

LOYOLA CHAIR IN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS

2000-2001

Environmental Communications is a nationally emerging speciality in the field of Communications. There are presently fewer than five such endowed chairs in the United States. Most are held by persons with a Ph.D. in Communications or a related field or people who have served a distinguished career in the journalism private sector. At Loyola University, the holder of the Loyola Chair in Environmental Communications has a Ph.D. in vertebrate Zoology and has spent the majority of his career as an environmental educator as Executive Director of the Louisiana Nature Center. In this role, he has focused his attention on communicating complex environmental issues to the breadth of the Greater New Orleans community - from five year olds through school age to adults. He has developed means of communicating environmental information to those who are highly educated and those with less success.

The field of environmental communications is an increasingly important element in the state of Louisiana. No other state is so dependant on its natural resources and their direct and indirect use as is Louisiana. Much valuable time and effort is spent dealing with poorly understood and/or mis-information. It is, therefore, crucial that our state=s professional communicators (especially print and broadcast journalists) refine their abilities to communicate the often very complex and vitally important information relative to the impact of human use of natural resources on the environment. The co-existence of economic and environmental well-being is vitally important to Louisiana. If the citizens do not understand the implications of the use of natural resources and exposure to the by-products of their use, then the state will never reach its economic and human potential.

An environmentally educated citizenry will make the right choices for our state=s economic and environmental health.

One of the foci of the Loyola program is to improve communications among stakeholders in environmental issues in the State of Louisiana. This is done by LUCEC staff working on environmental intervention programs (such as the EPA=s Common Sense Initiative) and hosting the Institute for Environmental Communications (a program that brings together citizens from business/industry, environmental activism, government, science, and the media to have an open discussion of the issues).

Another is to work with environmental communicators in Latin America (Belize, Guatemala, and Trinidad at this time) and the Caribbean (the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) to solve their problems. The economic linkage between Louisiana and Latin America is obvious and is part of economic plans throughout the state.

The Loyola Chair in Environmental Communications sponsors the only program in this arena in the state. It is one of only eight of its kind in the nation, and the only with the holder of

the chair being a scientist and having a background in environmental education.

The endowment funds available to the Loyola Chair in Environmental Communications have served as the cornerstone for the activities of the Center for Environmental Communications (LUCEC), and its subsidiary program - the Institute for Environmental Communications (IEC).

The following are activities directly funded by the endowment proceeds:

- \$ General operation of the office was guaranteed.
- \$ The web site was maintained (www.loyno.edu/lucec).
- \$ the chair holder was able to be active in the International Federation of Environmental Journalism, thus networking with international colleagues.
- \$ LUCEC was able to maintain communications projects in the tropics. This year, a program was developed proposing to train environmental journalists and ecotourism businesses in the Caribbean (proposal sent to the U.S. Agency for International Development), a program to provide training for biomedical technicians on the detection of Chagas Disease in Guatemala (with Dr. Patricia Dorn) was recorded on video, and discussions have continued with Carlos Pérez Brito (LU >96) regarding a joint environmental communications venture with the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (this has been strengthened by including the International Center for Journalism, Washington, DC).
- \$ Hosted a number of national and international environmental journalists (see section below).
- \$ Finalized funding for a survey of broadcast editors (as gatekeepers) regarding how they analyze environmental story opportunities at their stations (survey by Dale Willman, Midwest Editor of National Public Radio).
- \$ the LUCEC traveling exhibit was updated to reflect changes in the program.
- \$ Magazines and other publications were made available for students.
- \$ Student workers were hired to work on LUCEC projects.
- \$ New software was purchased to maintain efficient communication.
- \$ The IEC held its second program with 30 graduating Fellows (for further information, see www.loyno.edu/lucec/fellows.html).

ENHANCEMENT OF CONTINUING/NEW AREAS OF RESEARCH/INQUIRY

The funds allowed the Chair to attend meetings, visit with colleagues, and gather extensive research materials for his communications research program.

PUBLICATIONS: PEER REVIEWED

Thomas, R.A. (2000). Where might we look for environmental heroes? *Women in Natural*

Resources 21, 35-36.

Thomas, R.A., M.A. Di-Bernardo, and Heinz Grillitsch. (2001). *Philodryas pallidus* Werner, 1926: A synonym of the colubrid snake *Liopholidophis varius* (Fischer, 1884) from Madagascar. *Journal of Herpetology* 35, 120-122.

Thomas, R. A. submitted (recommended by reviewers). A revision of the South American snake genus *Philodryas* Wagler, 1830 (Serpentes, Colubridae, Xenodontinae). *Tulane Studies in Botany and Zoology*.

