

THE CURRENT SAUCE



SEPTEMBER



Photo by Kevin Thomas

BY KEVIN THOMAS

The heart of Natchitoches has become a dry town that is trying to stay afloat and suffering to bring business in due to the high temperatures. Natchitoches store owners are aware of slow business in the summer months but did not expect an impact of this sort on their business.

Cathy Willett, owner of Pied à Terre, has had her doors open since March of 2020 and has not experienced a summer like this, where business is struggling in this sort of matter.

“I have absolutely noticed a decline in sales, it has been absolutely terrible to the point where I have cried,” Willett said.

For many of the store owners, they have had to become selective with items that they choose to sell, instead of buying a variety of goods that they think may sell.

Mike Morton is the owner of Laughing Sam’s just off of Front Street on St. Denis Street. His business is fresh to the Natchitoches scene, but he too is experiencing the hardships from the weather.

“It has been hard, because I am located off of Front street, not many people know where we are located. So I was able to put a sign up on the corner to allow people to know where we are at,” Morton said.

He is also one of the stores who has had to limit the merchandise that he brings in.

“I have had to become picky with what I purchase, I have had to select items that I know will sell,” Morton said.

Morton and other shop owners have been able to bring in more customers by hosting a St. Denis Second Street festival. The event included local bands’ performances, a live DJ, food trucks and vendors to bring the festival to life.

Britany Williams from Sweet Fruit Delights has had help from the St. Denis Second Saturday event, which has motivated people to hit Front Street and shop local in a time like this.

“We have been relying heavily on social media to reach out to people of the community and have even shifted our business to be able to cater to

people through Doordash and Waitr.”

Social media is a big source for these businesses at this time because it is the only thing motivating people to leave their house.

“I have done multiple Facebook lives for my customers so they can see what I have added to the store and if they are interested in purchasing something I can ship to them or even deliver to their house,” Willett said.

These owners also want Northwestern State University of Louisiana students to shop locally and eat locally because when they do so they are helping Natchitoches stay alive.

“I always try to stay local, if I am in need of a lightbulb or some tools I make a quick run to Kaffie-Fredrick because I am giving back to the community. It may be a little more pricey but I know I am giving back,” Morton said.

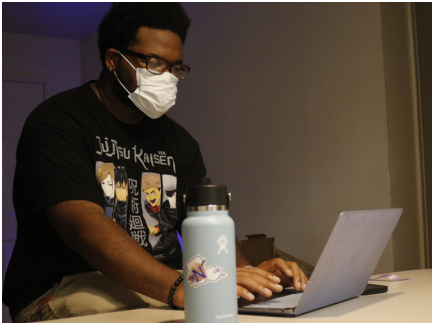
These owners would like to encourage students and residents to keep shopping locally and support the businesses that help carry Natchitoches.

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Madelyn Murphy features graduating seniors as they reflect on their COVID-19 freshman year.

Photo by Tyra Jones



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Photo by Jayde Gee



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Photo from freepik



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Christian Robinson interviews Coach Brad Laird on things fans should expect and team’s expectations for this football season.

Photo by Chris Reich



“OUR GREATEST WEAKNESS LIES IN GIVING UP. THE MOST CERTAIN WAY TO SUCEED IS ALWAYS TO TRY JUST ONE MORE TIME.”

-THOMAS EDISON



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TO MY ALMA MATER

By Eddie Gibson

There is only good-bye now, yes bitter but sweet.

Less rest in me, less to say, so good-bye Alma mater, my Alma mater-

lady embedded with dreams you are.

Since the first day came, I knew I would miss this place; an inevitable

fixed sorrow that has wrapped me beautifully for this formidable release.



From COVID-19 freshmen to graduating seniors



Jaylin Moore, a senior music business major, does not feel he had to miss out on his first-year experience, as he made the most of what he could.

Photo by Tyra Jones

BY MADELYN MURPHY

When COVID-19 showed them how quickly life can change, seniors chose to learn from it rather than watch the time go by.

It can be challenging to leave home for the first time, move into college, and begin a new chapter of one's life which would be full of the unexpected. But imagine the feelings that came with undergoing this experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Class of 2024 did just that.

