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NSU increases its retention numbers into the Spring 2024 semester. The story explains reasons for why and what recruiting efforts are in store for the fall semester.

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Professor Melody Gilbert from the Department of New Media, Journalism and Communication Arts host a documentary screening depicting “40 Below: The Toughest Race in the World.” Students gained valuable lessons watching the documentary.

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## NSU increases enrollment by maintaining current students

BY KALLIE BOURGEOIS

Following the enrollment decline of the Fall 2023 semester, retaining students that are currently enrolled has remained the priority.

Northwestern State University of Louisiana has successfully increased retention rates for the Spring 2024 semester.

Vanner Erikson, director of enrollment and recruiting, explained that NSU offers resources for high school students to hopefully benefit enrollment, but that retaining current students is just as important.

“There are multiple reasons for the decline in enrollment, but we aren’t the only schools facing a decline, about nine other schools in the state are as low as we are,” Erikson said. “When you think of enrollment, whether it’s a decline or increase, a piece of that is not only recruiting but it’s also retention and retaining the students that you have.”

Since shifting focus toward retention, Erikson has seen significant improvement in spring enrollment.

“The retention number skyrocketed to the highest of all time to 87.8% of those students that retain at Northwestern,” Erikson said.

He also addressed that, yes, the decline extends from previous years, but there will always be a spring enrollment decline until NSU gets more students in the fall semesters.

“Our total enrollment number for the spring was 8,035, so it was a bit lower, the good thing is our total number of freshmen that came in the fall and went into the spring,” Erikson said. “From that point it’s awesome, because that means we are doing things right in terms of looking at helpful financial pieces, scholarships, barriers students are having and fixing those.”

Erikson predicts the incoming class of



Photo by Lalaina Woods.  
Current students continue to follow their daily schedule and move from class to class.







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The Current Sauce is the official student-run newspaper for Northwestern State University. The content and stories within the paper may not necessarily reflect the views of administration, faculty and staff.

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## “40 Below: The Toughest Race in the World” a film that inspired students

BY MADELYN MURPHY



Photo submitted by Melody Gilbert. Along with Melody Gilbert, a few students stay back to take a picture “with” director Marius Jones.

There are people out there who have suffered through severely cold weather, frost building up on their faces and the fear of frostbite in the back of their minds. These people have gone through what seems unimaginable. Even so, they put themselves in that situation; Who would do that? Located in International Falls, Minnesota, participants of the “Arrowhead 135,” would.

The documentary “40 Below: The Toughest Race in the World” features racers competing in a 135-mile race by running, biking or skiing in brutally cold weather within no more than 60 hours. This film was directed by Marius Anderson and produced by Marius Anderson, London Road Films and Northwestern State University of Louisiana’s very own professor: Melody Gilbert.

Gilbert has produced 18 documentaries, some of which are her own and some for other filmmakers. With the experience she has had, she was of great help to Anderson when making the film and gaining viewers.

“I did so many things as a producer, including writing the logline and synopsis, arranging rough cut viewings and feedback sessions, film festival premieres and other screenings and even recently getting distribution through Cargo Film & Releasing,” Gilbert said. “I’m happy that I could lend my experience to help Marius because I could see the potential in the film from the beginning.”

Gilbert spoke proudly of both Anderson and the film. By watching the documentary, it is clear to see the hard work that went into making it. On Feb. 5, there was a public screening of the film, where students and even staff were encouraged to attend.

“It was so fun watching students respond to the screening at NSU,” Gilbert said. “Nothing is better than showing something you helped create

in front of an audience because you are sharing part of yourself.”

It was obvious the attendees of the screening were invested in the documentary. Members of the audience shook their heads in disbelief as the film presented the first runner in the race to reach a checkpoint.

The effective drone shots throughout the film made evident how strenuous





ARTS & LIVING



Photo submitted by Melody Gilbert.  
Director Marius Anderson and Bill Bradley.

the race was, as the runners, bikers and skiers seemed so small compared to the snow-covered path. Additionally, there were numerous scenes showing the ice-covered beards and eyelashes on the racers’ faces. Whether they be about the difficulty of the filming process or the difficulty of the race, students were able to ask director Anderson questions over a video chat.

One audience member compared Anderson’s struggles to the racers’ because he was outside filming in the harsh weather conditions. With this, he asked how Anderson, and his crew of three men approached the situation.

