

Next Step

Change provides business incubator with new opportunities

A BUSINESS INCUBATOR IN CARENCRO, La., is under new ownership.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette is now the sole owner of the Enterprise Center of Louisiana. It acquired the center earlier this year from two partners, the Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation and the City of Carencro.

Roy Holleman, ECOL's executive director, said the change is another step in the center's successful evolution. And, it's a step that was planned from the start.

The business incubator was spearheaded in the early 1990s by SLEMCO to help promising businesses get established and create more jobs. SLEMCO, a private membership corporation that provides utilities in Acadiana, owned 60 percent of ECOL's stock; UL Lafayette owned 40 percent. The City of Carencro put up 25 percent of the funds needed to build it and obtained a 50 percent matching grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration for the center's construction. Additional funding to build ECOL came from the Louisiana Public Facilities Authority and the Lafayette Economic Development Authority.

"SLEMCO's intent from the beginning was to get ECOL started, help it through its lean years and then hopefully turn it over to the university someday," Holleman said. "The plan worked."

It became clear that the timing was right for a transfer of ownership, Holleman continued. "We all saw that for the incubator to continue to grow, it would be better with one partner and that the most logical partner would be the university."

As a UL Lafayette center, for example, ECOL will be eligible for funding from sources that weren't available under the original ownership arrangement. As part of the university, ECOL will continue to contribute to economic development in Acadiana, Holleman said. "At the same time, this move ensures the Enterprise Center's future."

Early agreements require a public



Roy Holleman has served as executive director of the Enterprise Center of Louisiana for the past eight years.

ROBIN MAY



ECOL provides office space and administrative support to its tenants.

This allowed me to not only build a successful business but to invest in Lafayette's commercial real estate market, something that I would not have been able to do without ECOL's helping hand."

Holleman said all ECOL graduates have remained in Louisiana; most have relocated within Acadiana. Many of those graduates have stayed in northern Lafayette Parish. Recently,

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body to own the building and specify that the center must be used as a business incubator for at least 30 years.

ECOL offers office space, administrative support and guidance to budding entrepreneurs who have solid business plans. New businesses are nurtured there until they "graduate" and move to other locations. A business can stay at ECOL for a maximum of five years.

"Small businesses are really the backbone of job growth. They will hire locally and buy locally," Holleman said.

The incubator is at 100 percent capacity, with businesses ranging from an electrical repair franchise to a commercial fire sprinkler company. Some tenants have only one employee, while others have more than 20.

One recent ECOL graduate is Durel Mail and Imaging Technologies. The first of its kind in Acadiana, it offers high quality, rapid turnaround, short run digital color printing and automated mailing services.

Owner John Durel said one of the biggest expenses for most start-up businesses is rent. By locating first at ECOL, he said, "small start-up businesses like mine are able to 'live within our means' and build up business.

"This, along with the advice, exposure to high level business leaders via the board of directors and the incidentals provided, gives ECOL's clients a leg up.

four ECOL graduates, which have a total of 45 employees, relocated in Carencro.

ECOL sits on prime real estate.

"Basically, we're at the corner of Interstate 10 and I-49, so our manufacturing and distribution businesses, and those who are using the interstate system, couldn't ask for a better place to be located," Holleman said. "Once I-49 continues further south, it will make our area stronger. It will become an even more important corridor."

ECOL works closely with other economic development agencies and programs, such as the Manufacturing Extension of Partnership of Louisiana, Louisiana Small Business Development Center, Lafayette Economic Development Authority and the small business unit of the Louisiana Economic Development Department.

"We've identified what we all do best, and we don't duplicate. We complement each other," Holleman said.

The Louisiana Small Business Development



The business incubator is strategically located near the intersection of Interstate 49 and Interstate 10.

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CURRENT ECOL TENANTS

Double Eagle Inspections

Excel

iMedia

InfoTech

iWrite

Mr. Electric

Pro Tech

Purchasing Partners, Inc.

