

THE CURRENT SAUCE

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THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

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The Ben D. Johnson Educational Center closed its doors due to the loss of federal funding because of the One Big Beautiful Bill that was passed in July. Read more about how the Natchitoches community is impacted from the closure after serving young adults for eight years.

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From Florien to the State Capitol, read how NSU alumnus Joe Reece Salter’s legacy and dedication to serving the community left an everlasting impact on the Natchitoches community. In this issue, we also feature several students who got the opportunity to work with NASA over the summer.

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New software is being used to encourage student engagement at NSU. Read how students and faculty are adjusting to the new app that is supposed to be more functional and efficient for organizations on-campus. The Current Sauce Editor-in-Chief reflects on her journey to holding a leadership position and shares how she will grow with this publication.

Ben D. Johnson Educational Center to close due to funding cuts

By Heidi Gauthier
News Editor

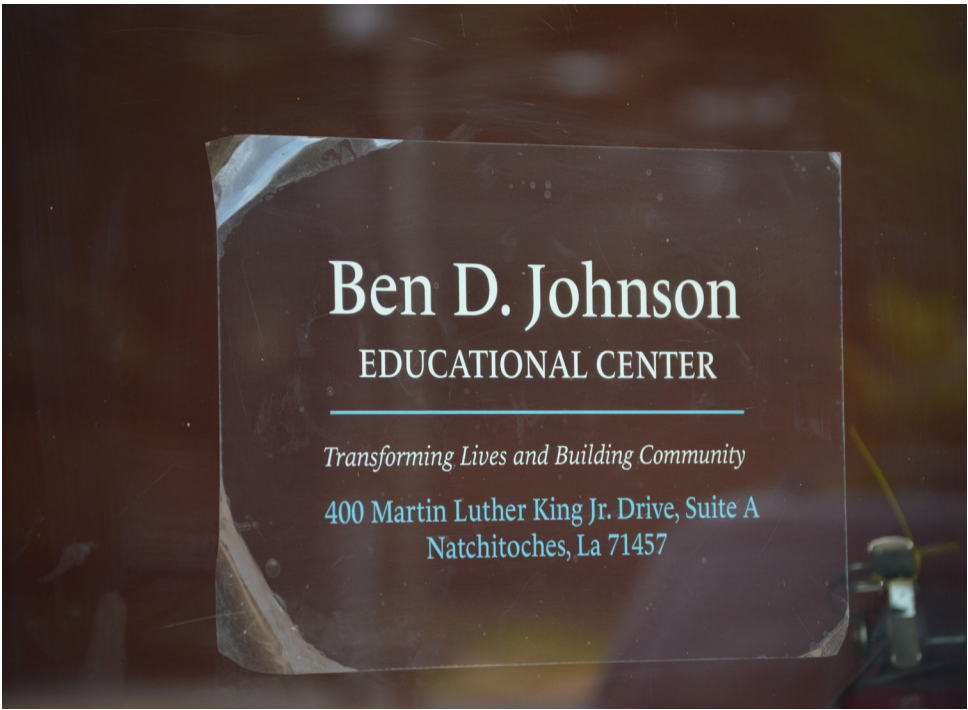


Photo by Lalaina Wood
Due to federal funding cuts, the Ben D. Johnson Educational Center closure will take affect this month.

After eight years of serving young adults in Natchitoches, Ben D. Johnson Educational (BDJ) Center has decided to close its doors this month due to federal funding cuts.

On Aug. 13, the BDJ Center announced its closure in a Facebook post. “Our Board has had to make the heart-wrenching decision to close the BDJ Center effective September 30, 2025.”

The post explained that the BDJ

Center is working closely to connect its staff and students with other opportunities.

Luttrill Payne, a former beneficiary of the BDJ Center, reacted to the closure and shared how the BDJ Center impacted his life in a positive way, has given him direction and helped him regain his confidence.

“The organization has positively impacted countless lives, and I am lucky to be one of them. The closing of the educational center is very

sad for the community,” Payne said. “Life is full of transitions, and this program helped me face life with confidence and a sense of purpose.”

Claire Prymus, founder and board president, explained that the organization’s closure is due to the loss of federal funding because of the One Big Beautiful Bill that was passed in July 2025.

“Our two major funders were the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Louisiana Department of Child Support Enforcement (CSE). Both of those are federally funded programs that were cut, and we cannot remain in business without these funders,” Prymus said.