Thomas, R.A., M.B. Harvey, and L. Dirksen. In press (2001). A reconsideration of the systematic status of *Philodryas aestivus levisquamus* Thomas 1998 (Serpentes, Colubridae, Xenodontinae). *Tulane Studies in Botany and Zoology*.

PUBLICATIONS: NON-PEER REVIEWED

Thomas, R. A. and J. L.. Bast. 2001. 14 Tips for Talking to Reporters. *EnviroDecisions* 3(4), 1-2.

Thomas, R. A. In press. The Stressful Lives of Louisiana Environmentlists. *Loyola University New Orleans Center for Environmental Communications, Miscellaneous Publications, 1*.

Thomas, R.A. Submitted. Ecotourism Can Be a Good Thing. *E Magazine*.

PRESENTATIONS

Environmental Journalism Academy, College Park, MD, *Basic Techniques in Researching Scientific Topics*, June 30, 2000.

Environmental Journalism Academy, College Park, MD, Panel: *Ethics and Truthfulness in Environmental Reporting*, June 30, 2000.

Communications Faculty, Universidad de San Carlos, Guatemala City, Guatemala, *Environmental Communications: How Do We Obtain Our Information and How is It Used?*, July 13, 2000.

Cypress Academy, Westwego, LA, *Spiders of the New Orleans Area*, July 19, 2000.

Louisiana Association of Business Communicators, New Orleans, *Environmental Justice: A Challenge for Business*, August 16, 2000.

Cypress Academy, Westwego, LA, *Marine Organisms of Louisiana*, September 20, 2000.

Strategic Management Services - USA, Loyola Campus, *Lessons Learned in Norco, Louisiana*, October 9, 2000.

Society for Environmental Journalists, East Lansing, MI, *Ecotourism as a Means of Environmental Communications*, October 19, 2000.

Society for Environmental Journalists, East Lansing, MI, *Chaired table session: Environmental Justice Issues*, October 21, 2000.

Texas Herpetological Society, Tyler, TX, *Herpetology as a Means for Communicating Science*, October 28, 2000.

Dr. Rogene Buchholz=s MBA Class, Loyola University, *Environmental Justice: Is there an answer?*, October 31, 2000.

- Dr. Robert Moreau=s MBA Class, Southeastern Louisiana University, *Environmental Justice: Is there an answer?*, November 6, 2000.
- Air and Waste Management Association, Baton Rouge, LA, *Environmental Impact of the Presidential Elections*, November 8, 2000.
- International Federation of Environmental Journalists, Cairo, Egypt, *The Role of the Media in Improving the Urban Environment and Developing Historical Areas in Old Damascus, Syria*, panelist discussing comparisons to Western Hemisphere environmental issues, November 14, 2000.
- International Federation of Environmental Journalists, Cairo, Egypt, *The Media in the Arab World: Synthesis of Case Studies, Lessons Learned and General Recommendations*, panelist discussing comparisons to Western Hemisphere environmental issues, November 16, 2000.
- Faculty Seminar, University of New Orleans, *Environmental Truthfulness: Why the Constant Debate?*, November 27, 2000.
- Cypress Academy, Westwego, LA, *Introduced-Invasive Species in Coastal Louisiana*, November 29, 2000.
- Mayor=s Environmental Breakfast, New Orleans, Organized, chaired, and spoke on panel: *Environmental Journalism: Challenges and Triumphs*, December 15, 2000.
- LUCEC High School Environmental Communications Workshop, *Environmental Expert Sources: Who Are They, Why Do They Talk Funny, and Why Don=t They Want to Talk To Me?*, December 16, 2000.
- Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program Management Committee, *Truly Informing Louisiana=s Citizenry About the Impacts of Coastal Erosion*, January 18, 2001.
- Tour Guides Association of Greater New Orleans, *Louisiana=s Wetlands: Your Key to Successful Ecotourism*. January 18, 2001.
- Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana Board, Loyola University, *Truly Informing Louisiana=s Citizenry About the Impacts of Coastal Erosion*, January 20, 2001.
- Cypress Academy, Westwego, LA, *Topics in Local Natural History*, January 24, 2001.
- Metairie Heights Garden Club, *Wildflowers of Louisiana*, February 7, 2001.
- Audubon Nature Institute, Louisiana Nature Center, *The Economic and Cultural Values of Louisiana=s Coastal Wetlands*, February 10, 2001.
- Greater New Orleans Foundation Development Dinner, *Strategic Thinking of the Loyola University Center for Environmental Communications*, February 15, 2001.
- Louisiana Planning Council Conference, Baton Rouge, LA, *Environmental Justice: Accepting the Challenge*, February 22, 2001.
- National Association of Government Communicators, Denver, CO, *Throwing Many Hats in the Ring: Helping a Whole Community Communicate*, May 9, 2001.
- Silver Scribe, Loyola University, *Hormone Mimicking Chemicals in Our Lives*, March 24, 2001.
- Leadership Slidell, *Economic Implications of the Loss of Coastal Louisiana*, April 4, 2001.
- Marine Bioinvasion Conference, led a swamp tour to discuss and demonstrate how invasive plant species are affecting Louisiana, April 9, 2001.
- New Orleans Center for Science and Mathematics, Keynote address for Earthday Celebration:

