

# The Almagest

a publication of LSU Shreveport



Photo Editor Jessica Ingram captured Claudia Feliciano, sophomore, studying for her Intro to Psychology midterm in the Noel Memorial Library.

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"DO NOT THINK OF TODAY'S FAILURES, BUT OF THE SUCCESS THAT MAY COME TOMORROW." - Helen Keller

## Louisiana senator works to "cap" TOPS

Iris MacLean  
STAFF WRITER

Senator Dan Morrish is sponsoring Senate Bill 34, which will place a cap limiting the amount of money to be awarded to students receiving the TOPS scholarship if passed.

Currently, TOPS pays the tuition of qualified Louisiana high school graduates of any state school, or pays the weighted average of all state school tuitions for any other approved in-state school. The proposed bill would limit TOPS by an inflation index for higher education. This means, as tuition increases each year, the amount of TOPS a student can receive will not necessarily rise with it.

"The whole reason I stayed in Louisiana and am able to go to college is because of TOPS, so if I had to pay out of pocket it would be very difficult to continue attending school," said M.E. Breithaupt, freshman, fine arts.

Like Breithaupt, many students that went to high school in Louisiana are able to attend college with their tuition paid by TOPS. While this bill will not take the scholarship away from students, it may cause some to have to pay a portion of their tuition out of pocket as tuition rates change each year.

"I already work two different jobs on top of being in school full-time in order to pay for food, rent, and bills, and I can barely scrape by

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Drama Club members "acting" out by the fountains for a picture featured in LSU Shreveport's 1984 yearbook.

Photo courtesy of Emily Wright

## Drama club shines in the spotlight

Emily Wright  
STAFF WRITER

The Drama Club at LSU Shreveport is moving forward as it is producing more plays, such as the upcoming production of *Three Zany Comedies* in April.

"Now that the Drama Club is doing actual productions, it's not just a social club that supports theatre, but an organization that gets involved and puts on plays," said Associate Professor of Speech Robert Alford II.

According to *The Manifest*, an LSU yearbook published in the year 1984, the Drama Club started anew in the Spring semester of 1982 after the club experienced some heartaches and failures while becoming a part of campus activities.

The years following 1985 were ones of whispers from the Drama Club. Little is known about the club's activities and productions. However, recent productions have helped to shape the Drama Club into what it is today.

"The first play actually produced on-campus was *A Raisin in the Sun* back in 2000," Alford said.

Alford stated that because there had been so little history of people doing plays on-campus, it was really hard to get students to audition for *A Raisin in the Sun*.

"For a long time when we did plays, the majority of actors were not students but community members, and that's only recently started to change," Alford said. "We did a production of *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress*

in 2011 and that was the first time we did a production where all the actors were students. In *Southern Girls*, all but one of the actors was a student. So it's really flipped around where we have enough student interest to cast entire plays now."

From 2000 to 2007 most plays were performed in the University Center Theater, but there were some scheduling conflicts.

"The biggest obstacle is that it's a multi-space, not only used by a lot of organizations on-campus, but a lot of off-campus organizations, too. So, it's very difficult to book the theater for the amount of time that you need," Alford said.

So the Drama Club moved to a classroom on the third floor of Bronson Hall that was well-liked and used by the club because of

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## Moodle voting now open for 2014-2015 Student Government officers



Students may now vote on Moodle for their 2014-2015 Student Government Association officers.

Students have a choice between three candidates for president: Brianna Mason, sophomore, psychology; Kirsten Howard, junior, public relations; Matt Kay, senior, market management. The presidential candidates participated in a debate last Wednesday in the University Center Port, pictured left.

For the offices of vice president and secretary, only one candidate entered the race for each position. Garrett Jones is the sole named candidate for vice president, Natasha Van Der Merwe is the sole named candidate for secretary, although the Moodle voting page does include a write-in option for students.

Voting will remain open until Friday.