The BDJ Center was founded in honor of Prymus’ late uncle, Ben D. Johnson. According to the organization’s website, during the 1960s, Johnson held one of the largest minority-owned enterprises in Louisiana. Johnson was a philanthropist and believed in Natchitoches, where he built a ballpark, boxing club and continuously gave back to First Baptist church.

The BDJ Center has offered assistance for young adults through programs designed to help individuals reach their full potential. The non-profit works with young adults ages 16 to 24, providing life and training skills and industrial readiness courses.

“Knowing that the community’s need for a safe place to grow, learn, and connect will not vanish just because funding has disappeared makes this even harder. For the past eight years, your support has allowed us to change lives, nurture dreams, and strengthen our community, and for that, we are deeply grateful,” the Facebook post stated.

Kierra Jackson, program manager, discussed that the BDJ Center offered classes such as resume writing, interview skills, anger management and even provides clothing for professional work interviews.

The BDJ Center provided Payne and many Natchitoches community members with the resources to get forklift and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certified.

“At the educational center we provide workforce development training to individuals who lack the skills to get a job or individuals who have barriers to employment,” Jackson said. “It is so rewarding seeing people come in here broken and disheartened, then leaving with full confidence in themselves to go out and get a job.”

The closing of the BDJ Center, that instilled confidence, opportunity and purpose, will leave a significant gap for young adults in the Natchitoches community.

From Florien to the State Capitol: Remembering NSU Alumnus Joe Reece Salter

By Isabel Juarez Rubio
Arts and Living Editor

On Aug. 16, 2025, Northwestern State University of Louisiana shared the passing of Louisiana House Speaker Joe Reece Salter, an alumnus and member of the Long Purple Line, NSU's alumni hall of distinction.

At NSU, he was a part of Blue Key Honor Society and Phi Kappa Phi. He began his career in education in Florien, Louisiana, where he served the Sabine Parish School System as a teacher and administrator for many years.

"Salter became principal at Florien High School (FHS) and held that position for 11 years. As principal, he initiated the construction of a new school building. FHS became state accredited, and he served four consecutive terms as president of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association. Salter was appointed Assistant Superintendent of Sabine Parish Schools where he served for 17 years," according to his obituary by The Advocate.

Salter was a three-time recipient of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, where he won the Legislative Golden Apple Award. He was also named to the Louisiana Association of Educators Legislative Honor Roll three times. He was honored by organizations including the Louisiana Council on Aging, Fleur de Lis Health Care, Louisiana Public Broadcasting and the Louisiana Association of School Executives.

In 1986, Salter began his political career when he was elected to the 24th District of the Louisiana House of Representatives. He was the first person in his district to become Speaker of the House. He served as the 62nd Speaker of the House from 2004 to 2008 and was the first person in his district to become Speaker.

While serving as Speaker of the House, he was inducted into the Long Purple Line in 2006. "Salter has become one of the most respected leaders in state government," his Long Purple Line description states.

He was inducted into the Hall of Distinguished Educators at NSU and the Sabine Parish Hall of Fame, and in 2008, into the Louisiana Political Museum and Hall of Fame.



Photo submitted by Northwestern State University of Louisiana
NSU alumnus, Long Purple Line inductee and politician Joe Reece Salter passes away at 82.

Most recently, he served the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors, reappointed by Gov. Jeff Landry to represent the 4th Congressional District earlier this year, which would have extended through Dec. 31, 2030.

In his honor, Gov. Landry ordered that flags of the United States and Louisiana be flown at half-staff over the State Capitol and all state buildings from sunrise until sunset on Aug. 22 and Aug. 24, 2025.

"He touched countless lives with his perseverance, wisdom, and kindness, and he leaves behind a legacy of service and dedication to all who knew him," Landry said in an executive order after Salter's passing.

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Salter's career reflected his lifelong commitment to education, public service and the state of Louisiana. His legacy and dedication to serving the community have left an everlasting impact on the NSU community.

The Current Sauce Staff

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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DOSE OF SAUCE Newsletter Sign up

Join The Current Sauce's weekly newsletter: Dose of Sauce. Each Friday at 1 p.m., the newsletter will feature the stories posted in the past week and highlight photos and things happening around campus. Use the link below to sign up or use the link on our Instagram bio!



NSU and NASA shoot for the stars at RockOn workshop

By Michael Mumphrey
Reporter



Photo submitted by Damien Tristant
NSU students participating in the NASA Program this summer.