The History of the Environmental Movement and your Responsibility for the Future.
April 17, 2001.

Neotropical Ecology Institute, Tulane University, *Tropical Environmental Communications - Loyola Style.* April 18, 2001.

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana Annual Awards Banquet, Thibodaux, LA, Master of Ceremonies and commentaries on coastal issues, April 27, 2001.

Leadership Louisiana, Council for a Better Louisiana, *Strategic Importance of Coastal Louisiana to the Entire State and Nation,* May 4, 2001.

PRESS COVERAGE/INTERVIEWS:

Today=s Refinery, Tara Discoll, *Environmental Equity. Are Refineries Ready?*, interviewed and quoted, p. 9, June, 2000.

Times-Picayune, Bob Marshall, *Are Frogs Croaking?*, interviewed and quoted, D1, 6, June 7, 2000.

CityBusiness, Carolyn W. McLellan, *Publisher=s Notes: re LUCEC*, p. 3, June 26, 2000.

SC PETE Newsletter, *Dr. Robert Thomas Posts Articles on Environmental Communications*, pp. 1-2, July 7, 2000.

Times-Picayune, John Biers, *Bad Air Day*, interviewed and quoted, F1-2, September 17, 2000.

Times-Picayune, Nell Nolan, Photo with Brent Wood and Greg O=Brien, E2, September 22, 2000.

Daily Comet, Katina A. Gaudet, *Environmental Reporters Learn of La. Troubles*, interviewed and quoted, October 20, 2000.

Deductbox.Com, *Dept of Spotted Owls, Newts, Bunnies, Water*, p. 3, October 20, 2000.

Maroon, Staff, *Thomas to Discuss Nutria on Explorer*, p. 5, October 27, 2000.

National Geographic Explorer, *Alien Invasions*, served as a field producer and on camera interviews, October 29, 2000.

Tulane Hullabaloo, Advertisement thanking LUCEC (among others) for working with Tulane interns, p. 11, November 10, 2000.

Times-Picayune, *Exotic Species Thrive in State: Not all Cause Harm to Us, Naturalist Says*, interviewed and quoted, Marrero Picayune, p. 1, December 7, 2000.

Maroon, Robert A. Thomas, *Coastal Wetland Erosion Affects Everyone*, p. 11, January 26, 2001.

Maroon, Crystal Bolner, *Former Marooner Wins National Award*, p. 4, February, 2, 2001.

Times-Picayune, interviewed for an article about the heavy rain=s effects on purple martin nestlings, June 14, 2001.

Dallas Morning News, Bill Manuel, interviewed about geckos.

Scientific Consultant, X-Files (TV show), topics including mechanisms for spitting snakes, adaptations for seeing in the dark, and vision in lizards.

DISPLAYS AND SHOWS

Sponsored showing of Thom Scott=s photos from the John P. Oakes Environmental Journalism

Award winning series *Unwelcome Neighbors*, a five part series in the Times-Picayune, February 5-12, 2001.

Table top displays re LUCEC: Society for Environmental Journalists, East Lansing Michigan, October 19-22, 2000; International Federation of Environmental Journalists, Cairo, Egypt, November 13-17, 2000; Association of Southeastern Biologists, New Orleans, April 4-7, 2001.

MENTORING OF STUDENTS

The Chair works with many students in mentoring various aspects of their professional development. They use LUCEC as a source of information and resources, and he mentors students as they pursue their professions, theses in the honors and biology programs, and independent studies projects.

TEACHING ENHANCEMENT

LIST OF COURSES TAUGHT

CMMN A370. Environmental Communications. 3 credits. Fall 2000.

CMMN A371. The Environmental Beat. 3 credits. Spring 2001.

CMMN A499. Special projects. 3 credits (several students.) Fall 2000.

BIOL A118. Tropical Ecology. 3 credits. Spring 2001.

