UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM
Extreme Spring Break 2006: Students Rebuilding Louisiana

What:  **Extreme Spring Break 2006: Students Rebuilding Louisiana**
- Orientation Features
  - MSU: Tour of Cameron Parish
  - SLU: NY Times Photojournalist Ozier Muhammad
- Build w/Habitat for Humanity in hurricane-affected areas
  (Calcasieu, Covington, & Hammond)
- Red Cross Disaster Training

When:  April 19-23, 2006

Where: McNeese State University, Lake Charles
- Housing: Henning Family Life Center (Sulphur)
Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond
- Housing: SLU Cardinal Newman Dormitory

Who:  100 Students, faculty, & staff from all 8 ULS universities:
- Grambling State University
- Louisiana Tech University
- McNeese State University
- Nicholls State University
- Northwestern State University
- Southeastern Louisiana University
- University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- University of Louisiana at Monroe

Costs:  $40 participation fee ($20 w/out housing)
- Included $15 fee for Habitat for Humanity insurance, housing, meals, transportation, and materials

Major Partners: Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross, Louisiana Campus Compact, The New York Times, and Wal-Mart

Visit [www.ulsystem.net](http://www.ulsystem.net) for more information.
LAGNIAPPE

- Idea initiated by ULS Student Board Member & McNeese SGA President Mallory Wall and adopted by the other ULS SGA Presidents, especially Paul Donaldson (SLU SGA)
- Participants were housed in locations that served either as shelters during Hurricane Katrina (MSU) or housed relief workers immediately after (SLU)
- Featured speaker for the SLU orientation, Photojournalist Ozier Muhammad, covered Hurricane Katrina for the New York Times
- MSU orientation included McNeese President Robert Hebert, Lake Charles and Sulphur mayors, and culminated in a tour of hurricane ravaged Cameron Parish
- The New York Times partnership was based on the UL System’s involvement with AASCU’s American Democracy Project
- Participants reflected about their experiences through journaling each night and completed a survey that gauged attitudes and experiences
- Louisiana Campus Compact representatives led capstone discussions to review the lessons learned and chart ways to continue service and recovery efforts
- On the final day (Sunday, April 23) participants went through the first of two courses on disaster training with the Red Cross. They were encouraged to go back to their local communities and take the final course. That way, they will be officially “disaster certified” and ready to react should another disaster occur.

QUOTES FROM APPLICATIONS

- “After seeing some of the damage first hand and having relatives who are residents of New Orleans (9th ward), I think it will be a great experience to have. Rebuilding homes of others and helping people we have never met to get back on their feet will be a great service, I definitely look forward to working!”
  -Nicholls freshman majoring in psychology
- “As a Hurricane Katrina survivor and native to this area, I would be very happy to be a part of helping rebuild my community and the surrounding areas. I am very dedicated to helping the people who were affected by the devastation of the hurricanes.”
  -Southeastern freshman majoring in English
- “Helping those less fortunate than me is something I consider a virtue and a selfless activity. In light of the economic and social devastation and the mass destruction of homes and buildings caused by the hurricanes, I’d be honored to give my time so that others and our state can once again thrive.”
  -UL Lafayette junior majoring in Communication

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SELECT QUOTES FROM JOURNAL ENTRIES

- “The Spring Break 2006 Experience was a much needed activity. The experience provided insight as to the necessity for service-learning at our university and others. The activity also amplified the need for cultural diversity training at schools within the system. If these two activities – service learning and cultural diversity could be incorporated into the University of Louisiana System school’s curriculum our students would be the catalyst for change for the nation.”

- “This experience has been a great one for me. The project that we did will help or even change the lives of the families that will receive. Being able to bond and fellowship with people that are different in personality and ideas was learning experience that I believe was much needed for a lot of us to grow as people. The feeling that I got from knowing that something I did will help someone gives me a feeling that will be timeless and always present in my mind and heart. After this project I truly believe service, especially community service, should be a staple in everyone’s life. Thanks for the experience.”

- “Today, we visited Cameron Parish and saw the devastation Rita left. Holly Beach is GONE. There is nothing there. There’s still debris caught in trees and I’m reminded of scarecrows. I always thought Lake Charles was bad, but Cameron doesn’t even compare. I’m looking forward to helping out tomorrow to help start the healing process.”