This past summer, a crew of Northwestern State University of Louisiana students visited the Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia to participate in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA) RockOn workshop. University students from across the country worked together to build a piece of software known as a payload with the end goal of launching a rocket.

Physics professor Anna Dugas started a collaboration with the program in 2019. Plans to embark on the trip, as well as applications, began in Fall 2024. Shae Wetzel, a senior biology major, and Morgan McCrory, a recent graduate of NSU, were two of the applicants that got to participate.

“Morgan and I collaborated and created a rundown paragraph of who we were, what we wanted to gain from the experience and a little bit about our majors. Dr. Tristant and Professor Anna Dugas helped us out with the rest,” Wetzel said.

“The application was in November, and we got a reply in March that we would be able to attend RockOn.”

Dugas, Tristant, McCrory, Wetzel and the rest of the fleet traveled to Virginia, ready to build a payload for a rocket. The attendees saw the behind-the-scenes process of making a rocket. “We were able to see where rockets were assembled, where the launch was monitored and what the data was used for once a launch was completed,” McCrory said.

McCrory also learned many valuable soft skills while building the

payload for the rocket. “I learned how to properly solder, and we learned how crucial it was to be aware of small details and electronic placement when building the circuit board,” McCrory said.

On the last day of the workshop, the payload was inserted into the rocket, which was subsequently launched. The rocket reached a whopping 73 mph. To put that into perspective: the distance between Earth’s surface and the point at which our atmosphere ends and space begin, also known as the kármán line, is about 62 miles above sea level.

“I felt like a kid,” Tristant said. “This is what you see on TV, and then you’re there at the station and can feel the excitement from professors and students.”

The experience opened the eyes of the participants as to why workshops like RockOn are important for students, working with all levels of student understanding and expertise to grow their knowledge of such a complex field.

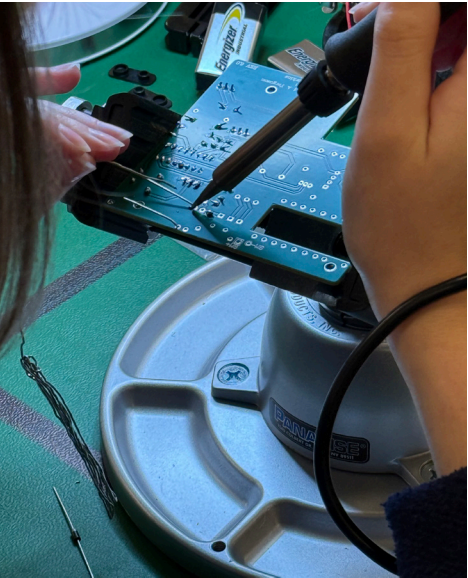
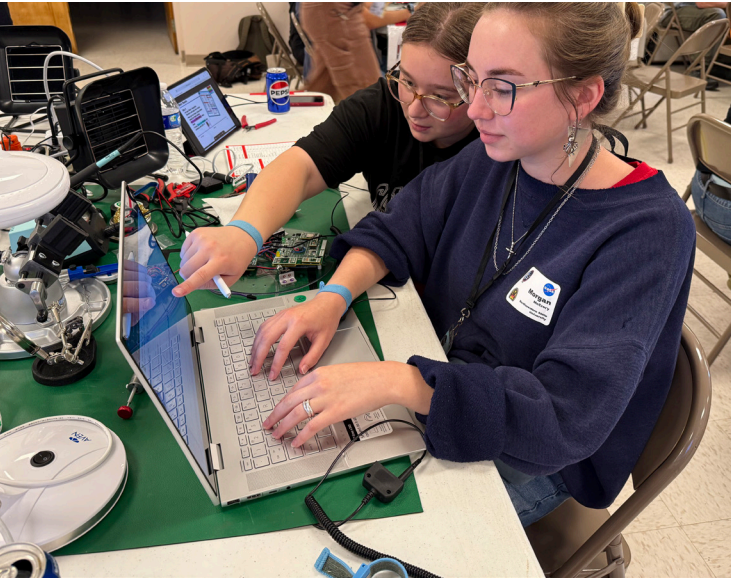
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You don’t have to love space or want to be an astronaut to be interested because NASA supports a multitude of careers. RockOn showcases that in the upper level RockOn programs,” McCrory said.