Northwestern State University of Louisiana seniors, Rikki Landry and James Lowring, recall feelings of isolation and loneliness when they think back to the times of the pandemic. Leaving home, leaving friends, leaving family and even leaving one's pets can provoke feelings of desolation.

On top of this, the seniors had few opportunities to distract themselves from solitude.

"We really missed out on First Year Experience [due to] events being scarce and having little interactions with people in class," Landry, music performance major, said. "It was really hard to connect with others during the midst of the pandemic, but then things started to brighten up."

From a Spirit of Northwestern band member's perspective, everyone took the opportunity to create an environment of love and fun, she said.

For themselves and others, the Class of 2024 managed to make light out of the pandemic.

Seniors began to overcome the obstacles of the pandemic rather than being drawn back because of these challenges.

Jaylin Moore, a senior music business major, does not feel he had to miss out on his first-year experience, as he made the most of what he could. Before COVID-19 prevented Moore from being in the presence of others, he did not realize the importance of prioritizing certain aspects of his life.

Moore felt the weight of the pandemic

during his freshman year.

"It taught me how to stay focused and attentive, especially when it came to things like coursework or trying to stay connected with friends," Moore said.

When COVID-19 showed them how quickly life can change, seniors chose to learn from it rather than watch the time go by.

Although his first year of college was different from other classes' experiences, Lowring, communication senior, has experienced a great time in college.

"I have had the best time of my life in college," he said.

From quarantining and social distancing to Demon Days and now graduation just around the corner, the Class of 2024 has learned, grown and achieved together.

Not only did the pandemic teach seniors to be prepared for anything that may come their way, but it has also given them the confidence to survive and thrive through the craziness of planet Earth, Lowring said.

We started this process a year ago, getting the initial paperwork ready and choosing a designer to come in, and figure out what we needed to upgrade the elevator



Kyser Hall elevators to be operating within months

Photo by Lia Portillo Cantarero

BY KALLIE BOURGEOIS

As the first week of school came, students that attended classes in John S. Kyser Hall grew confused about which elevators were working in the building.

Currently, Northwestern State University of Louisiana Kyser Hall's east elevator is completely in operation while the west elevator is still undergoing replacements.

Katie Rion, freshman English major, shared her recent experience with navigating Kyser Hall and the elevators.

"The elevators being broken is really annoying if you're in a rush, especially if you just came in from being outside in the recent heat and now have to

run up four flights of stairs," Rion said. "All of my classes are on the third and fourth floor, and on days whenever I've already walked from my dorm and then back to class, having to go up the stairs is not fun."

Tinley Durr, sophomore general studies major, said the elevator issues are nothing new to her.

"Going from floor one to the fourth floor at least three times a day, I definitely think the elevators need more work and to be more reliable," Durr said.

Plans have been put in place for both of the Kyser elevators to be replaced within the next couple of months of the Fall 2023 semester.

Mark Melder, Kyser Hall building manager, explained that the west elevator will be fully operational by the end of the fall semester, if everything goes as planned.

"We are hoping to start in two weeks," Melder said. "Since they've done the east elevator now and it's the same repair crew coming to fix the west elevator, they've seen the various modifications that have occurred over the last 60 years."

Dale Wohletz, physical plant director, said that replacing the elevators is a long process that relies on finding the available funds and waiting for specific parts.

