

Teaching Honor

Foundation says 'Thanks' to university president in a lasting way

WHEN THE UL LAFAYETTE FOUNDATION was established in 1957, Dr. Ray Authement was just beginning his career at the university as an associate professor of mathematics.

After 50 years of service – the past 34 as president – he will retire this spring. The Foundation has named its annual Excellence in Teaching Award in his honor.

Dr. L. Dwyann Lafleur, a physics pro-

essor, is the first recipient of the Dr. Ray Authement Excellence in Teaching Award.

Lafleur was one of Authement's students in the 1960s. But the committee of faculty members that chose Lafleur for the teaching award was unaware of that connection.

Recipients of the Foundation's 2008 Distinguished Professor Award are John Hathorn, a professor of visual arts; Hector Lasala, a professor of architecture; and Dr. Ardith Sudduth, an assistant professor of nursing.

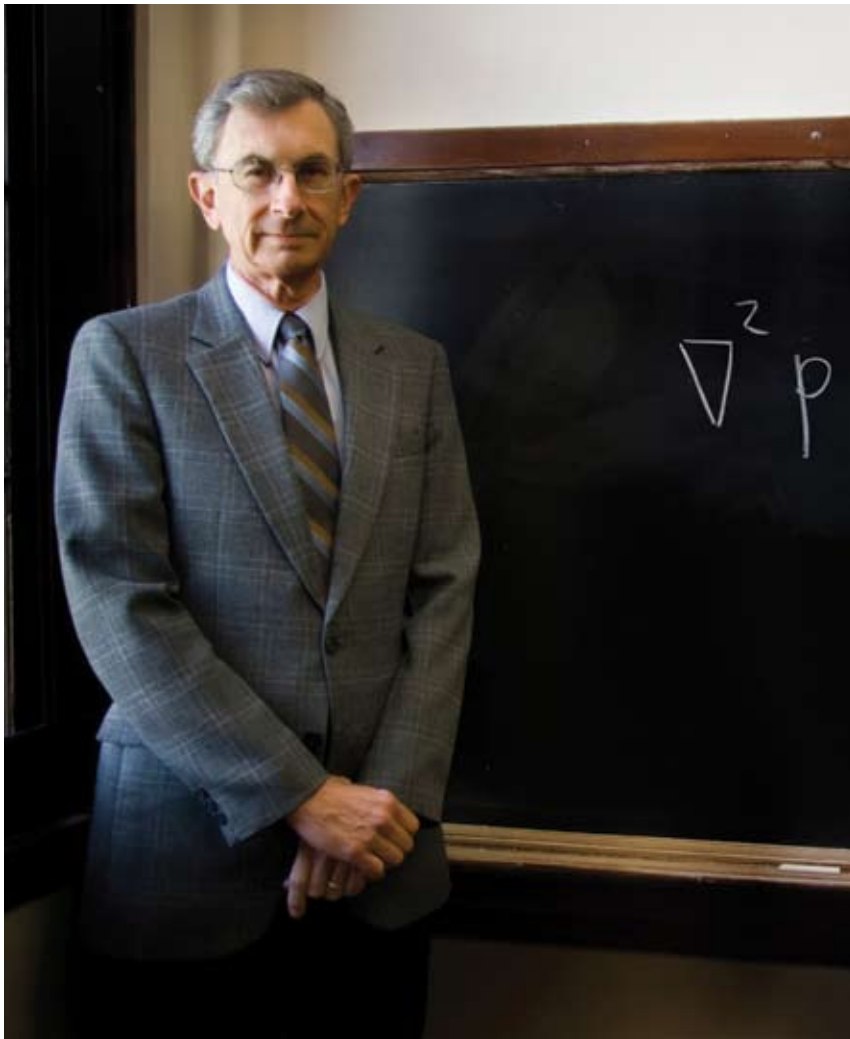
Authement was responsible, in a sense, for the Foundation's coming of age in the 1980s. During its first 25 years, its board of trustees primarily managed contributions to the university. In 1981, the university's president asked the late Alfred Lamson, an independent oilman in Lafayette, to lead a major fund drive. That campaign raised \$10 million.

"Since then, we've grown tremendously, in terms of our support for university capital projects and sophisticated investment fund management. We have a diversified portfolio due to the strength of our investment committees and the expertise of board members over the years," said Julie Bolton Falgout, executive director of the Foundation.

By the late 1990s, the university's endowments had reached about \$45 million. The *Investing in Our Future* campaign, held in conjunction with UL Lafayette's 100th birthday in 2000, substantially boosted that amount. Today, the university's gifted assets total more than \$130 million.

Falgout said the Foundation's board of trustees will honor Authement in other ways. "But the board was especially interested in finding a way to convey to future generations that he was, first, an extraordinary teacher," Falgout said. So it named its Excellence in Teaching Award.