RockOn is a workshop for more than just science majors, as NASA caters to the teaching of all students interested in learning. “RockOn shows us that it doesn’t take just a certain major to achieve these big things we see such as launching a rocket. It takes people who are in business, it takes people who are in psychology. It takes people from different backgrounds because there’s so many moving parts,” Wetzel said.

While the feat that occurred was certainly one for the books, Tristant wants to shoot for the stars by going to more NASA workshops in the future. “The goal for next year is to send two freshman students, and the year after we want to start a new program called Rock Set,” Tristant said.

The program will be a one-year project entailing students to create their own experiments to bring on a rocket ship. If you are interested in applying, speak to Dr. Tristant at 205 Fournet Hall or email him at tristantd@nsula.edu or Professor Dugas at duga-sa@nsula.edu.



NSU esports lounge to relocate to the WRAC to attract prospective gamers

By Chase McLaurin
Reporter

The esports facilities at Northwestern State University of Louisiana has been moved from the Friedman Student Union to the Wellness, Recreation and Activities Center (WRAC).

The relocation was made to draw more attention to the esports facility. Patric DuBois, the director of the WRAC and deputy athletic director, feels that the move was very beneficial to increase student engagement.

“Even though we had a beautiful esports lounge down in the student union, a lot of the students never knew that, so we felt like it was a bit underutilized,” DuBois said. “We’ve already transitioned to the WRAC, and it’s working out great.”

The previous esports lounge, which was once the former campus bookstore, was one of the largest of its kind in Louisiana when it first opened in early 2021. According to the NSU website, “The 3,500 square foot lounge is designed with 24 fully

equipped computers, multiple consoles and seating that can be reconfigured for competitive and recreational gaming.”

While the student union has a variety of activities, the WRAC brings more to the table for esports when it comes to advertising and being a quick and easy place for students to have fun.

The WRAC now features upgraded equipment and hosts tournaments, along with new arcade machines and consoles offering games like Mario Kart and Smash Bros.

Courtney Chancellor, coordinator of esports and club sports, hopes to increase foot traffic at the new esports lounge in the WRAC. “We changed it up a little bit. It’s more console-based, in-

stead of PC-based, and we have our arcade machine up and running,” Chancellor said.

Students still need to show their campus ID to be able to utilize the esports lounge. Fisher Cooley, a freshman musical theatre major, explained that the area feels more secure. “I think it’s pretty dope, and I like that it’s over here instead of the student union.”

Victoria Powell, a freshman biology major, shared her thoughts on the relocation. “I think it’s fine since like a lot of people tend to play sports games. I think it’s beneficial since it’s (WRAC) a workout place,” Powell said.

Logan Hunter, a freshman nursing major and student who frequently works out at the WRAC, noticed the new lounge and

spontaneously dropped in for a match. “I really liked the lounge. I got done working out, and saw they had a whole esports lounge in the WRAC, so I had to check it out,” Hunter said.

The new location has already drawn attention to esports at NSU from students who frequently visit the WRAC. For more information on upcoming tournaments, please contact Courtney Chancellor at chancellorc@nsula.edu.



Illustration by Stephani Bradley

The esports venue is one of several spots on-campus receiving a makeover. It's relocating to the WRAC.

Photo Gallery

NSU football secures first win since 2022 against Alcorn State University



Photos by Zoey Fitts

A closer look at the Suitable app

By Phillip Voorhees
Viewpoints Editor

New software is being used to encourage student engagement at Northwestern State University of Louisiana. Suitable is a free mobile app that seeks to enhance campus life. Logging into the app shows a thorough list of events happening at NSU and a tally of how many events the student has attended.

According to an article on the Suitable company website, the app seeks to incentivize campus involvement by “gamifying” the process—breaking down the broad goal of “getting involved on campus” into smaller, less intimidating tasks.

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There are many facets to Suitable, which may make it appear complicated at first glance, but a closer look reveals the potential for improvements to the student experience at NSU.

There are many facets to Suitable, which may make it appear complicated at first glance, but a closer look reveals the potential for improvements to the student experience at NSU.

Suitable was introduced this year as a better alternative to Presence, another mobile app focused on campus engagement. Although only a few weeks into the semester, Suitable has been more utilized than Presence ever was. It was used to log attendance at mandatory housing meetings and at the first football game of the year against Alcorn State University.

According to Trevor O'Bannon, assistant director of student engagement, Suitable is “much more user-friendly than Presence,” and Suitable’s “mobile first platform” is more appropriate for a “technologically driven age.”

