

ANNUAL REPORT

LOYOLA CHAIR IN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS

2003-2004

Environmental Communications is a nationally emerging specialty in the field of Communications. There are presently fewer than ten 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 New Orleans, 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 Founding and 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 academic 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 false 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 the Loyola University Center for Environmental Communications (LUCEC) staff working on environmental intervention programs (such as the EPA=s Common Sense Initiative) and hosting the Institute for Environmental Communications (IEC) (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 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 one 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 and continually updated (<http://www.loyno.edu/lucec>). During this academic year, a specific AChair@ site was maintained: <http://www.loyno.edu/lucec/chair/chairweb.htm>.
- \$ The chair holder was able to be active in the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (serving as General Secretary), thus networking with international colleagues.
- \$ LUCEC maintained communications projects in the tropics. This was the final year of a project (Caribbean Environmental Communications Initiative) that was funded by USAID (through the University of New Orleans Foundation) that is training environmental journalists and ecotourism businesses in the Caribbean.
- \$ Hosted a number of national and international environmental journalists.
- \$ 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.
- \$ LUCEC hosted the annual meeting of the Society for Environmental Journalists.
- \$ Continued a cardboard box reuse program at Loyola University that is intended to result in providing an annual scholarship in environmental communications. The program will be shared with other universities in the state.
- \$ Continued a student audit of the environmental operations of Loyola University.

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 environmental communications research program.

PUBLICATIONS: PEER REVIEWED

- Bailey, J. R. and R. A. Thomas.** Submitted. A revision of the South American snake genus *Thamnodynastes* Wagler, 1830 (Serpentes: Colubridae). I. The Tribe Tachymenini, with comments on the status of its genera. **Comunicações do Museu de Ciências da PUCRS (Brazil).**
- Bailey, J. R., R. A. Thomas, and N. J. da Silva, Jr..** Submitted. A revision of the South American snake genus *Thamnodynastes* Wagler, 1830 (Serpentes: Colubridae). II. Two new species of *Thamnodynastes* from central Brazil, and adjacent areas, with a redescription of and neotype description for *Thamnodynastes pallidus*. **Phyllomedusa (Brazil).**
- Bailey, J. R. and R. A. Thomas.** Submitted. A revision of the South American snake genus *Thamnodynastes* Wagler, 1830 (Serpentes: Colubridae). III. Three new species of *Thamnodynastes* from northern South America, with further descriptions of *Thamnodynastes gambotensis* Pérez-Santos and Moreno and *Thamnodynastes ramonriveroi* Manzanilla and Sánchez. **Memoria Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales La Salle (Venezuela).**

PUBLICATIONS: NON-PEER REVIEWED

- Robert A. Thomas.** 2003. "La. Candidates lack environmental stance," *The Maroon*, November 13, 2003, p. 7.
- Robert A. Thomas, R. King Milling, and Lynne Parwell White.** 2004. *Saving "America's Wetland": What it means to you.* **Garden Club of America Bulletin Aug.-Sept.: 3.**
- Horan, Sarah B. and Robert A. Thomas.** 2004. *Walking Guide to the Trails of Asa Wright Nature Centre.* **LUCEC. 20 pp. (edited by R. A. Thomas)**
- Robert A. Thomas.** Submitted. *Ecotourism with a Purpose: The Toledo Ecotourism Association Conserving Maya Traditions in Belize.* **ECOChronicle (St. Petersburg, Russia).**

PRESENTATIONS

- Robert A. Thomas.** "Environmental Communications: A Model That Will Work in Nigeria," Center for International Education, Loyola University (a groups of Nigerian oil & gas regulators visited campus to hear my seminar), June 16, 2003.
- Robert A. Thomas.** "Communications Within the Organization of American States' STEP Program," St. Lucia, August 22, 2003.
- Robert A. Thomas.** "Common Sense Approaches to Environmental Communications: Louisiana's Petrochemical Corridor, a Case in Point," Tulane University School of Business (including an MBA class from Southeastern Louisiana University), October 30,

2003.

Robert A. Thomas. Banquet speaker: "Environmental Politics: How Does it Look for 2003?" Annual meeting of the Air & Waste Management Association, Louisiana Section, Baton Rouge, November 4, 2003.