- “It is pretty awesome to see people my age and from my generation organize and execute such an event. This program made me understand that I have a duty and an obligation to the community in which I live. Not necessarily the community in which I was born or the community that my visa says I belong to. During the course of the day I realized that there was a bigger purpose for me being here.”

Visit www.ulsystem.net for more information.
A total of 61 participants (21 males and 40 females) completed the survey. There was a wide distribution of age ranges. The majority of participants (77%) were between 19 and 22. The largest group of student majors (19) belonged to a business, education, or communication major; 16 (25%) belonged to a sociology, history, or fine arts major; 11 (17%) belonged to a allied health, social work, or public administration major; 5 (8%) belonged to a math, physics, chemistry, or biology major, and 8 (12%) belonged to an engineering, pre-med, or agriculture major.

There were 4 parts to the survey. The ‘Experience from Service’ section contained 18 items gauging participant’s perceptions of the actual experience. The ‘Attitudes’ section contained 13 items about thoughts on community responsibility. The ‘Activity’ section contained 6 items about voting behavior and campus involvement.

**Experience from Service**

Based on the responses, the students seemed to have benefited tremendously from the service experience. 12 of the 18 items under this sub-component yielded at least or close to 75% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with statements signifying a positive, worthwhile, and enhancing experience. 41% strongly agreed or agreed that the experience changed their perceptions about community involvement. A very positive sign and a testament to students cultural sensitivity was that over 93% stated that they were comfortable working with cultures other than theirs.

**Attitudes**

7 of the 13 items yielded at least 80% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with statements suggesting a positive orientation toward civic responsibility. For example, 97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I have a responsibility to serve my community.’ Over 90% of respondents disagreed with the statement ‘My problems are too large for me to give time helping others.’ Overall, participants responded in ways that higher education constituents would find desirable.

**Activity**

Respondents do not appear to be heavily involved in campus politics; only 26% agreed that they were involved. 70% of the participants indicated that they always vote in national elections, while 59% indicated that they always vote in state and local elections. At least 15% marked uncertain on 5 of the 6 items in this section.

The descriptive analysis suggests the participants had a positive experience. The major limitation to this analysis is that none of the students’ voices are captured to provide a deeper context to some questions. Overall, based on the responses, the X-treme Break experience significantly enhanced the lives of those involved.
### X-treme Break Service Learning Survey Results

| 1. After this experience do you feel that you are better prepared for involvement in the community? | 1 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 41 | 4.56 | 93.6% |
| 2. After this experience do you feel that you will be actively involved in community service? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 23 | 39 | 4.54 | 95.4% |
| 3. After this experience do you feel that you are better prepared to be involved in diverse communities? | 1 | 1 | 6 | 24 | 34 | 4.57 | 92.2% |
| 4. After this experience, do you feel that you have more a personal responsibility to others? | 1 | 2 | 6 | 24 | 32 | 4.31 | 87.5% |
| 5. After this experience, do you feel that you are a better leader? | 2 | 3 | 13 | 23 | 25 | 4.06 | 76.0% |
| 6. I would sign up for a class if it incorporated a service experience such as this? | 2 | 2 | 6 | 17 | 36 | 4.34 | 84.8% |
| 7. I was already volunteering in my community before this service experience. | 6 | 8 | 7 | 15 | 29 | 3.82 | 74.7% |
| 8. I feel that the community project benefited the community. | 4 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 46 | 4.52 | 89.1% |
| 9. I probably won’t volunteer or participate in the community after this project. | 61 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1.37 | 4.8% |
| 10. The community project helped me to become more aware of the needs in my community. | 2 | 4 | 9 | 22 | 27 | 4.08 | 76.0% |
| 11. The community project helped me define which profession I want to enter. | 19 | 18 | 18 | 7 | 3 | 2.34 | 16.4% |
| 12. Participating in this community project helped me enhance my leadership skills. | 3 | 5 | 9 | 19 | 28 | 4.00 | 73.4% |
| 13. Doing work in the community helped me to define my personal strengths and weaknesses. | 6 | 5 | 7 | 26 | 25 | 4.13 | 81.0% |
| 14. I was comfortable working with cultures other than my own. | 2 | 0 | 3 | 17 | 43 | 4.58 | 90.8% |
| 15. I see social problems in a new way. | 1 | 9 | 12 | 24 | 13 | 3.63 | 67.2% |
| 16. Skills and experiences that I gained from community service will be valuable in my career. | 9 | 2 | 7 | 20 | 31 | 4.58 | 76.0% |
| 17. This service experience has changed my perceptions about community service. | 3 | 9 | 13 | 18 | 22 | 3.72 | 61.5% |
| 18. This service experience has changed my perceptions about political involvement. | 5 | 10 | 23 | 17 | 19 | 3.26 | 41.5% |