"We started this process a year ago,

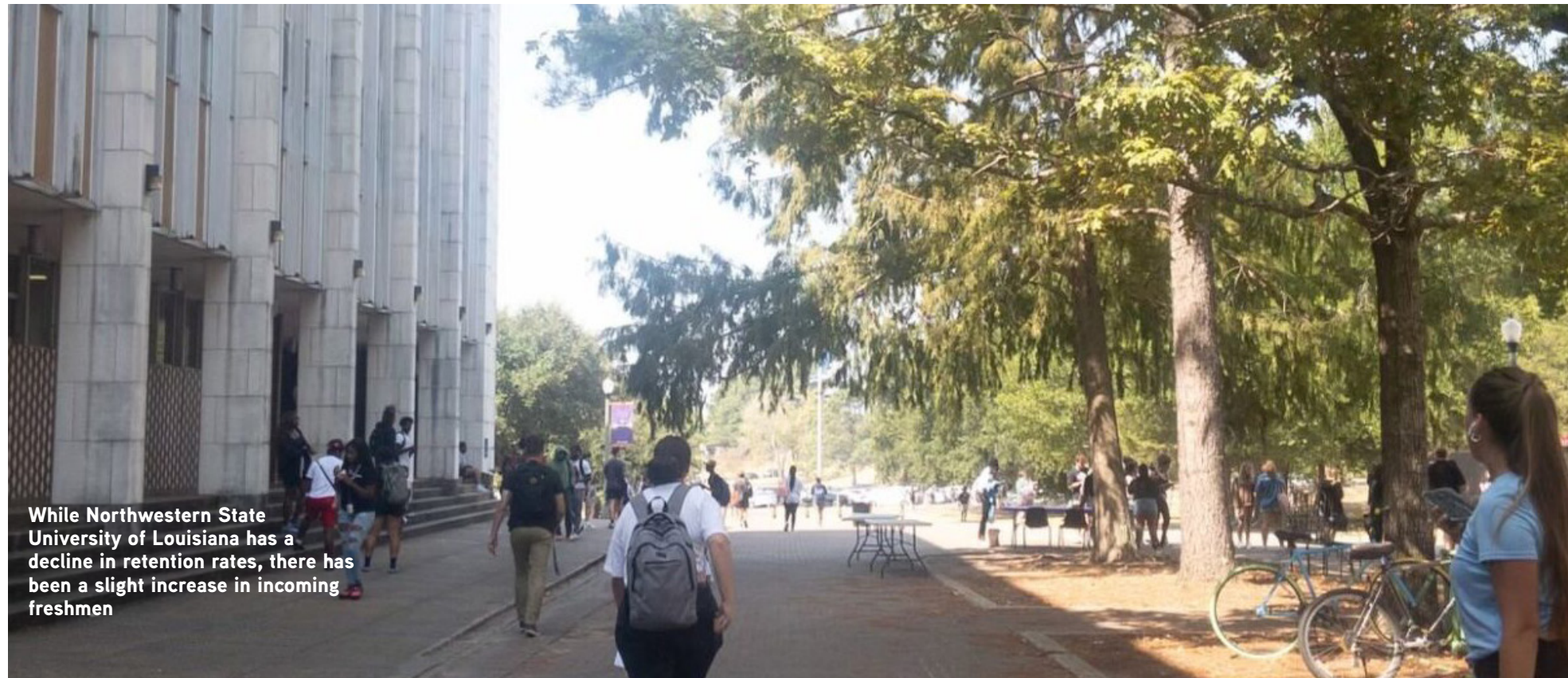
getting the initial paperwork ready and choosing a designer to come in, and figure out what we needed to upgrade the elevator," Wohletz said.

In addition to the west side Kyser hall replacement, NSU is in the process of upgrading the three elevators in Watson Memorial Library of NSU's Natchitoches campus, and one elevator that is currently down in building B of the Shreveport campus, Wohletz said.

"Both the east and west elevators in Kyser Hall were modified to have upgraded mechanics such as new rollers, cables, electronics and upgraded all the safety devices," Wohletz said. "We are hoping to get started pretty quickly on the process of getting the elevators upgraded."

Illustration by Naomi Adams





While Northwestern State University of Louisiana has a decline in retention rates, there has been a slight increase in incoming freshmen

Photo by Jayda Gee

NSU looks to increase future enrollment

BY NINA OVALLE

Northwestern State University of Louisiana is experiencing an enrollment decline for the Fall 2023 semester due to a significant decrease in the retention of current students.

Marcus Jones, president of NSU, believes this issue is related to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When COVID started in 2020, the admissions standards were relaxed, so we were able to admit students who did not necessarily meet the admission requirements," Jones said. "As a result of that we're seeing, for some of those students who were weaker students, it has been difficult for universities to retain those students."

Jones, along with all the faculty on campus, are actively working to resolve low retention rates through beneficial initiatives to offer help to any student who needs it.

"It was never an attempt to lower standards, it was an attempt to help all students who wanted to come to college, go," Jones said.

The main two things that impact students' desire or ability to return and persist are finances and academics, Jones said.

"Academically we're engaging in a lot of intrusive advising to make sure we catch students that are potentially in a position where they may not do what they need to remain in school. Then financially we have some of the best scholarships and safety net financial programs to assist students on the retention side," Jones said.