The UL Lafayette Foundation has presented the Distinguished Professor Award since 1965 and the Excellence in Teaching Award since 1992.



Dr. L. Dwyann Lafleur

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PROFESSOR CREDITS OTHERS FOR HIS SUCCESS

Dr. L. Dwynn Lafleur

Sitting on a shelf in Dr. L. Dwynn Lafleur's office in Broussard Hall is a copy of the manual of the first digital computer on campus.

Having taught in the physics department since 1970, Lafleur said he has kept the manual of the IBM 1620 to remind him how far the university and the department have come. The manual is also a symbol for Lafleur of how computers and research have progressed over the past four decades.

A native of Jennings, La., Lafleur graduated from UL Lafayette in 1962 with a bachelor's degree in physics. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Houston in 1969 and returned to Lafayette shortly after to begin what is now a 38-year teaching career.

Lafleur has taught nearly every undergraduate physics class at UL Lafayette as well as several graduate-level courses. He is the recipient of the Dr. Ray Authement Excellence in Teaching Award.

Besides his teaching duties, Lafleur also performs research in computational acoustics and ultrasonics. His research involves penetrating the earth's surface with sound for various purposes, including locating buried objects and measuring the quality and properties of different sediment in wetlands or coastal regions.

Lafleur said computer advancements have greatly reduced the time required to complete research. He vividly remembers the days when punch cards were the latest technology that allowed for one or two computations a day. And he remembers when the IBM 1620's memory – a whopping 20K or 20,000 words – was considered “high-tech” in the 1960s.

“I'm not a patient person,” he joked.

“Now, you can run your simulations rapidly and get answers rapidly, doing calculations in a few minutes and producing graphics to illustrate the results.”

Despite the appeal of computers, Lafleur said teaching students is what he enjoys the most about his profession.

“When you're teaching it, you're learning it,” he said. “I'm learning this stuff all over again, or really, some of it for the first time. That's the part I really like about it.”

Spending whatever time it takes to ensure students are learning the material is something Lafleur said he learned from his professors at UL Lafayette, including University President Dr. Ray Authement, who

PROFESSOR, STUDENTS TEACH EACH OTHER

John Hathorn

For John Hathorn, teaching and creating his own art are inextricably intertwined.

The professor of visual arts teaches painting and drawing. He is also the senior project coordinator for the Visual Arts Department.

Hathorn has exhibited regularly in Dallas, Houston and New Orleans galleries. His work has been shown in solo exhibitions in university and museum venues in Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi. His paintings



Dr. John Hathorn

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taught a modern algebra class that Lafleur took in the early 1960s. Lafleur noted that Authement's class was held in metal buildings in “little Abbeville,” an area of campus near Rougeou and Griffin Hall that was considered the outskirts of the university 40 years ago.

“He was such a good teacher. I think back and I've had three or four teachers that made me, and he's one of them,” Lafleur said of Authement.

have been included in numerous national group exhibitions and are represented in many private and public collections.

Gordon Brooks, dean of UL Lafayette's College of the Arts, said Hathorn's priorities are clear. “Student work first, personal work last.”

Hathorn, a recipient of the 2008 Distinguished Professor Award, said he considers it a privilege to teach. “It's a huge opportunity to instill all kinds of things, in terms

of confidence and work ethic,” he said.

Hathorn recently wrote a brief essay about teaching. In it, he noted that teaching requires a capacity to listen, and listening carries an obligation to nurture students’ talents.

“The capacity to listen and to observe what others may not hear or see in themselves, furthermore to shed some temporary light toward developing insight and confidence, is what distinguishes a good listener – one truly willing to assume the privilege and obligation of what is heard,” he wrote.

Hathorn’s students learn about the history of art and study the master painters. “At the same time, I encourage them to call all that into question. And, in the same light, I want them to call much of what they receive from me into question,” he said.

He also challenges his students to explore what is unfamiliar, pressing each one to become a “visual archaeologist. We charge a student to excavate layers of possibilities, layers of information, to get something that is really meaningful to him.” It is at that point, he continued, when a student finds his own voice.

The professor said he learns from his students. “There are plenty of times when I wake up in the middle of the night thinking about a student’s work as well as my own,” he said. When that happens, he is reminded of the connection between teaching and his own work.

In addition to teaching, Hathorn takes an active role in Department of Visual Arts’ activities. Brian Kelly, head of that department, credits him as “a major voice in our department developing into one of the premier visual arts program in the country. . . John possesses an endless amount of energy and freely devotes that energy for the betterment and support of the department’s and university’s educational mission.”



Hector LaSala

Over the past 16 years, Hathorn has led 17 trips by faculty and students to Houston art museums. He and a colleague, Allan Jones, obtained UL Lafayette Instructional Improvement Mini-Grants to help finance 12 of those trips.