- **1.** I have a responsibility to serve my community.  
  - 1 1 0 17 48 4.83 96.8%  
- **2.** Most people can make a difference in the community.  
  - 2 1 0 11 51 4.69 85.4%  
- **3.** I can make a difference in my community.  
  - 2 0 1 11 50 4.67 95.3%  
- **4.** My problems are too large for me to give time to helping others.  
  - 42 11 5 4 2 1.04 94.4%  
- **5.** It is important for me to be very well off financially.  
  - 10 13 8 18 13 3.17 49.2%  
- **6.** It is important for me to become a community leader.  
  - 2 7 10 26 17 3.75 68.9%  
- **7.** College students should be required to provide a certain number of community service hours in order to graduate.  
  - 6 7 3 17 25 3.75 66.6%  
- **8.** I feel that social problems are not my concern.  
  - 40 11 3 6 3 1.75 14.3%
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>% Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>9. It is important to me personally to have a career that involves helping people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4.36</td>
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<td>10. I feel uncomfortable working with people from different races</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.64</td>
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<td>11. I feel that I can have an impact on solving the problems in my community</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.33</td>
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<td>12. Community service is necessary to making our communities better.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>4.90</td>
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<td>13. it is critical that citizens become involved in helping their communities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. I often discuss political and social issues with my friends.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.62</td>
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<td>2. I try to keep up with local and national news</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.61</td>
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<td>3. I am active in campus politics</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.51</td>
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<td>4. I am active in political campaigns</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.45</td>
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<td>5. I always vote in state and local elections</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I always vote in national elections</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.68</td>
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April 19, 2006

Dear ULS Students, Faculty, and Staff:

I would like to thank you for participating in “Extreme Spring Break 2006: Students Rebuilding Louisiana.” Your willingness to join an alternative break is a sign of your deep commitment to rebuild and strengthen our state. The lessons we learned from Katrina and Rita will allow us to not only construct houses, but to also build the dream for a brighter tomorrow.

All of us in Louisiana are grateful for your dedication and responsiveness to help the citizens of our state in this time of need. There is no greater responsibility and affirmation of the dignity of human life than service to society and humanity. Through this unique opportunity for service and learning, it is my hope that you will also deepen your understanding of the need to promote humanitarian values.

I congratulate you on taking the lead to make someone’s life better while also improving a community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sally Clausen
President
University of Louisiana System
For Spring Break, Thousands of Students are Volunteering in the Gulf Coast

BY KATHERINE S. MANGAN

While their friends are on the beach comparing tan lines during the next few weeks, thousands of college students from around the country plan to converge on the Gulf Coast, where they will spend their spring break pounding nails rather than pounding beers.

The volunteers have signed up to help national groups like Habitat for Humanity tear down and rebuild homes in New Orleans and other areas that Hurricane Katrina and Rita devastated this past summer.

“I see it as an amazing experience, to be a part of something that is so much bigger than me,” says Patrick Jenkins, a senior at Northern Illinois University who plans to join 1,100 students from 55 colleges and universities at What A Relief, a Lutheran Church-sponsored volunteer program. Students will work in several cities along the Gulf Coast—“mucking out homes”—tearing out drywall, and bleaching moldy walls.

The event is one of many service projects coordinated by religious, nonprofit, and education groups eager to tap into an energetic army of students who have a week or more to spare.

Mallory Wall, president of the student government at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, La., is recruiting her classmates for a program dubbed Extreme Spring Break 2006: Students Rebuilding Louisiana.

The program, to be held next month, is organized by the University of Louisiana System for students from its eight campuses, including McNeese, which closed for a month after Hurricane Rita roared over the campus, shredding roofs and downing trees in late September.

Up to 250 students will spend five days in Lake Charles and Hammond, helping rebuild hurricane-ravaged homes and sleeping on cots in buildings that were used as shelters during the hurricanes. The Red Cross will provide disaster-training sessions to interested students.

