

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.