NSU has also supported initiatives such as the Demon Mentor Network Program, which has begun specific advising to watch and aid students who may be at high risk.

Jones personally supports the construction of Alost Hall, the academic center planned to substitute John S. Kyser Hall as the largest academic building, which will also play a major role in increasing enrollment.

"It's going to be a state of the art, 73,000 square foot building that will provide all that an incoming student would expect and deserves in an academic building. I think that's gonna be a game changer for us," Jones said.

Though retention of current students is decreasing, NSU has seen an increase in enrollment of first-time freshmen. The Fall 2022 semester had 968 first-time freshmen, compared to the Fall 2023 semester with a projected 1,100 first-time freshmen. NSU has seen an increase of about 13%.

Jones stresses the importance of recruitment as well as retention efforts beyond just focusing on traditional students. "If an institution is going to sustain itself, it has to look beyond just high school graduates as potential students, so we're looking at every avenue possible to get students in," Jones said.

Jones has been focusing more attention on students that complete dual enrollment courses with NSU by offering scholarships to those that enroll as full-time students after.

NSU has welcomed roughly 30 new international students and welcomed back many online students.

"Getting out of COVID and sort of getting to the point where we're sort of back to normal, if I can say, that's why I think that going back to sort of where we were pre-COVID numbers with the face-to-face piece," Jones said.

Despite the decrease in enrollment many

have not noticed a decline within their circles.

"I've seen some of the highest recruitment rates in a lot of extracurriculars, specifically in ROTC," Loren Higginbotham, senior business major, said. "There's not really an increase or decrease in classes either, it just seems steady."

Wesley Harell, University Police captain, has also seen the increase of on-campus students through traffic and parking lot incidents.

"Right now I think we're back on an average semester pre-COVID of parking lot accidents, we've already seen a few in the first few weeks of school," Harell said.

Harell and Jones agreed that there has



Photo by Jayda Gee

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Marcus Jones, president of NSU, believes this issue is related to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

been an increase in on-campus students.

"I don't think that you're going to find an institution, especially in our system, that does a better job of finding resources to assist incoming students and continuing students. I don't know that we'll ever get 100 percent back, but I do think that we are seeing more students now who are on campus," Jones said.

Are the Residential Meetings really helping students?

BY DESTIN LOPEZ

For the past two years, Northwestern State University of Louisiana has hosted "Living in the Residential Community Meetings." These usually occur early on in the semester with the purpose of informing students about important information regarding their housing and the community. They are hosted over three different days, with multiple meetings set at different times so that students that live in residential housing on campus can find one that fits their schedule, hopefully.

I say hopefully, because if you cannot attend any of the meetings for some reason, such as classes or work, you will be considered violating the Student Code of Conduct. The first few weeks of a new college semester are hard with balancing new classes along with your work schedule and your social life. I can understand how some students may struggle to be able to attend these meetings.

Being threatened with a violation of the Student Code of Conduct as a busy student who works hard to pay for the cost of tuition, opting to live in the residential dorms, may be an overreach of power. Whether or not people who skip these meetings actually receive consequences is debatable, as many students have said they have skipped without ever having any follow up.

One big reason that this discussion is being brought up is because of an incident that occurred in University Place 1 parking lot on August 16. It is being alleged that a few students set off fireworks outside of UPI, which then set grass and other shrubbery on fire outside of the parking lot.

Luckily, the fire was contained, and the police have an open report for arson. It is not known whether the police have suspects or not. Since the start of the semester on August 14, we have had eight incidents reported by police that have occurred in or outside of different residential buildings on campus. These include crimes like disturbances, drug law

violations and more.