Safety Compliance

opment Center holds training sessions at ECOL, including seminars for people who are considering opening small businesses. Mark Galyean, that center's director, said it is the only "nationally-accredited, university-based business consulting and training organization in the state. And, our consulting is free."

ECOL assists many businesses that never become tenants. "About 90 percent of people we help will never locate here and shouldn't locate here. We're not the place for them," Holleman said. For instance, ECOL can't accommodate restaurants or retail stores. "But we will help people with those businesses, along with our partners," Holleman said.

ECOL also houses a library of business start-up guides available from Entrepreneur Media Inc. It is the only free, comprehensive library of its kind in Acadiana. It's a joint project with the Louisiana Public Facilities Authority.

With financial unrest in the United States and abroad, some potential entrepreneurs may be reluctant to start a business.

"It's tough. But if you think it through and you prepare a business plan properly, that takes a lot of the fear out of it," Holleman said.

Also, he added, "One of the great things about being in an environment like ECOL is that you have other companies that are starting up. The tenants are all very good about working with each other and helping each other." ■

Bonnette Watched Technology Flourish

DELLA BONNETTE, vice president for Information Technology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, retired in August.

She supervised several departments, including Computing Support Services, Continuing Education, the Electron Microscopy Center, Information Networks, Information Systems, Institutional Research, KRVS Public Radio Acadie, the Marine Survival Training Center, Media Center and Printing Services, and Edith Garland Dupré Library. She was appointed to the post in 1996.

"Della is a perfect example of integrity and commitment," said Dr. Steve Landry, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. "She's been a leader here on campus and she'll be missed."

Bonnette was a long-time university employee, having first served as an instructor and then assistant professor of computer science in the 1970s. She became director of the Computing Center in 1977 and director of Computing and Information Services in 1981.

"I've seen the university change in so many ways," Bonnette said. "It has



Della Bonnette

certainly changed in the number of students enrolled, in selective admissions policies and, of course, in the landscape of campus."

She noted that when she first started working at UL Lafayette, a single computer could fill up a room. Now, the information stored on that computer can be stored on a flash drive.

"The biggest and most profound has to be the impact of the PC and the Internet," she said.

UL Lafayette President Dr. Joseph Savoie cited Bonnette's dedication to the university. "She was a mentor to many here. She will be missed very much," he said.

Bonnette earned an undergraduate degree in mathematics and master's degree in computer science from USL. She served in leadership positions with the Computer Science Accreditation Commission, which accredits computer science programs at colleges and universities; and the Association for Computing Machinery, a professional computer science society.

Film Captures Flavor of Area Plate Lunches

"Raised on Rice and Gravy" celebrates a daily dining tradition in Lafayette, the plate lunch house.

The 30-minute documentary offers a look at the kind of authentic Cajun and Creole cuisine that Acadiana natives serve themselves, not tourists, such as chicken stew, smothered potatoes and stuffed turkey wings.

Conni Castille, a folklorist



and co-director of the film, said the role the modest restaurants play in the community is just as important as the food they serve.

"People used to come home to eat lunch with their families. For farmers and laborers, it was an important daily ritual to sit down and share the midday meal at home. That's not possible today, so neighborhood plate lunch houses have become a substitute for that in South Louisiana culture," she said.

Castille and co-director Alison Bohl focus on three plate lunch houses: the Creole Lunch House on 12th Street, Gary's on Lamar Street and Country Cuisine on University Avenue.

"Raised on Rice and Gravy" is the second documentary directed by Castille and Bohl. "I Always Do My Collars First: A Film About Ironing," earned them the Louisiana Filmmaker Award. Both films were produced by Charles E. Richard, an associate professor of English and director of the Cinematic Arts Workshop at UL Lafayette.

PRINCETON REVIEW PRAISES MBA PROGRAM

UL LAFAYETTE'S MASTER of Business Administration program is cited in the 2009 edition of the Princeton Review's *Best 296 Business Schools*.