BIOL Z144. Ecology of the Mississippi River Delta Region. 3 credits. Spring 2001.

BIOL A499. Research. 3 credits. Summer and Fall 1999, Spring 2000.

HONORS THESIS ADVISEES:

Julie DesOrmeaux. Save the Mosquito. The Grass Roots Struggle to Combat Wholesale Power Plants in Louisiana. University Honors Program. May 2001.

Thomas Oliver. A Biochemical Characterization of *Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma* (Western Cottonmouth) Venom. University Honors Program, Biological Sciences Honors Program. May 2001.

Shawn Vincent. The Induction of Ovulation in the Anuran *Eleutherodactylus coqui*. Biological Sciences Honors Program. May 2001.

GRADUATE STUDENTS AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES:

Amelia Ballew, University of New Orleans, December 2001.

Dale Willman, Antioch University, Summer 2001.

NON-HONORS RESEARCH:

Lidya Colindres. Basking Behavior: Study of the Red-eared Slider Turtle (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) Population at Audubon Park. December 2000.

OTHER: See activities listed under A Mentoring of Students. @

CURRICULUM INNOVATION/DEVELOPMENT

The following courses (unique to the state) have been formally approved by their respective departments and the university:

CMMN A370. Environmental Communications. 3 credits. Taught each Fall.

CMMN A 371. The Environmental Beat. 3 credits. Taught each Spring.

BIOL Z144. Ecology of the Mississippi River Delta Region. 3 credits. Taught in odd-year Springs.

The following course is being taught for the first time in Fall 2001 and is also unique:

CMMN A496. Management and Communications of Environmental Relations. 3 hr.

Course Description: The focus of this course is to identify environmental expectations of environmentalists regarding the activities of business/industry, and of the latter regarding the role played by the former. Students will meet and hear discussions by a number of leading representatives of the environmental community, business, and industry. Students will then develop strategies for overcoming the challenges they learned about, and orally present their findings to one another in class. Additionally, students will produce a newsletter (to be mailed to the guest participants and organizations related to theirs) detailing student findings and recommendations.

It is directed at students in the fields of Advertising, Public Relations, and Business.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the past year, the Chair has attended a number of training programs regarding the use of computers, and he has attended professional meetings. Additionally, he visits with colleagues and hosts visitors in his profession.

SEEKING EXTERNAL FUNDING

Charles A. and Anne Morrow Lindbergh Foundation, \$10,580 to develop and present a workshop entitled A Introduction to Environmental Journalism for High School students. Declined.

Shell Foundation, \$10,000 in support of the Center for Environmental Communications.

Awarded.

Koch Industries, \$95,000 to continue support of the Institute of Environmental Communications.

Pending. Pending.

Greater New Orleans Foundation, \$30,000 to develop and implement two environmental journalism workshops: Coastal Erosion and Related Environmental Issues. Fall 2000. National audience. Oil & Gas and the Environment. Spring 2001. State audience. Awarded \$10,000.

Luso-American Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal, \$10,000 to present a week long workshop about Louisiana=s coastal wetlands for five Portugese environmental journalists. Awarded.

Letters of Interest Developed and Submitted: Nathan Cummings Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Turner Foundation, Charles Stuart Mott Foundation, Needmore Foundation, Ford Foundation, Moriah Foundation.

ENHANCEMENT OF PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT QUALITY/REPUTATION

As LUCEC develops, its reputation is building. The department and university are becoming widely known as a place where people can discuss environmental issues in a constructive atmosphere.

UNITING UNIVERSITY, COMMUNITY, AND BUSINESS/INDUSTRY

The principal portion of LUCEC that answers this need is the Institute for Environmental Communication (IEC). IEC is held each fall semester. Its purpose is to bring together environmental stakeholders and to stimulate conversations among them. IEC participation has a balance of people from business/industry, the environmental community, government, the media, and the scientific arena. This activity, taking place at the university, creates opportunities that do not exist elsewhere.

Persons completing IEC are named Fellows of the program. There are presently 69 IEC fellows, all of whom are connected via a LUCEC supported listserv. A new class of 30 participants will begin in August.

SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

Environmental:

Member, Top 10 by 2010, an initiative of Metrovision.

Member, Governor=s Environmental Task Force

Member, Greater New Orleans Foundation Environmental Committee

Member, Shell Oil Bayou Trepagnier Task Force

Member, Awards Committee, Louisiana Nature Conservancy

Board, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana.

Member, Strategic Planning Committee, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana.