“Before the race, a local news anchor said, ‘don’t go outside unless you absolutely have to,’ and that’s when we started the film,” Anderson said. “I knew that it was going to be something that we’d just kind of jump on and try our best for.”

Despite the harsh conditions, Anderson knew that filming this documentary was something worth continuing. “I wanted to find out more,” he said. “Why do people volunteer to do this?”

Another attendee commented on how good the audio was when the racers were speaking, so they wondered how this could be done without interfering with the race. When Anderson revealed they did not have a microphone attached to any of the racers during the race, the audience was impressed.

However, this was not the only thing that provoked reaction from the audience. Not only was the audience impressed by the filmmaking process, strategies and results, but they were also inspired by the storyline Anderson

captured. A variety of people who came to watch the documentary and participate in the Q&A with Anderson left the screening feeling motivated, including NSU student-athlete Jordan Brown.

Brown, a junior communication major, is number 23 on the Lady Demon Basketball team. Before transferring to NSU, though, she was forced to miss out on basketball seasons due to tearing her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) two years in a row.

“The process was very hard and emotional and stressful; The rehab was treacherous, almost like what the racers went through,” Brown shared with the audience. “But I kept persevering like everybody in the film because of my passion for the sport.”

The documentary highlights many different racers striving to complete the race; The main subjects were racers Bill and Leah. Anderson captured Bill’s personal life in depth, so the audience knew the adversity Bill faced and he became one of the racers viewers developed an emotional connection to. Despite always being unable to finish the race in attempts prior, Bill tried again in this documentary while keeping and sharing the mentality of following one’s dreams.

“What Bill said about never wanting to give up reminds me just how much I love basketball and I want to keep at it,” Brown said. “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” The way that Anderson presented the subjects’ stories allowed the audience to relate to them and gain motivation from their stories. The audience at the documentary screening related to Bill, most particularly, as people

commented and questioned how Bill keeps his motivation despite all he had faced. Brown elaborated on the impact the film had on her.

“It’s good that he made this documentary because a lot of people, like athletes, would really benefit from watching these types of films,” Brown said. “I always want to see what other people are going through or who are in similar situations to mine so that I know that I’m able to accomplish it - I’m able to beat two ACL surgeries and still play basketball.”

The racers’ perseverance, despite the intimidating race ahead of them,

led Brown to leave the documentary screening feeling motivated. The documentary itself left students feeling encouraged to drive toward their goals, just as the racers did. Without Anderson, Gilbert and the others who assisted in filming, producing and editing the film, viewers get to witness the perseverance of individuals chasing their dreams. For more information about the documentary, “40 Below: The Toughest Race in the World,” and to keep up with screenings and events, visit [40belowmovie.com](http://40belowmovie.com) or email [gilbertm@nsula.edu](mailto:gilbertm@nsula.edu).

Photo by Melody Gilbert.  
Various people attend the on-campus documentary screening of “40 Below: The Toughest Race in the World.”





# Lady Demon softball players named SLC Preseason All-Conference

BY KALLIE BOURGEOIS

The Southland Conference named seniors Maggie Darr, Laney Roos and Ashlyn Walker of Northwestern State University of Louisiana’s Lady Demon softball team, for the 2024 preseason all-conference selections. Those three Lady Demon softball players made it on the second team squad just before the start of the season.

Maggie Darr, senior health and exercise science major and pitcher, was one of the top strikeout pitchers in the conference. In her career, she surpassed 100 Ks (kilo second) on the season for the first time, the third most overall finishing with 126 and the sixth most with 49 conference play.

This was Darr’s first time being selected, leaving her emotional.

“It’s really exciting, I’ve never gotten a preseason all-conference award,” Darr said. “It definitely wants you to keep wanting more and working harder and not get complacent with it.”

Having the seventh lowest opponent batting average in the season at .242 and her second straight season a sub-.245 average against her, Darr was one of nine pitchers to record double-digit wins on the year with a career high of 12.

After her hard work on the field, she is grateful for everything she has ever been able to accomplish.

“Receiving the title means everything you’ve put into it, even before college, how much work we put in to get where we’re at is getting recognized,” Darr said. “We kept working harder and harder and got a lot of awards. I feel appreciated and I’m grateful for that.”

Laney Roos, senior general studies major and outfielder, finished the 2023 season as third on the team with a batting average of .296, with 11 doubles, 13 total extra-base hits, 23 RBI and 35 total runs scored.