Photo by Malvya Chintakindi



# Is online the classroom of the future?

## An Almagest at LSUS Guest Editorial

**Jennifer Middleton**  
STAFF WRITER

### Editorial Policy

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Although campus life is an excellent way to connect with fellow students and get involved with the school, for many students, online classes are the best way to go.

There are a number of reasons why online courses are preferable. These courses offer flexibility, allowing students to make time for schoolwork in the midst of their sometimes hectic and stressful lives. Many students work full time, which makes it hard to set up a class schedule. Online courses ease that burden a little, because rather than having to appear in class at a specific time and date, the work can be done whenever the student can make time during the week.

Building off of that, online classes also help foster a greater sense of responsibility; anyone can walk into a classroom and sit at a desk for an hour, but online courses require more discipline. There are no teachers taking roll and marking ab-

sences two or three days a week—students have to remember on their own to log onto the school site and do their assignments, so there is a certain amount of self-discipline that goes along with it.

Online courses are also beneficial for students who live farther away from campus, because they can cut down on the daily commute, or even eliminate it entirely. With the price of gas being so high, anything that reduces the amount of driving that needs to be done is definitely a good thing.

In spite of all the positive aspects, there are also a lot of downsides to online courses. One such issue arises in the lack of face-to-face interaction with the instructor.

Certain subjects, like math and science, can be extremely difficult to learn from textbooks and PowerPoint slides alone. The human element is often necessary when it comes to more difficult subjects; in face-to-face classes, students can easily interact with teachers when they are having trouble understanding and need clarification.

Another problem with online classes is the

lack of accountability. Without the presence of an instructor and classmates, students may be more inclined to cheat on assignments. Some students might even resort to paying someone else to do the class work for them. Since all of the work takes place outside of the classroom—and usually off-campus—there is no way for instructors to know which students are completing their assignments honestly and which ones are taking shortcuts.

Students who take classes exclusively online are less likely to get involved in things on campus. Participating in events and interacting with fellow students is an important part of the college experience, but with fewer students actually spending time on campus, it runs the risk of becoming obsolete.

Overall though, the benefits of online classes ultimately outweigh the downsides. They allow for flexibility and easy access, and they provide students with opportunities to learn self-discipline.

### TOPS cont.

with that. I can't imagine having to find a way to pay part of my tuition," Breithaupt said.

Chandler VanGossen, freshman, environmental sciences, chose LSU Shreveport because he went to high school in the area and was hoping the scholarship would allow him to attend college for little-to-no cost.

"The TOPS scholarship was a deciding factor for me to stay in Louisiana for college. Had I not received [it], I would've probably gone to a bigger school in Texas," VanGossen said.

VanGossen said he and many of his friends have the TOPS scholarship, but the cap wouldn't necessarily affect them enough to not be able to pay for school.

"If TOPS capped the amount of money I got, I probably wouldn't be too badly affected," VanGossen said. "It would still be cheaper for me to go to school here. However, I'd probably just stay to get my main courses done. Then, transfer out of the state since I would be paying money out of my pocket anyways, and get a better, more suited education for myself."

Jeffrey Sadow, associate professor of po-

litical science, posted an article on his blog, [www.jeffsadow.blogspot.com](http://www.jeffsadow.blogspot.com), with his opinion in regards to the passing of SB 34. Sadow believes that the bill is a good start to addressing the overspending of TOPS, but it lacks in many areas and doesn't address the real issue.

"What started as a need-based enterprise in name was made into a scholarship program, but never has operated as a scholarship program because its standards – basically the same as admissions criteria to get into most baccalaureate-and-above public universities in the state – are relatively so low," Sadow said.

Sadow notes that nearly 70 percent of all Louisiana high school graduates receive the award based on the low standards and because these are marginal students, many of them either lose their scholarship during their college years or simply do not graduate. Currently, there is no system of recovering money spent on these students. Sadow believes the solution is not just containing how much money is spent, rather regulating how this money is spent.

