

## NEW PRESIDENT HAS CLOSE TIES TO UL LAFAYETTE

**D**r. E. Joseph Savoie's connection with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette is strong and his experience in higher education is broad.

"The university has been a very important part of not only my life, but my family's. My mother finished here in the 1940s. I came here as a high school student on debate trips. I was so enamored with it that I decided to stay," he said in a recent interview.

"I think my professional experiences have prepared me for the responsibility (of president). But my commitment is more than a professional commitment. It's a personal commitment."

Savoie is a 1976 graduate of the University of Southwestern Louisiana, now known as UL Lafayette.

Before becoming the state's commissioner of higher education in 1996, he served as the university's vice president for University Advancement, executive director of the Alumni Association, program director for the Union Program Council, and Stu-

dent Government advisor. He was also an adjunct assistant professor.

Savoie received bachelor's and master's degrees in education from USL. He earned a doctor of education in educational leadership and administration from Columbia University Teacher's College in New York, a nationally recognized graduate school of education.

He has held many state, regional and national positions. Former Govs. M. J. "Mike" Foster, Edwin Edwards and Kathleen Blanco tapped him for higher education committees and commissions during their administrations. Savoie was a cabinet member in three governors' administrations – Foster's, Blanco's and Bobby Jindal's. His regional and national affiliations include the



Dr. E. Joseph Savoie

Southern Regional Education Board, the national State Higher Education Executive Officers, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, and the American Association of School Administrators.

His awards and honors include the 2007 CASE District IV Chief Executive Leadership Award, which was renamed the "Dr. E. Joseph Savoie Chief Executive Leadership Award"; the 2004 University of Louisiana at Lafayette Outstanding

Alumnus Award; and the 2000 Henry Mason Award, which is presented by the Louisiana Chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

Savoie and his wife, Gail, have a daughter, Jennifer Blaire Saulnier, and a son, Adam Savoie. ■

property; students; and athletics.

"I want this to be a collaborative, participatory process. . . These work groups will help us focus in on specifics. I'm anxious to hear from them," Savoie said.

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The groups will complete their reports before he takes office "so we can hit the floor running," he said.

Savoie won't develop a long-term strategic plan until he can gather more information and opinions from the public and UL Lafayette students, faculty and staff. But he already has a few overall goals in mind.

"I think one thing we can do really quickly is address some physical issues on campus, such as the appearance and conditions of facilities. It is no one's fault.

They are a natural result of two decades of underfunding.

"Longer term, we have to solidify the university's academic status, such as its designation by the Carnegie Foundation as

a Research University with High Research Activity. One way we'll do that is by continuing to develop our graduate programs.

"We will focus on student success. The university has begun doing some of those things and we can build on that. We will take a very comprehensive approach to student success."

Savoie said it's important that "there be regular and open communications, not only in the university community but the broader community."

He has long-standing relationships with many key leaders in Acadiana. "We will make sure that we work together to improve the community at large," he said.

Savoie described universities as "stabilizers" in communities. "They have existed for 1,200 years. They have lived through the creation and destruction of dozens of countries.

"UL Lafayette is over 100 years old. It has seen any number of changes and crises and progress. It has provided educational opportunities, created economic opportunities and improved the quality of life of people in the region and it will continue to do that."

The role of a university president is to make sure the assets of the university are being used for the greatest benefit of the people it serves, he continued. At the same time, the president must "always have an eye out for what the university will need 10 years from now, 20 years from now.

"Thinking about the future is as important as responding to the present. Obviously Dr. Authement has done that. I hope I can do as good a job." ■