

‘Real Leadership Is Very Unselfish...’

How did Dr. Ray Authement remain an effective, innovative university president for more than 30 years?

That’s a question Dr. Sally Clausen, president of the University of Louisiana System, is particularly qualified to answer. She served as state commissioner of higher education and was president of Southeastern Louisiana University from 1995 to 2001. Earlier this year, she was inducted into the Louisiana Political Hall of Fame.

Clausen noted that university presidents must satisfy many “bosses,” including state education boards, state and federal lawmakers, parents, students, faculty, sports fans and community leaders. So, university presidents are “decision makers by consensus and if you cannot draw consensus around major issues, you cannot succeed. Anyone who can attain consensus over such a long period of time is truly an amazing leader.

“You do so by the sheer power of your drive, your intellect, your personality and your willingness to understand the big picture,” she said.

Effective university presidents know their ideas and actions will sometimes be controversial and “sometimes very difficult. Yet, they have the courage of conviction

of a moral leader to do what is right by the people they represent.”

Authement has those qualities – and more, she continued.

“He’s dedicated. He has vision. He works hard. He collaborates with people and sometimes he has to make some isolated decisions, knowing that he’s going to take some heat.

“But his vision has always been impressive because he seems to anticipate where the university ought to be in the next few

years and makes conscious decisions now to ensure that it gets there. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have University Research Park, the LITE Center, the Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art

Museum or Moody Hall. We wouldn’t necessarily have well over \$100 million in endowments.

“So many things that he has envisioned and worked to accomplish are the sheer genius of his thoughtful anticipation, while always, however, staying in tune with the politics of the area, the state politics, the students and their needs, and the faculty’s need for resources.”

Clausen noted that Authement doesn’t seek the limelight. “His quiet, daily work, every day, day in and day out, on little issues and big issues, keeps the

enterprise moving forward.

“Real leadership is very unselfish and he is one of the most unselfish leaders that I’ve ever worked with. He sets high expectations. He shares. He stays engaged. He encourages. He’s not afraid of assessment. He’s always in direct contact with students. In fact, he keeps his focus on the students. He believes that diversity is something that should define us but not divide us; he embraces it. And, he changes with the times.”

Authement earned credibility over the years by building a record of success, Clausen said.



Dr. Sally Clausen

COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM

Members of the University of Louisiana System

- Grambling State University, Grambling, La.
- Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, La.
- McNeese State University, Lake Charles, La.
- Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, La.
- Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, La.
- Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, La.
- University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, La.
- University of Louisiana at Monroe, Monroe, La.

“And he doesn’t break his word. Trust is not built overnight and the power of his word, his trustworthiness and his follow-through instilled confidence in those who were affected by his decisions. I think that’s the mark of a real leader and history will, I believe, reflect on him as one of the great leaders of our time.” ■

1999	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ USL becomes University of Louisiana at Lafayette ■ Centennial Celebration begins ■ Selective admissions implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New UL Lafayette Foundation building opens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cayenne debuts as new spirit leader ■ Center for Cultural and Eco-Tourism established ■ President Authement plants Second Century Oaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ LACES created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CajunBot, an autonomous robotic vehicle, is one of only 15 vehicles who earns the chance to compete in desert race for \$1 million prize from U.S. Department of Defense ■ Kathleen Babineaux Blanco becomes first USL graduate to serve as governor of Louisiana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UL Lafayette houses and assists Hurricanes Katrina and Rita evacuees ■ College of Nursing and Allied Health Professions becomes only the seventh college in nation to earn prestigious Center of Excellence designation ■ Exclusive Ragin’ Red spice introduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UL Lafayette is first in Louisiana to have a satellite in orbit that was designed by students