“They’ll know what it’s like to be an evacuee,” Ms. Wall says of her fellow volunteer. “That’s an important part of the experience—not just coming down and nailing walls together. They’ll see what it was like in those darkest moments after the storm—to be displaced and sleeping on a cot alongside 100 other people, and sharing communal showers.”

UNSAFE DAY OF WORK

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita killed 1,300 people, displaced more than 1.4 million others, damaged 217,000 homes and 18,000 businesses, left the region with $25-billion of insured losses, according to a report by the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The report found the hurricanes created the equivalent of 50 years of coastal erosion in two days.

Students who see the remnants of the devastation this spring will gain a new appreciation for their own homes and families, according to those who participated in similar trips during winter break.

“It’s so easy to spend some money and go do something with your friends,” says Mary Kathryn Wyle, a senior at Davidson College who spent a week of her winter break volunteering in Biloxi, Miss. But when students participate in service trips, “The stories you take home aren’t about some crazy night, they’re about this insane day of work you did.”

About 75 Davidson students from various student groups returned to their campus last week from spring-break trips to the Gulf Coast. One group stayed in New Iberia, La., where its members helped residents of the Cajun fishing town clean and repair their mold-ridden homes. Another group helped residents build shelters and storage units.

Sewanee: The University of the South plans to send 18 students to Long Beach, Miss., this week to volunteer at a relief center for survivors of Hurricane Katrina on Mississippi’s Gulf Coast. The university has already organized two other trips to the region, and has sent $14,000 in monetary donations, along with truckloads of clothes, food, water, and toys.

The center, Camp Coast Care, is supported by the state’s Lutheran and Episcopal churches. Sewanee students will sleep on cots on the gymnasium floor of a local school and spend four days cleaning houses, tearing down crumbling walls, hauling off fallen limbs and cleaning up debris. Then the students plan to move on to New Orleans, where they will do similar work.

THE UNIVERSITY ALSO PLANS TO SEND A PHOTOJOURNALISM CLASS TO NEW ORLEANS TO BEGIN A FIVE-YEAR PROJECT THAT WILL CHRONICLE THE EXPERIENCES OF A GROUP OF RESIDENTS AS THEY STRUGGLE TO REBUILD THEIR HOMES AND LIVES.

AN INTENSE EXPERIENCE

While they are in Long Beach, students from Sewanee are likely to run into students from Southwestern University. Eleven of its students and two staff members are also planning to help rebuild houses with the support of the coastal-relief center.

The trip’s coordinators are Beverly J. Jones, Southwestern’s chaplain, and Gail Roberson, an admissions counselor who used to spend summers with her grandparents in nearby Gulfport, Miss.

“I don’t know if I’ll recognize anything,” Ms. Roberson says. “But I know this trip will really have an impact—on the students and on the community.”

Other colleges that have organized spring-break trips to the Gulf Coast include Amherst, Augustana, Bard, Bates, Davidson, Gettysburg, Hamilton, Macalester, and Wartburg Colleges. Rowan and Susquehanna Universities, and the Universities of Florida and of Puget Sound are among the universities that have also organized volunteer projects in areas recovering from the hurricanes.
Extreme Humanity

University of Louisiana system president Sally Clausen hugs Southeastern Louisiana University's Amber Jones, who participated in the Extreme Spring Break to help Habitat for Humanity build homes in hurricane affected areas. Jones volunteered after others helped her family rebuild their home.

Claudia B. Laws
claws@timesofacadiana.com

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HAMMOND — Andrew Cheatham took a brief moment to observe the wall he had just painted in the home that will soon house Hurricane Katrina survivors.

"To think someone is going to eat dinner in this room," said Cheatham, a Louisiana Tech University freshman from Minden. "That's really exciting. I love it, except for when they see the (paint) streaks; then maybe not so much," he said, adding a dose of humility to his valued contribution.

Cheatham is one of about 100 students from the University of Louisiana System's eight universities volunteering for "Extreme Spring Break 2006: Students Rebuilding Louisiana." Tech and Grambling State University students comprised nearly one-third of the total volunteers at a site near Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond and McNeese State University in Lake Charles, respectively, with a handful of University of Louisiana at Monroe students due in Hammond on Saturday.

"We're all in this together," said Tech SGA president-elect Matthew Babcock, who has family from New Orleans. "It's just a small way North Louisiana can say, 'We haven't had our homes destroyed, but we feel your pain. We want to help you get started again.'"