She finished seventh overall in the conference in runs scored and a top 10 total of finishing with 15 home runs. This is her second time receiving this title and it means a lot to her to be selected, she said.

“It shows all the work you put in and it’s nice to be rewarded for it and receive those awards,” Roos said.

The season matched a career high and second straight season with her 11 doubles, which was the ninth most in the conference in the year. Roos only struck out twice against SLC pitching in 24 games and more than 65 total at bats.

After managing to achieve a career batting average of .309 entering the season and .444 in slugging (the total number of bases a player record per at-bat), Roos shared some of her other goals she has in mind for the upcoming season.

“Our goal as seniors is to win the conference tournament, no matter my spot on the field or what position I’m playing I just want to help the team win.” Roos said. “I would like to get hitter of the year, I know it’s a big award, but I would like to do that, and I know it takes a lot of work. I would also like to be on the all-tournament team, I was on it once before and that was a great reward.”

Ashlyn Walker, senior biology major and catcher, was one of three catchers in the SLC to throw out 10 or more potential base stealers in the year. She was ranked second in the conference with catching seven base stealers.

Walker was thrilled to receive preseason all-conference, with this being her first time.

“I’m very grateful to be recognized by the Southland and it motivates me to be the best player I can be this year,” Walker said. “It’s a great honor because with this being my last year of softball it gives me a boost of confidence, and all the hard work I have put in since I was a little girl has started to pay off.”

She hit seven doubles with a

home run and drove in 15, all while having a .336 on-base percentage. Walker addressed how the team and coaching staff have impacted her softball career immensely.

“This team has such great talent and skill, and the work ethic is great,” Walker said. “Coach Lacy Prejean has had an amazing impact on our program already, and she has been putting us in the best position to be the

best players and people we can be. Every day she pushes us to get after it and enjoy the grind of it, and I think we will be successful in the end because of it.”

Alongside these three players, NSU Lady Demons softball ranked sixth in the preseason headed into 2024 looking to win the conference title this year.

Photo by Chris Reich  
Maggie Darr (left), Ashlyn Walker (right) and Laney Roos (not pictured) named pre-season All-Southland players.





# Lady Demons softball begins season and looks to improve

BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON



Photo by Arief Harlan.  
Taylor Williams and the rest of the Lady Demons softball team begin their season.

Northwestern State University of Louisiana Lady Demons softball team is 5-5 in the first week under coach Lacy Prejean, and with a rocky start in the beginning of the season coach Prejean is still standing optimistic.

So far in the season all but two losses have been one score and the Lady Demons heading into the ninth is in every game. Coach Prejean talks about the games and praises her team, but also acknowledges the seriousness in closing out some of these games.

“I saw a lot of good things and I also saw a lot of things that we need to clean up and some of our losses were one hit runners,” Prejean said.

With these close losses Coach Prejean still praises the pitching team and batters.

“You know that is all you can ask from your pitching staff is to give us an opportunity to win and the last inning and I challenge the hitters to be able to put us in a position to win and that’s what they did,” Prejean said. “Unfortunately, we couldn’t close

out those games and that comes with experience and something we will be able to correct.”

Maggie Darr, pitcher and senior health and exercise science major, recalls the preparation the team did last fall and the leadership that arose from the off-season.

“Over the fall we have been so well-prepared Coach Prejean talks about making practice just as hard as the games and I do think we are working some kinks out just like everyone else in the season, but I believe we will win a lot of games,” Darr said.

Coach Prejean mentioned the goals of the season, what they are looking for from there and what she hopes to gain from these losses and from the wins game-by-game.

“When I brought my staff, I met with the seniors. One goal of ours was to make the seniors’ last run with us the best run and the most fun as much as possible,” Prejean said. “And two was to change the culture of our work ethic and dealing with adversities and how to handle failure.”

Kat Marshall, first baseman and senior

health and human performances major, addressed the buy in to the team. For some players, being fully engaged as a player, or buying in, takes longer than others, but Marshall explained that it comes as the season advances.

“It varies from person to person, I think it’s obvious for some and some not to say they’re not bought in but some have a hard time grasping it,” Marshall said. “When it comes to leadership it’s very important having a senior/freshman team it is up to the seniors to buy in and show the younger players how to buy in to a new team.”

