Baylor and Auburn.

- Louisiana's Ragin Cajuns® compete in NCAA Division I, the highest level of collegiate competition.

- University Research Park was established and developed.

- More than 30 buildings and facilities were constructed; more than 25 others were renovated or expanded.

Authement kept the university sound fiscally, despite repeated budget cuts when the Oil Boom went bust in south Louisiana in the 1980s. At the same time, he contributed to the diversification of the oil-dependent local and state economies by establishing 17 research centers and assisting area businesses.

Since 2000, he supervised a \$130 million building boom on campus that included construction

of Legacy Park, an apartment-style student residence; the Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum; the Advanced Computer Technology and Research Hall; and the Louisiana Immersive Technologies Center in University Research Park.

Dan Hare, executive director of the UL Lafayette Alumni Association, said Authement and the Association have a symbiotic relationship.

"Dr. Authement has always started each year off by welcoming the Alumni Association president during a private meet-



The Alumni Association nominating committee voted unanimously to honor Dr. Ray Authement and Barbara Authement.

ing that I attend as well. They each have a chance to share their goals for the year and Dr. Authement gives an update on the university's perspective. They also discuss any objectives that he would like the Association to assist with," he said.

For more Alumni Association news, go to www.louisianaalumni.org ■

Would you like to send your best wishes to Dr. Ray Authement?

He announced in April that he plans to retire after serving as the university's president since 1974. That makes him the longest-serving president of any public university in the United States.

You can send a letter or card to this address:

**ATTN: RETIREMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC RELATIONS AND NEWS SERVICES**

**UL LAFAYETTE
P. O. BOX 41009
LAFAYETTE, LA 70504**

Or, you can email a message to him at prns@louisiana.edu



Dr. Ray Authement congratulates his wife, Barbara, who received the Alumni Association's Honorary Alumni Award.