Robert A. Thomas. "The Kapok Tree's special meaning in the tropical jungles." St. Rita School, Metairie. November 11, 2003.

Robert A. Thomas. "Louisiana's Coastal Dilemma: A National Issue," talk and swamp boat tour, Southeastern Council of Foundations Annual Conference, New Orleans, November 12, 2003.

Robert A. Thomas. Keynote: "The Future for Communications for Environmental Issues: use Communications as a Strategy for Achieving Environmental and Natural Resources Program Goals," 2003 Environmental Communications Forum, Washington, DC, November 17, 2003.

Robert A. Thomas and James A. Whelan. "Using Urban Ecosystems to Explore Ecological Concepts: A French Quarter Nature Walk," Louisiana Science Teachers' Association, New Orleans, December 4, 2003.

Robert A. Thomas. "The World of Tropical Snakes." Louisiana Gulf Coast Herpetological Society, January 11, 2004.

Robert A. Thomas. "Louisiana's Wetlands: Your Heritage." Garden Study Club, January 20, 2004.

Robert A. Thomas. "America's Wetland: What You Must Know about its National Significance." Masonic group, January 25, 2004.

Robert A. Thomas. "Saving our coast: The strategic plan." Bureau of Governmental Research Breakfast Briefing, March 25, 2004.

Robert A. Thomas. "Louisiana's Wetlands: How Leaders Can Have an Impact." Leadership Slidell, April 7, 2004.

Robert A. Thomas. "Environmental Communications: What Scientists Should Know." Departmental seminar, Department of Biology, University of Louisiana Lafayette, April 22, 2004.

Robert A. Thomas. "The Natural History of Frogs: A Presentation in the Field." Loyola Environmental Studies Program, April 29, 2004.

Robert A. Thomas. "Louisiana's Wetland Loss: National Ramifications." Visiting class from Bluffton College, Ohio. May 14, 2004.

PRESS COVERAGE/INTERVIEWS:

WWL AM 870, one hour interview on coastal wetlands loss with Cory Johnson, July 3, 2003.

Bob Thomas brings attention to ecology. Editorial, *The Maroon*, November 12, 2003, p. 6.

Environmental journalists confer on local issues, by Katie Ide. *The Maroon*, November 12, 2003, p. 1. Interviewed and quoted.

The Ultimate Guide, by Bob Marshall. *Times-Picayune*, October 22, 2003, Sec. D, p. 1. Interviewed and quoted.

Invasive species flourish despite expensive eradication efforts, by Angelle Bergeron. *New Orleans CityBusiness.* November 17, 2003, p. 31. Interviewed and quoted.

Texas Transplant. Environmentalist Bob Thomas' roots are now planted firmly in New Orleans, Brenda DuCote. *FLOW*, February 13, 2004, 3(1): 8-10

WVOG/KTIB FM 600, one hour interview on coastal wetlands loss with Christopher Tidmore, March 25, 2004.

Word gets out about coastal plight, by Katina A. Gaudet. Daily Comet.com, March 26, 2004. Quoted from talk given.

Where does your recycling go?, by Denise Trowbridge. New Orleans City Life, April, 2004, pp. 64-68.

WWL AM 870, one hour interview on coastal issues with Andre Traveigne, May 6, 2004.

Leadership Institute class is graduating, Times-Picayune, June 18, 2004. Listed.

Business Notes, Times-Picayune, June 20, 2004. Listed.

WVOG/KTIB FM 600, one hour interview on politics of coastal wetlands loss with Dr. Polly Thomas. July 2, 2004.

MENTORING OF STUDENTS

The Chair works with many students in mentoring various aspects of their professional development. The students 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.

LUCEC annually offers a workshop on environmental journalism for local high school newspaper journalists. The workshop is held in Loyola's Department of Communications and is intended to interest local students in covering the environmental beat in their high school newspapers. LUCEC publishes a monthly newsletter directed at local high schools to enhance their environmental reporting.

Annually, the chair participates in the Tom Bell Silver Scribe event, hosted by Loyola's Department of Communication and the New Orleans Press Club.