While Presence was primarily used by student organization leaders, Suitable is a must-have for every student. The software is more functional and efficient than its predecessor, while also offering new features.

One of the exciting features offered by Suitable is Digital Badging. The Suitable article explained, “Digital badges can be a helpful tool for assessment and accreditation. When they are used to track co-curricular student engagement, this data can be used as evidence to benefit university accreditation efforts.”

In other words, students can be rewarded for their participation on campus. “We’ll be able to do things like provide students with a virtual badge of recognition for completing certain aspects of college life, and that can potentially lead to us being able to give stoles and cords at graduation,” O'Bannon said.

O'Bannon hopes for eventual integration with Handshake, so that employers can see student achievements on Suitable.

Suitable is also home to a comprehensive list of every Registered Student Organization (RSO). Many students want to get involved with extracurricular organizations, but do not know where to start. Suitable simplifies this process.

RSO leaders can register events on the app, showing everyone on campus what their organization has to offer. Some events include incentives, such as free food or T-shirts, and these benefits are listed in the app to encourage participation.

Within organizations, leaders can also use Suitable to assign tasks. Organizations can send notifications to members, reminding them of important deadlines. This is “the biggest way that students will find it useful,” O'Bannon said.

Students and staff alike are still adjusting to the newly introduced app. O'Bannon encouraged every student to download the app so its features can be properly implemented on campus.

Although the app is mostly functional, some have faced software errors and general frustration with the transition. An anonymous student in the NSU Student Needs Facebook group commented, “The times for events on Suitable are consistently inaccurate.”