Sadow offers a strategy of providing "a free

tuition ride to anybody who scored at a certain level on the American College Test and class graduation rank comparable to top out-of-state institutions, and then graduate awards downwards as credentials for each school decline."

"This regime brings the advantage of better matching student ability to school, motivating students to perform better in high school to earn more of their tuition thus improving eventual outcomes, and discouraging marginally-motivated students from wasting theirs and taxpayers' time and resources," Sadow said.

Morrish serves as a Louisiana State Senator for District 25. SB 34 was introduced by Morrish on Feb. 4. The bill was withdrawn from the senate prior to introduction on both Feb. 7 and March 10.

SB 34 is similar to a bill that did not pass last year called SB 83. Morrish also sponsored this bill. SB 83 limited TOPS to pay the previous years tuition plus no more than 10% with the start of the 2013-2014 school year.

### DRAMA cont.

the room's unique setting and small stage. However, this was only a temporary place due to the room being converted into the electronic media journalism studio that it is today.

With the support of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Larry Anderson, Alford was able to write a grant for the Board of Regents Support Fund for the commission of the Black Box Theatre. The Black Box debuted in 2007.

"We got permission to use two separate classrooms, which had to have a wall knocked down to combine the two classrooms, to paint the room black, and to put theatre equipment in there," Alford said.

The Drama Club was dormant until about 2010 when the club finally had enough theatre majors to get involved. The club reached out to students to become involved and held fundraisers to raise awareness.

The 2013 fall semester marked *Southern Girls* as the first production sponsored by the Drama Club. Alford said that until last semester, Drama Club members might have been involved in a play, but had never actually sponsored a play.

The Vice President of the Drama Club Bet-

ty Matson, sophomore, field and organismal biology, became involved with the club as the technical administrator for Southern Girls.

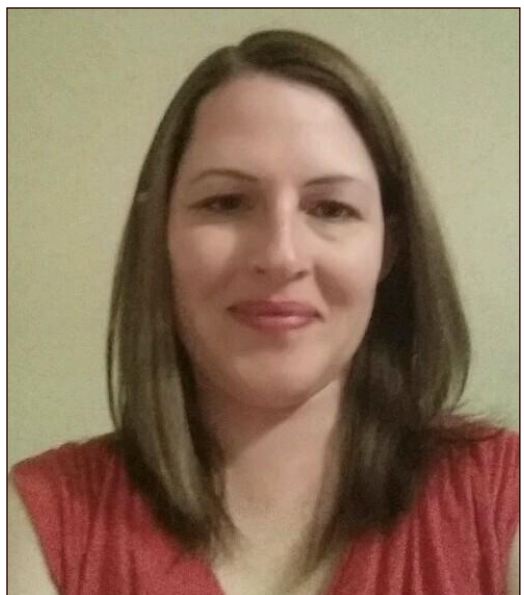


Photo courtesy of Betty Matson

Drama Club Vice President Betty Matson, sophomore, field and organismal biology

"I have always enjoyed acting. I think it's a magical thing to be on stage and portraying another character," Matson said.

She wanted to continue the enjoyment of theatre so she auditioned in February for a part in the three one-act comedies and received the role of Laura in *Dances with Football* by Prince Duren. She described the plotline by saying that it is a comedy about an epic battle over a television remote between a husband and wife.

Members of the Drama Club have the opportunity to be involved in productions by participating as actors, ushers, or by selling tickets at the box office, or working backstage.

"I think they gain camaraderie with people who enjoy the same interest and the support of each other helping them to be the best actor that they can be," Matson said.

The performance dates of the Drama Club production of *Three Zany Comedies* are April 24 through April 26 at 8 p.m., and April 27 at 2 p.m. in the LSUS Black Box Theatre, BH 111.

There are currently 11 members in the Drama Club. Students interested in joining can contact Robert Alford at [robert.alford@lsus.edu](mailto:robert.alford@lsus.edu).



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