TEACHING ENHANCEMENT

LIST OF COURSES TAUGHT (those with * are unique in the state):

Fall 2003

*CMMN A370 Environmental Communications. 3 cr. 25 students.
BIOL Z144. Ecology of the Mississippi River Delta. 3 cr. 30 students.
ENVA A499. Practicum. 3 cr. 1 student.
CMMN A899. Special projects. 3 cr. 1 student.

Spring 2004

*CMMN A371-001. Covering the Environmental Beat. 3 cr. 12 students.
CMMN A899-002, 003. Independent Study in Environmental Communications. 3 cr. 2

students.

*BIOL A118-001. Tropical Ecology. 3 cr. 7 students.

BIOL A345-001. Herpetology (lecture). 3 cr. 8 students.

BIOL A346-021. Herpetology (lab). 1 cr. 8 students.

BIOL A401-003. Tropical studies. 1 cr. 1 student.

ENVA A495-001. Environmental Analysis of the University. 1 cr. 1 student.

ENVA A499-001. Environmental Analysis of the University.. 3 cr. 1 student.

ENVA A499-002. Endangered Species Husbandry. 1 cr. 1 student.

ENVA A499-005. Environmental Business Networking. 1 cr. 1 student.

LECTURES IN OTHER CLASSES: The chair gives many lectures in classes across the campus and on other college campuses (for the latter, see the APresentations@ section).

Hosted a class from Bluffton College - lectured on Louisiana's wetlands.

GRADUATE STUDENTS AT LOYOLA UNIVERSITY:

Krista Whittington

Preeti Karnack

GRADUATE STUDENTS AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES:

Eileen Banach, LSU Shreveport, MS

Lisa Marie Wallace, University of New Orleans, Ph.D.

Laura Wooley, Yale University (worked out of LUCEC office during summer)

ADVISING: 60 students.

OTHER: See activities listed under AMentoring of Students.@"

CURRICULUM INNOVATION/DEVELOPMENT

The following course, directed at students in the fields across the campus, was taught for the first time in Spring 2003:

SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS & CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP. This graduate course was developed and taught at the request of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, the Alabama universities consortium. There were 12 students. This course will be offered to Louisiana universities as a short course taught between semesters. It trains graduate students how to apply their knowledge and training for improvement of environmental and community challenges. Among other issues, it trains the students how to work with the media and how to become engaged in

their communities. This course was taught the weekends of January 17/18 and April 17/18, 2004. Developed a Blackboard site.

OTHER EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES:

Updated class notes for Mississippi River Delta Ecology on the LUCEC website.

Created a public Blackboard site that houses course notes and attachments for the delta course, herpetology, and a general natural history section directed at teachers and ecotourism professionals.

Completely updated all courses on Black Board.

Processed over 1000 new slides for use on Black Board.

Continue using *Diversity* (a whole brain model system) for classroom activities (we also administered it to the *Maroon* editorial board).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Invited participant in the Science Journalism Initiative, sponsored by the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting, University of Rhode Island, March 17-21, 2004 (held at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, La Jolla).

Attended a workshop on how to use Global Information Systems for environmental reporting, University of West Indies, Trinidad (part of CECI grant)..

Additionally, the Chair attended and graduated from the New Orleans Regional Leadership Institute.

SEEKING EXTERNAL FUNDING

USAID/UNO Foundation: \$500,000. (last year of grant). Caribbean Environmental Communications Initiative. During the 18 month duration of this project, our team (which includes several of our faculty) will 1) train Caribbean journalists to

cover the environmental beat; 2) establish structure for the existing Caribbean Environmental Reporters= Network (we will hire an Executive Director, set up an office with supplies, and otherwise stabilize a Secretariat); 3) produce a series of radio shows that will air throughout the Caribbean and certain areas of the U.S. and Europe, provide public relations for the Organization of American States= program that encourages small hotels to become sustainable in their operations and to orient toward ecotourism; 4) survey Media House Managers (editors) re their positions and attitudes about the value of environmental news coverage (we will present the results at their annual professional conference); and 5) publish a book on environmental communications/journalism for Caribbean professionals. Funded.

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (grants through Congressman Vitter to enhance our understanding of Lake Pontchartrain): \$80,000.

Communications Plan and Documentary on the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet.

The project will result in 1) the development of the first communications plan on the Mississippi river Gulf Outlet (that will enable the public to understand the issue and the ramifications of policy development), and 2) a one hour documentary for public television. Funded.