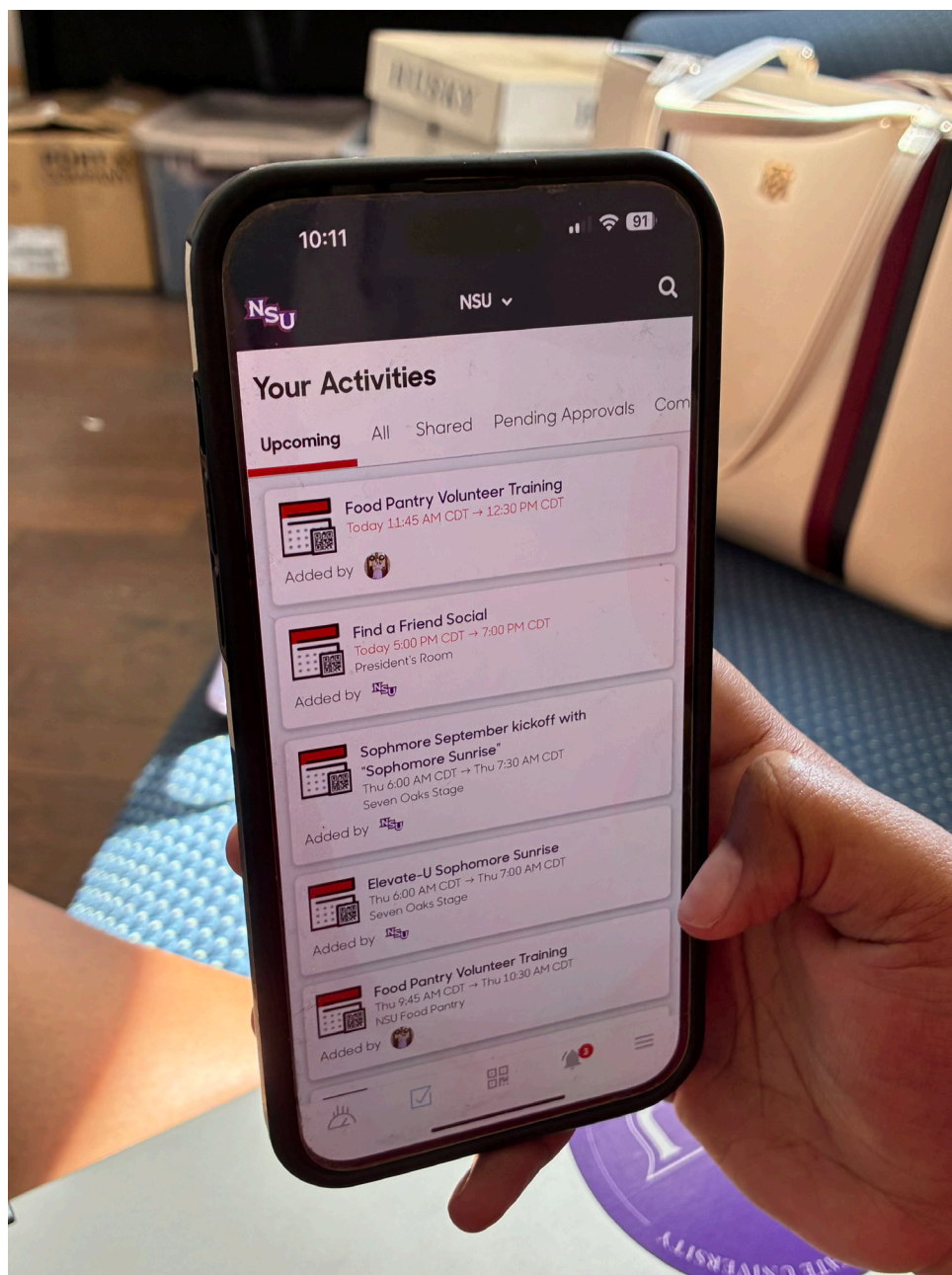


Photo by Kallie Bourgeois
NSU students are able to earn achievements for attending events and view upcoming activities through the new Suitable app.

Faculty members such as classics professor Davina McClain are also skeptical. “Very little information seems to have been sent to advisors,” McClain said. “And I’m not keen on having it on my personal phone.”

O'Bannon acknowledged the problems as NSU works to remedy them. “We do understand there are some issues with the app. While it isn’t a whole lot, we are working with Suitable’s IT team as well as our own IT team to get it resolved,” O'Bannon said.

Regardless, the minor errors will not impede the integration of the software on campus. Student Engagement has big goals to improve the college experience using Suitable.

PURPLE
MEDIA
NETWORK



Letter from the Editor: Looking ahead, reflecting back

By Kallie Bourgeois
Editor-in-Chief

I’ve always thought about the butterfly effect, the idea that something small can have a much larger effect on your life. One decision changed the entire trajectory of my life, and I’m grateful that I’m too stubborn when it comes to sitting still in comfort.

During my junior year of high school, I became aware of The Current Sauce.

I took a risk and moved from southern Louisiana to get a fresh start. Even though I knew who I was before joining The Current Sauce and even before attending Northwestern State University of Louisiana, I never knew how much I would grow in such a short amount of time.

Fast forward three years later as a junior in college, I became the Editor-in-Chief of that same publication. I’m not saying that I’m

a mastermind, but the minute I joined this newspaper I knew where I wanted to end up. I know I have leadership qualities and I’m a hard worker, but sometimes I get imposter syndrome because I feel like I’m not the most knowledgeable in this field. I’m not trying to be humble or make you doubt my skills in any way but just know that I am also a person who is growing. I’m growing just as much as this newspaper will.

Being the Editor-in-Chief allows me to advocate for more than just myself and that is what motivates me moving forward. In Lia Portillo’s “Letter from the Editor: What it means to me to lead this publication,” she referenced trying to find the balance between appealing to the student body and respected professors of this campus. I find that I’ve had the same struggle since I took over in May.

I wanted to find a way we can increase student engagement, while also catering towards people who will actually pick up and read our print editions. For the student body, you will see us more active on social media and around campus. As for those who look forward to keeping up with our physical newspapers, those will not be going anywhere.

It is my pleasure to lead this publication and bring new ideas to The Current Sauce, which has fostered talented award-winning writers, professors and alumni. I will carry on the saucy legacy.

To my past and current professors, thank you for educating me in all things journalism. To our student media coordinator Matthew Craig, thank you for making these new and slightly terrifying responsibilities easier on me with your assistance and encouragement. To the section

editors before me, thank you for all your feedback and answering my millions of questions (I’m sorry for spamming you).

To my Lia Portillo, my Editor-in-Chief, thank you for believing in me and giving me this opportunity to thrive. Your guidance has been very impactful for not only the future of this newspaper, but also my future career.

To my 2025 staff, I know I might be overwhelmed sometimes but bare with me as we embark on this new journey together. I believe that we can accomplish great things.

To the readers of The Current Sauce, my office door is always open in Kyser 227, and I will listen to whatever you need. The Current Sauce will always be here serving you.