Board, Environmental Research Consortium of Louisiana, a not-for-profit organization that will do research, communications, and educational projects on the environment of Louisiana

Board, J. Bennett Johnston Science Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation that will fund environmental research in Louisiana

Board, Asa Wright Nature Centre, Arima, Trinidad

Board, Save Our Lake Endowment

Member, Senator Mary Landrieu=s Outer Continental Shelf Technical Task Force

Board, Cypress Academy, a not-for-profit educational organization (assumed the lead role of developing the Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, and IRS arrangements)

Member, Environmental Committee, New Orleans/River Region Chamber of Commerce

Member, Outdoor Activities Advisory Committee, City of New Orleans Recreation Department.
International Federation of Environmental Journalists Representative, Society for Environmental Journalism

Other:

Board, Council for a Better Louisiana

Member, Archbishop=s Annual Appeal Committee

Member, Rotary Club of Metairie Sunrise

ORGANIZE EVENTS AND LECTURES BY AUTHORITIES IN THE FIELD

Hosted visits by the following environmental professionals:

Dr. Suhua Yu, Beijing, China; to discuss hydrological management in the United States (sponsored her visit).

O. B. Moro, S. D. Yusuf, U. K. Ndanusa, Ge. E. Nwachukwu, Uto Iheukwumere, and Buchi Sibeudu, all of Nigerian agencies that regulate oil and gas production, to discuss the Common Sense Initiative at Shell/Motiva Enterprises in Norco.

Ricardo Garcia, Paulo Chitas, Rita Siza, Antonio Marques, and Jose Pedro Frazão, all of Portugal, to attend a five day workshop on issues arising from coastal erosion in Louisiana.

Gua Yuan, Xu Gang, Caleb Loo (all of China), and Chen Fan (Tibet), to discuss the regulatory command of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Juan Gonzales, Paraguay, to discuss how New Orleans and coastal Louisiana interact with the massive Mississippi River (as they do with the Río Paraná).

Pedro de Faria e Castro, University of the Azores, and Dr. Janice Sumler-Edmond, Clark Atlanta University, to discuss ecotourism communications.

Cirnelia Shaimemanya (Fulbright Scholar), Namibia, to discuss a variety of environmental issues.

COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER SCHOLARS/PROGRAMS

Serving on a committee that is establishing a new journal in the field of environmental communications.

Working with Mark Schleifstein, Times-Picayune, to host the Society of Environmental Journalists annual meeting, 2003.

Serve on the Loyola Environmental Studies Faculty

Videoring Jefferson Parish=s Christmas Tree/wetlands project (with Jefferson Parish Environmental Departmental Staff)

Serving on LA Department of Wildlife & Fisheries= Reptile and Amphibian Task Force

Collaborating with National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration monitoring sea turtle strandings along the Louisiana coast.

Serving on the Chamber of Commerce Environmental Committee to help them open a dialogue with the local environmental community.

Attending community meetings in Norco, LA, which are resolving environmental justice issues.

Speaking to Silver Scribe competition, chaired by Drs. Larry Lorenz and Leslie Parr.

Field producer and talent in two Discovery Channel films on venomous snakes.

Working with Dr. Patricia Dorn, Department of Biological Sciences, on her Chagas Disease project.

Working with Faculty in the College of Business regarding sustainable planning.

Working with Shell Oil Refinery (Norco) and local environmental interests to reach an equitable decision on the fate of Bayou Trepagnier. I serve as the go-between.

Leadership role in the formation of the J. Bennett Johnson Science Research Foundation, a concept I developed in 1993 that is coming to fruition. Wrote the early drafts of By-laws and Articles of Incorporations. Worked with the attorneys and CPAs during the submittal of documents

Appointed to the Houston Toad (endangered species) Recovery Team by the Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Consultant, Russell Sage Foundation, New York. Advise them on biological management of their holdings in Louisiana.

Member of a team (based with Eskew+, and architectural firm) developing a master plan for the Pine Jog Environmental Center, West Palm Beach, FL.

ENHANCE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT OF PROFESSOR

The Chair funds provide a base-line of support for the Chair=s work and allow time and necessary resources for basic programs and the ability to seek additional support.

ENHANCE RESEARCH EFFORTS

As described in several places above, the funds allow the Chair to fund basic research needs and to travel to important meetings and resource locations.

PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CONFERENCES

The Chair participates annually in the meetings and activities of the Society for Environmental Journalism and the International Federation of Environmental Journalists. Other meetings that are relevant are attended when possible.

LEADERSHIP TO COLLEGE AND DIVISION

The Chair makes the resources of LUCEC available to colleagues throughout the university. He is gradually including more departments in LUCEC activities.