Funding for the Society of Environmental Journalists: raised \$112,500 to fund the meeting (donors include Loyola University, University of New Orleans, CWPRAA Public Relations Committee, America's Wetland Campaign, Louisiana State University, Tulane University, Motiva Enterprises). Funded.

Fenner Family Fund: \$500. In support of the Loyola box recycling program. Funded.

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, rational, fair 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 117 IEC fellows, all of whom are connected via a LUCEC supported listserv. A new class of 20

participants will begin in September.

The Chair participated this year in the New Orleans Regional Leadership Institute, thus learning more about regional needs and expanding his network among business leaders in the region.

LUCEC works diligently to convince industry and business that sound environmental planning and consideration is a wise investment, for the company and for the citizens of Louisiana. It also works with the environmental community regarding the value of constructive collaboration for environmental improvement, and with government about the need for fair, consistent enforcement of existing environmental regulations and rational evaluation of existing and potential regulations.

LUCEC is presently collaborating with the University of New Orleans Foundation as developer and subcontractor for the Caribbean Environmental Communications Initiative, a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

During the year, the Chair hosted a meeting of New Orleans region university research directors to discuss The Governor's Fund for Coastal Restoration, led by Dr. Don Davis.

SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

ENVIRONMENTAL:

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

Greater New Orleans Foundation Environmental Committee

Board, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana., chair the Communications Committee.

Development Council, 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

General Secretary, International Federation of Environmental Journalists Representative, Society for Environmental Journalism

Advisory Council, U.S. PIRG (Louisiana Office), 2001-present

Board, Caribbean Environmental Reporters' Network, 2003-present

Leadership Award Committee, Association of Nature Center Administrators

OTHER:

Board, Louisiana Children's Museum

Archbishop=s Community Appeal Committee
Rotary Club of Metairie Sunrise
Judge, Biodiversity Journalism Awards, co-sponsored by Conservation International and
the Center for International Journalism

ORGANIZE EVENTS AND LECTURES BY AUTHORITIES IN THE FIELD

Hosted visits by environmental professionals from Myanmar (Burma).

Hosted a university lecture by Brian Dabadie, Worthlin Worldwide, about
communicating politics and the environment. February 5, 2004.

COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER SCHOLARS/PROGRAMS

Serving on The editorial board of the Environmental Communication Yearbook, a journal
in the field of environmental communications.

Judged the Guyana entries in the Conservation International Biodiversity Awards
Program.

Worked with Mark Schleifstein, Times-Picayune, as Co-chair of the Society of
Environmental Journalists annual meeting, 2003.

Serve on the Loyola Environmental Studies Faculty

Advising management of Motiva Enterprises and Shell Chemical Company in Norco,
LA, regarding the resolution of environmental justice issues.

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

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 Johnston 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

Member of a team (based with Eskew+Dumez+Ripple, and architectural firm)
developing a master plan for the RiverCamps, an environmentally sensitive
development by the St. Joe Company (I am doing the environmental
communications/education component).

Advised Mr. Pat Bryant and Ms. Denise Verret about communications concerns with
their work with waste disposal in low income neighborhoods.

Collaborating with the Garden Study Club, New Orleans Town Gardners, and the
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana to design and implement a wetlands
training seminar in October.

Designed the website for a new Science Journalism initiative.

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, the International Federation of Environmental Journalists, National Communications Association (Environmental Communications Commission), and the Association of Nature Center Administrators. 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.

An innovation that he developed (along with Provost Walter Harris) and other endowed professors and chairs is the Provost=s Committee for Endowed Professors and Chairs. Its emerging purpose is to identify projects important to the State of Louisiana and/or the citizens of Greater New Orleans that may be served by being addressed by Loyola=s community of endowed scholars. This program may serve as a model to other universities in Louisiana.

Additionally, the Chair served on the College of Arts and Sciences Endowed Professor's Committee, the search committee for the Mullahy Chair in Environmental Science, Gauthier-St. Martin Chair in Environmental Law, the Environmental Studies Faculty, Latin American Studies Faculty, and the New Faculty Orientation Committee. The Chair always participates in the President's Open House activities.

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