YOUNG ARCHITECTS LEARN BY SERVING OTHERS

Hector LaSala

Professor Hector LaSala wants his students to learn more than how to design buildings on a computer screen. He encourages them to get their hands dirty by working on construction jobs. And, he shows by example how they can use their talents to change lives.

“Above all, I hope our program allows students to experience the fulfillment of pro bono work. My main mission is to graduate students who realize their responsibility to be not just architects, but citizen architects,” he said.

His work has earned him the 2008 Distinguished Professor Award from the UL Lafayette Foundation. He received its Excellence in Teaching Award in 2001.

LaSala and colleague Geoff Gj-

ertson are co-directors of the College of the Arts’ Building Institute, which enables students to turn theories into hands-on experience. Through the institute, they earn course credit by working on community service projects.

Over the past five years, for example, more than 200 architecture students have worked on projects at the Acadiana Outreach Center in downtown Lafayette, which provides shelter and assistance to homeless and poor clients. Projects include a communal amphitheater, a gazebo, a meditation park and transforming an existing warehouse into a distribution center for free clothing.

Through the Building Institute, architecture majors have also assisted one of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Lafayette by building playground equipment, benches and a canopy over its basketball court.

Gordon Brooks, dean of the College of the Arts, said one of its goals is to encourage collaboration across disciplines.

“Hector is a prime example of a faculty member who takes this seriously,” he said.

Since 1994, LaSala has brought students from all departments of the

college to design and build stages and props for plays performed at Burke Hall on campus. He is also set designer for the Summer Youth Shakespeare Ensemble.

LaSala is an advocate for energy-efficient architecture and urban housing for downtown Lafayette.

In 1983, he and UL Lafayette architecture professor emeritus Edward Cazayoux built an energy-efficient home on university property. Their work received the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Design Innovation Award. Both are members of the university's BeauSoleil Team, which is participating in the U.S. Department of Energy's fourth Solar Decathlon.

Last year, LaSala learned that the Building Institute's Outreach Center project received \$280,000 in federal funds to buy property and plan the conversion of a 14,000-square-foot warehouse adjacent to the center into a multi-story complex that will incorporate apartments and commercial space.

He said he values the opportunity that UL Lafayette gives him to pursue his many professional interests.

"I am so grateful for the creative freedom I am allowed in my teaching. My research exists because of it," he said.

HEEDING MOM'S ADVICE LED TO REWARDING CAREER

Dr. Ardith Sudduth

Dr. Ardith Sudduth can't pinpoint why she became a nurse. But after decades in the profession, she'd have it no other way.

"My mother was a great motivator because she insisted my sister and I go to college. She didn't care what our choice of major was – just that we went to college and graduated," said Sudduth, an assistant professor in the College of Nursing and Allied Health Professions.

At the time, most female college students sought degrees in teaching or nursing, Sudduth said. Her sister became a teacher, while she became a nurse.

Sudduth earned a bachelor's degree, two master's degrees and a doctorate. She is a nationally certified family nurse practitioner. In December, she completed

a certificate program as a geriatric nurse practitioner.

"Learning is a lifelong adventure, especially in nursing and health care," Sudduth said. "I want to excite young students about nursing and let them know that nursing is a profession that provides caring and competent care to all who need it."

Dr. Melinda Oberleitner, head of the Nursing Department, said Sudduth is popular with students, who describe her as "a clinical expert who is approachable, engaging and a great instructor. They often comment on her helpfulness and on her caring for students as individuals."

Sudduth sometimes incorporates games into her lessons to engage her students. For instance, she has them participate in a game that helps them learn what

Sudduth excels in research as well as teaching. Most recently, she and nursing colleague Dr. Sudah Patel presented their findings from a study on student stressors following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.

"We realized that our students were feeling the effects of the hurricanes and that we could help alleviate some of their stressors," said Sudduth. "We encouraged them to talk with friends and family and also told them about free resources on campus like counseling. We wanted them to take advantage of these offerings so their studies wouldn't suffer."

The two presented their findings at the prestigious World Psychiatric Association International Congress late last year.

Sudduth received the Outstanding Volunteer Award for her work as a nurse



Dr. Ardith Sudduth

it's like to age and to be forced to deal with age-related conditions.

"They go through different stages of aging, like walking with a cane or wearing glasses that depict eyesight with macular degeneration. They really get a sense of what aging feels like," she said.

practitioner at the Lafayette Community Health Care Clinic. Sudduth also received the Col. Jean Migliorino and Lt. Col. Philip Piccione 1951 Commemorative Endowed Nursing Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence. She holds the Hamilton Group Endowed Professorship in Nursing. ■