Photo by Anastasia Douglas
Reflecting on my time with The Current Sauce has allowed me to address areas of improvement as a publication and a person.

Back to School

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other.
Use the word bank below.

J I F T Q T U I T I O N H N E I X T F T
M D S S U I N T E R N S H I P O S K Q R
M I D T E R M S S V T N E M L L O R N E
J J L O U L N Y R T T C T T I H N S N C
T S N D N H L E A Y B H N I M O O M C E
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P W W H J O S H K Y B C A V Z B C N H T
A O K Y G A X T K E C R Y E R C M T I R
K E E S N X M W N B Y U W B M S A F G F

Word Bank

- 1. Major
- 2. Minor
- 3. Degree
- 4. Syllabus
- 5. Research
- 6. Seminar
- 7. Library
- 8. Campus
- 9. Graduation
- 10. Internship
- 11. Professor
- 12. Thesis
- 13. Credit
- 14. Finals
- 15. Advisor
- 16. Enrollment
- 17. Lecture
- 18. Tuition
- 19. Dormitory
- 20. Midterms

Burning Conversations



Northwestern State University

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OCT. 2ND

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QR code

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

10AM - 2PM | STUDENT UNION BALLROOM

ALL MAJORS INVITED Undergraduate & Graduate

PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE REQUIRED.

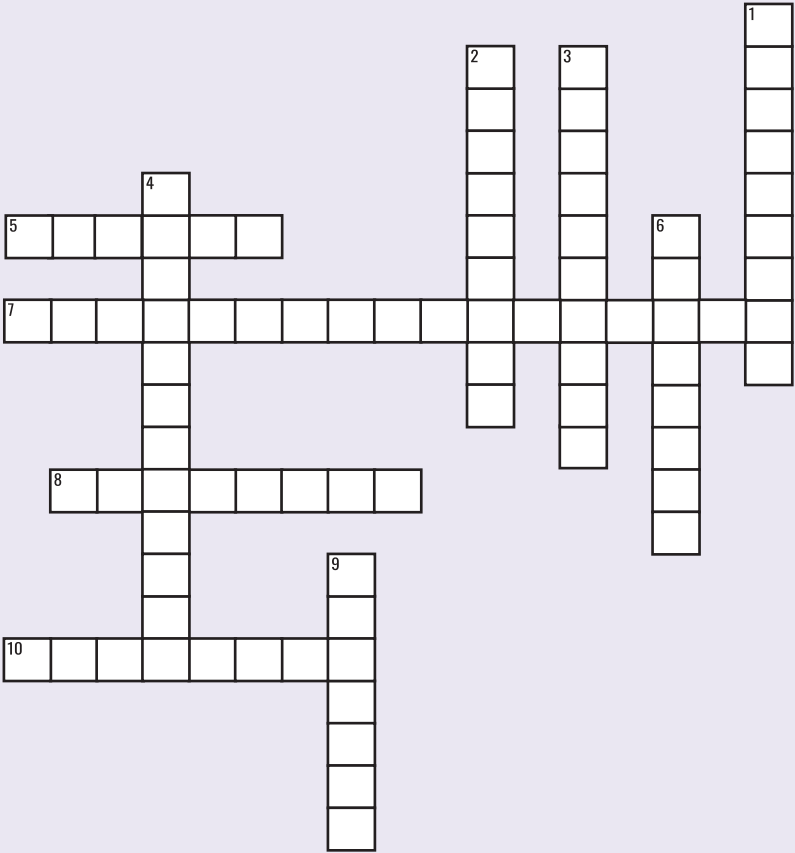
For more information: EMPLOYERS: nsu.la/GFemployer STUDENTS: nsu.la/GFstudent

HOSTED BY NSU CAREER CENTER

Handshake

Natchitoches Crossword

Answer the clues each themed after the city of Natchitoches



Across

- 5. Cultural influence found in Natchitoches cuisine and traditions
- 7. Historic site in Natchitoches dating back to the 18th century
- 8. Natchitoches is known for its well-preserved historic district
- 10. Common tree found in the gardens and landscapes of Natchitoches

Down

- 1. Waterway that runs through the city of Natchitoches
- 2. Natchitoches is the oldest permanen settlement in this state
- 3. Sites near Natchitoches known for large historic estates
- 4. Natchitoches is home of this university
- 6. Annual event in Natchitoches featuring music, food, and fireworks
- 9. Porpular savory pastry that is a specialty of Natchitoches