

## Getting Ready

Team to offer recommendations to UL Lafayette's new president

**A** TRANSITION TEAM is helping Dr. E. Joseph Savoie prepare to become the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's sixth president later this year.

Savoie, Louisiana's commissioner of higher education, will succeed Dr. Ray P. Authement, who will soon retire after 34 years as UL Lafayette's president. Savoie was chosen for the university's top post by the University of Louisiana System in December after a seven-month national search.

The transition team was formed primarily "to make sure that we don't disrupt the momentum of the university," Savoie said, in a recent interview. He has spent time each week on UL Lafayette's campus, meeting with a variety of groups to learn more about the school's strengths and areas that need improvement.

"The university is very solid, academically and financially," Savoie said.

In January, he appointed Jerry Luke LeBlanc to lead his transition team. LeBlanc was commissioner of administration during former Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco's administration, from January 2004 through December 2007. He had previously served in the Louisiana House of Representatives and was chairman of the powerful House Committee on Appropriations.

In 1996, LeBlanc authored legislation that established performance-based budgeting, a method of measuring the value produced by public services and programs. Louisiana was the



Dr. E. Joseph Savoie and his wife, Gail, are shown at the University of Louisiana System meeting in December, where he was named UL Lafayette's next president.

first state to implement performance-based budgeting. That accountability system earned LeBlanc the Public Official of the Year award presented by *Governing Magazine*.

As the state's chief financial and administrative officer, LeBlanc was in charge of a \$30 billion budget.

Savoie said LeBlanc "made strategic investments to improve quality of life in the state. He managed that through the greatest natural and man-made disaster in American history and left over a billion dollar surplus in the process.

"He's extremely competent, well-tested and I trust him."

Last fall, a panel of national education specialists spent several weeks eval-

uating UL Lafayette. Such assessments are routinely conducted in conjunction with a leadership change.

The panel was led by Dr. James L. Fisher, president emeritus of Towson University and president emeritus of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

The panel's recommendations range from student program requirements to faculty hiring to fund raising.

In April, Savoie formed presidential transition advisory teams composed of volunteer community and business leaders. They will examine six general areas: academics and faculty; economic development and research; university advancement; facilities and

## 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.

They are a natural result of two decades of underfunding.

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**'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.'**

**DR. E. JOSEPH SAVOIE**

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.

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." ■