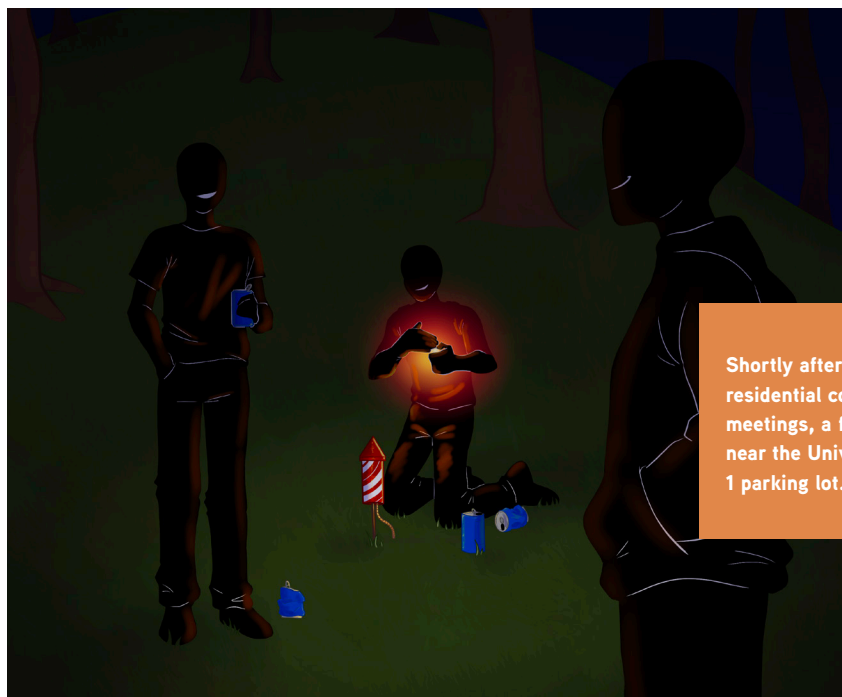
These incidents raise the question: Do these "Living in the Residential Community Meetings" help reduce the crime on campus on or around the residential buildings? Some people might say no. While it is important that students know what they are agreeing to when they sign a lease agreement, there will always be students who choose to go against the grain anyway. Whether that just means having guests over to your dorm without an overnight parking pass, or illegally lighting fireworks during one of the hottest, driest summers ever, while under a state of emergency and a burn ban, it's a choice they made. Luckily, the fire did not progress as far as it could have, and nobody was injured.

While University Police only keeps the crime log up for the current year, national statistics are available to look at. The year 2021 was the highest year for hate crimes reported on college campuses, as recorded by the Department of Education.

Over 31,000 crimes were reported on colleges throughout the nation in the same year. While this may sound shocking, this number has decreased by 50% since 2005, according to the U.S. Department of Education Campus Safety and Security website. Maybe we are not seeing an uptick in crime on NSU's campus, but rather seeing certain crimes become more public due to social

media and the abundance of video cameras around.

I believe that while residential meetings can be an added conflict in a student's schedule, it may be helpful for a student to be aware of the codes and regulations they need to follow. Whether they choose to follow them or not it's only their choice, but at least they cannot claim that they did not know the repercussions of their actions, since they learned it at the "Living in the Residential Community Meetings."



Illustrated by Naomi Adams

Shortly after one of the residential community meetings, a fire erupted near the University Place 1 parking lot..

Photo by Haley Wiggins



For Lia Portillo, The Current Sauce led her to finding herself

Letter from the Editor: What it means to me to lead this publication

BY LIA PORTILLO CANTARERO

I don't know how to start this. Who would have thought that the scared freshman that set foot on Kyser Hall two years ago would now be the Editor-in-Chief of The Current Sauce.

Two years ago, I didn't even know how to write an article, interview a person, edit an article and certainly did not know how to run an organization. Now, I sit in the newsroom in Kyser 227 leading a newspaper that has fostered Pulitzer writers, Hall of Famers, politicians, professors and alumni that have grown because of this paper. It feels weird to be in this position.

I don't know how to explain it, but this paper is my saving grace. Without the interest and the stubbornness of me wanting to join two years ago I wouldn't have realized what I wanted to be a journalist, a storyteller.

For someone who wasn't born in the United States, I never thought I could have these types of opportunities. I've always felt that I'm just a number to reach diversity quotas or simply not good enough because I wasn't born American. Yet, when I walked in the doors of the newsroom when I toured Northwestern State University of Louisiana, I felt at home.

Whether it was the energy of the staff members that I met that day, the newspapers that I read in my home country of Honduras to my grandma or the English newspapers that helped me learn the language, something made me want to be a part of this newspaper so badly.

Now, being Editor-in-Chief is not as easy as I thought. Many view The Current Sauce as not being a newspaper because of the online move it made in the fall of 2021. Others are not satisfied with the content we make and most do not know we are still here.