Coach Prejean mentioned that despite the close losses, she praised the team for how close all these games were. She also said the team is close to piecing the plays together to improve the rest of the season.

“You know, in some of our games the ball just bounced off why we easily could have won all those games and to see how close we are to being great,” Prejean said.

Despite the close losses Marshall brings up the energy and how the team must stay locked in.

“I am a big energy person so for me even in these close losses I still like to keep a positive energy going to the team and I know some of our players are like that and the senior leaders also play a part in that with working

with the team and bringing the energy every game and practice,” Marshall said.

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VIEWPOINTS

# Kyser Bathrooms: Do students deserve better bathrooms?



Photo by Destin Lopez  
Students are not asking for high tech hand dryers or motion sensor toilets but working soap dispensers and toilet paper holders on the wall.

BY DESTIN LOPEZ

John S. Kyser Hall, built in 1968, is the largest building on Northwestern State University of Louisiana’s campus and the main academic building. Hundreds of students attend class every weekday during the school year, with Kyser Hall having four floors of classrooms, science labs, computer labs, a TV studio, offices and more. But any NSU student can speak on the quality of the components of this 56-year-old building.

There are two elevators that are out of order more often than not, wasps’ nests in the windows of the classrooms, temperature issues and bathrooms that are disregarded and in disrepair.

Kyser Hall is being set to be replaced as the main academic building by Alost Hall, which cost 44 million dollars and is going to be ‘state of the art.’ This is an amazing achievement by NSU and is desperately needed by students who deserve to learn in a building with working elevators, but this new building is still in the early stages of construction with no end date in sight. The new building will also not move every department to the new building, leaving those who stay behind with the same issues.

Should Kyser Hall be left to crumble while students sit and wait for a

building that may not finish before they graduate? Could part of the money that NSU collects from students in tuition and fees go towards getting new toilet paper and paper towel holders and new stall doors?

If you were to walk into any of the bathrooms of any floor in Kyser Hall today, you would first have to find a stall with a door that closes and locks. Once you find one, your next task is to find the toilet paper, because 9 out of 10 times, it will not be on the holder on the wall because it is broken or missing entirely. While you use the restroom, you have time to read all the graffiti

on the stall, which goes back for years. It is almost like a moment in time for students to leave their mark on the stall. Then, when you finish and leave the stall, you must find a working soap dispenser.

Do not try the ones on the wall, those are broken or

empty, so you have to use the old-timey ones. Then find a sink to turn the water on to wash your hands, and then move to the next sink because water does not come out of the first sink.

Once you have finished all of these steps, it is then time to dry your hands.

This is usually an important task because nobody likes to have wet hands, and you cannot go back to class with water dripping everywhere. Walk to the paper towel dispenser and prepare to be disappointed. It is empty, broken or both. But do not worry, there is a stack of paper towels out in the open, ready for you to grab. Dry your hands, throw it in the trash and go back to your class while thinking about where your thousands of dollars you pay to the university go to.

NSU employs lovely custodial workers who work very hard to keep the bathrooms and hallways clean, but unfortunately it is not their job to fix the things that have broken over time.

I cannot speak about the faculty and staff restrooms, as I have not been in them, but if I had to guess, they might be in the same state. Other buildings on campus have varying degrees of nice

bathrooms. Morrison Hall has small, but clean and working bathrooms. But if you happen to live in University Columns, a dorm on campus, you might have water pouring out of a hole in your bathroom roof.

Since Kyser Hall is the main academic building on campus right now, and for the foreseeable future, I believe that NSU should allocate some portion of money to the renovating of the bathrooms.

Students are not asking for high tech hand dryers or motion sensor toilets but working soap dispensers and toilet paper holders on the wall. Who knows, maybe even new stall doors. Students who are paying to earn a degree should have the necessities in their academic building, like working elevators and bathroom stalls that lock.

## Vic’s Verdict: Ask the Demon

BY DESTIN LOPEZ



**Question:**

How do you stay on top of all of the schoolwork?

**Answer:**

As someone who’s been on this campus for 100 years, I can’t seem to find the right study plan! But I encourage everyone to visit the library and use your available resources!

**Question:**

What is the best way to make friends in my new classes?

**Answer:**

I’ve made most of my friends by starting with a wave or even a “high five”!

**Question:**

Where is your favorite place to hang out on campus?

**Answer:**

I love to hang out at sporting events, but you can find me chillin’ in the Student Union!