"We are pleased to recommend the B. I. Moody III College of Business Administration to readers of our book and users of our web site as one of the best institutions they could attend to earn an MBA," said Robert Franek, Princeton Review's vice president for publishing.

Princeton Review editors observed that UL Lafayette's business college offers an MBA with a concentration in health care administration, which they describe as "an appealing option to the area's many health care professionals."

UL Lafayette students surveyed by the Princeton Review noted that faculty in the MBA program have experience in their fields. Such practical knowledge helps them provide information that students will need in the workplace, one UL Lafayette student reported.



COLLEGE OF SCIENCES NOW CARRIES FORMER PRESIDENT'S NAME

COMMENCEMENT FOR THE COLLEGE of Sciences in May had special meaning for Dr. Ray Authement, former president of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

The college was named the Ray P. Authement College of Sciences in his honor.

And, he presented a diploma to his grandson, Philippe Prouet II, who graduated with a degree in biology. With that act, Authement fulfilled a promise he had made to one of his two daughters. When the late Kathleen Authement Prouet was battling leukemia, he had pledged that he would personally hand a diploma to Phillippe.

Authement retired in June after 34 years as UL Lafayette's president and more than 50 years of service at the university. When he retired, he was the longest serving president of a public university in the country.

Julie Simon-Dronet, director Communications and Marketing at UL Lafayette and chair of the Authement Recognition Committee, proposed naming the College of Sciences for him. Dr. Steve Landry, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at UL Lafayette, and Winfred Sibille, vice chairman of the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors, sought the ULS



Dr. Ray P. Authement

board's approval. Board members voted unanimously for the change. "For his name to be tied to the College of Sciences is perfect because of his history with the college, as a student for four years, then as a professor for eight years, as an administrator for eight years and as university president for 34 years. He led the college to national and international recognition," Simon-Dronet said.

The Ray P. Authement College of Sciences has continually received grants

from renowned organizations such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes for Health.

Dr. Bradd Clark, dean of the college, noted that Authement always supported the College of Science and believed "first class research goes hand in hand with first class teaching. We have had 15 straight years of merit-based raises for the faculty, raises in the bad years as well as the good. We've had a number of endowed professorships and chairs, created thanks to tireless fund raising."

Dr. Sally Clausen, the state's commissioner of higher education, praised Authement for his leadership. "We thank you for giving us your energy, your intelligence, your life and our future."

Authement thanked his family and many others for their support during his career. "They say that memories are the treasures of the mind and I leave with so many precious memories. . . I leave you with a strong university, one that is financially better off than it has ever been and a faculty that is as prepared as any I've ever worked with. With appreciation and love that I have for you and all of those who came before you, I thank you so very much for a great 34 years."

Gaines Adds Honorary Doctorate To Long List of Honors

ERNEST J. GAINES, acclaimed author and UL Lafayette's writer-in-residence emeritus, received an honorary doctorate of letters from the university in May.

The symbolic degree was presented during Graduate School's Commencement.

Gaines is one of the most significant American authors of the 20th century. He is best known for three of his novels, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, *A Lesson Before Dying* and *A Gathering of Old Men*.

Gaines' relationship with UL Lafayette began in 1981 when he accepted an invitation to serve as a visiting professor of creative writing. He became the university's writer-in-residence in 1984; he retired in 2004.

The author has often said the two most important moves in his life were when he left Louisiana to be educated in 1948 and when he returned in 1963 to

work on one of his novels, *Catherine Cormier*.

"Since then, I've added a third important move to my life: when I accepted the invitation to teach creative writing at USL. . ." he continued. USL is now known as the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

The Ernest J. Gaines Center will be built on the third floor of Edith Garland Dupré Library on campus. It will house the only



Ernest J. Gaines

complete collection of Gaines' scholarship in the world. The center will coordinate research related to him and possibly other African-American writers in Louisiana.

Gaines' work has been translated into at least 17 languages and earned him a National Book Critics Circle Award, National Humanities Medal and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. Talk show host Oprah Winfrey chose *A Lesson Before Dying* as an Oprah Book Club selection in 1997.