Leading an organization that is supposed to uphold the standards of journalism within a generation that wants entertainment over news is challenging. I definitely feel like I have to tug a rope between respected and knowledgeable professors and the student body we are trying to attract. It's hard being a student journalist in the 21st century.

The point of expressing these thoughts is not for you to feel bad, but for you to understand that I will try my best to carry the legacy of this paper while serving the student body. I may not be perfect, but I will try to meet in the middle for all of those who still care about and support us.

The first "Letter from the Editor" I read was Trinity's Velazquez "I'm not this paper's saving grace because I'm a black female." She talked about how as the first Black woman to lead the paper she felt the pressure of having to be constantly covering race issues. A Viewpoints piece so raw and beautifully written that has left an everlasting impression on me.

For me, The Current Sauce is my saving grace. It's where I found my voice. It was the first time I ever published and wrote in my native language since I left my home. This paper gave me the passion and drive to be the best person to lead it.

I have lived in the U.S. for 11 years, and I call southern Louisiana my home too. Moving four hours away for college felt like a new journey, but I was not ready for the obstacles of starting fresh. The Current Sauce gave me something to look forward to. Every meeting I got to socialize with other writers, photographers and staff members. Every meeting meant being assigned a new story to push me to meet people around campus to interview.

The Current Sauce gave me a safe space to share my ideas and thoughts. I no longer felt like I was small (although I'm really short in person).

I may not be unique within the Editor-in-Chief line. I'm not the first woman. I'm not the first Hispanic editor. I'm probably not the first immigrant editor either.

I want my legacy within this paper to be one that introduces new ideas and new spaces for people. I want to invite diversity within our website and print editions. I want to be the editor that cares so deeply about the success of this paper that her staff is happy to work with her. I want to be the editor that listens. Not just to professors, faculty, students but you the reader.

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Photo by Chris Reich

BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON

With the football season quickly approaching, Northwestern State University of Louisiana's football head coach Brad Laird sat down with The Current Sauce to discuss what Demons and fans can expect from this season.

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Doing the right thing over and over again. Doing it when you're tired, beat up, and frustrated. Consistency is the goal

Laird is excited to see his new freshmen players come in, and he said that approximately 10 athletes are new freshmen. He is looking to see how they adjust to the change of scenery from high school to college football.

"Well for one, in high school, you're the guy, whereas here you may be fourth, fifth or sixth on the depth chart and it can be difficult to transition from that, but I believe the guys we have are fitting in great," Laird said.

Laird also highlighted his new staffing hires. The coaching staff has had four new changes heading into the 2023-2024 season: Chris Gistor, defensive

line coach; Armani Lonardo, wide receivers coach; Jeremy Atwell, special team coordinator; Perry Carter, cornerback coach.

During the scrimmage on August 19, 2023, the crowd could see the energy from the field.

The energy the front line gave was efficacious towards the entire team, not just the defense. As the scrimmage went longer, both sides were up and ready to play for another hour. Laird compared it to last year, saying it was a nice change in motivation.

Looking to these coming weeks, Laird discussed the team's gradual improvement and that this was the job of not only the players, but also the coaching staff.

He wants his team to not look into the future and championships, instead to look at the day at hand and focusing on getting better, and then championships will come with that hard work.

There are three things the coach wants to see improve from last year, and one

is the ability to handle adversity.

"In a 60 minute ball game there will be highs and lows on both sides and we can't be too high or too low," Laird said. Additionally he talked about the team's skill to remain calm and collected in order to win against adversity.

The second point is consistency especially during a 60 minute ball game. "We got to have consistency and that means consistent execution," Laird said. "Doing the right thing over and over again. Doing it when you're tired, beat up, and frustrated. Consistency is the goal."

The next point mentioned is controlling the controllables. In this case Laird means attitude and effort. "You can't control what the refs call and you must be able to move on and not be fixated on that one moment," he said. "Control what you can control and that is the next play."

All he and his team want to do is "Win the Day."

The first official game will be Sep. 2, 2023 at the Cajun Field. The team will be playing against the Ragin Cajuns of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Viewers can tune into live coverage by ESPN on September 2 at 6:30 p.m.



Photo by Jason Rugh



Photos by Tyra Jones



Photos by Tyra Jones



Photos by Samuel Bailey



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