've always liked computers. Early in my career, when I was a market research analyst at an oil and gas consulting firm in Oklahoma, I became the computer expert in the office. It was the early 1980s, I was in my mid-20s, and I just knew more about computers than a lot of the older people I worked with, so they came to me for help.

Technology interests me. I like to be on the front edge of the computing landscape, so a few years ago when I saw my daughters getting more involved in instant messaging, and later into social networking, I was intrigued. I would see them and wonder what it was that was attracting them for hours to the computer.

My teenagers really introduced me to the whole world of social networking. I saw it as a whole new way of communicating. A few years ago when I heard about Facebook, I was a vice president for student affairs, and it was my responsibility to stay in contact with student opinions. I saw Facebook as a way to be in touch with students, to see what they were talking and thinking about and what mattered to them.

A year ago when I was announced as the new president of LeTourneau, Facebook really became a practical way for me to get to know students. The announcement was made in March, and I was able to jumpstart the whole process of learning about them before I came to LETU on July 1.

My first blog was inspired by LETU board Chair Dr. Kenneth L. Hall. I saw that he writes a blog and could see how it builds community with his readership all over the country, and all over the world. I started my own president’s blog as an efficient way to be available and share my heart with our LETU community, prospective parents, or anyone else who cares to read what I’m thinking about.

And in this busy world we live in, relationships matter. Social networking, used responsibly, is a valuable tool for people to get to know one another. Today, with the technology we have available to us, online social networking is expanding the ability we have to meet new people, make new friends and share our ideas and thoughts in record time. It’s one more tool to stay in contact.

This issue of the NOW magazine shares how we use social networks to connect to our students, to our alumni and how our enrollment services office is using social networks to connect to prospective students. If you’ve read my blog, you know about the very important visioning process we have begun these past few months as we seek to define God’s vision for the future of LETU. If you haven’t read it, you’ll find some information about that process in this issue.

While nothing beats face-to-face interaction, face-to-Facebook doesn’t hurt.
“BEHOLD, NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME; BEHOLD NOW IS THE DAY OF OUR SALVATION.” II Cor. 6:2

LeTourneau University is an interdenominational Christian university located in Longview, Texas, offering academic majors in the aeronautical sciences, business, education, engineering, the humanities and sciences. LeTourneau University also offers business degrees and teacher certification programs online and at five educational centers around Texas in Austin, Bedford, Dallas, Houston and Tyler.

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Facebook and social networking at Letourneau University

Written and Photographed By Tom Barnard
It’s been said that if you want to know the measure of man, just count his friends. If that old adage is accurate, then LeTourneau’s new president is quite a man. Dr. Dale Lunsford has 359 friends on Facebook, the popular social networking Web site available online.

“Within minutes of being named LETU’s new president last year, there were a number of students who were looking me up on Facebook and adding me to their list of online friends,” Lunsford said. “In a matter of days, that number hit double digits. Before I ever stepped into my job as president, I was able to meet quite a few students and learn more about their personalities, dreams and goals by reading their profiles on Facebook.”

So what exactly is Facebook? It is a Web site that was created in 2004 by an enterprising student at Harvard University who was trying to create a Web-based tool to stay in contact with his friends on campus. Since that time, Facebook has spread to include more than 30,000 recognized schools, and has opened up membership to anyone who desires it even if they aren’t affiliated with a school or organization.

Facebook is completely free and can be accessed at www.facebook.com. The brilliance of Facebook is that it allows users to network with friends and family in many different ways, all in one convenient site.

As a social networking tool that allows people to stay in contact with friends, family and colleagues, it also preserves your privacy. For anyone to find you on Facebook, they have to already be a member of the service, however to view your personal profile, they have to “friend you,” which is essentially asking your permission.

These safeguards give you control of who sees your personal information and keeps it from being made public. Facebook considers the privacy of its users to be extremely important and security measures like this serve to protect the users' safety while using the Web service.

Once on the Web site, you have to set up an account, after which you are allowed to search for and connect with friends. You can post pictures, videos and blog entries on your personal Facebook profile page. It also allows users to keep in touch with their friends by sending private messages and allowing them to make public comments on their profile ‘wall.’

In 2005, when Facebook was expanded to include LETU, students began to use the free service almost immediately as a way of staying in contact with each other, sharing photos and stories and spreading news of events taking place on campus.

What started as a fun trend has blossomed into a way of life for most of the current students on campus. Trying to think about what life would be like without Facebook is almost unfathomable to students like sophomore Angela Dorman, from Louisville, Ky.

“I check my Facebook at least as often as I check my e-mail,” Dorman said. “Without Facebook, I would not be able to easily connect with so many of my friends who still live back at home.”

Facebook is also a way for university administrators to reach out to LETU students. Corey Ross, director of Student Affairs, said, “Relationships are the key to our ministry in Student Affairs, and Facebook offers several ways for us to connect, even if it is in cyberspace.”

Facebook gives Ross and other administrators the chance to grow closer to students in a variety of ways.

“I’m able to offer birthday greetings, encouragement for an intramurals victory, or just keep up on who might be having some relationship stress when I see that their status goes from being in a relationship to being single,” Ross said. “It’s really just something that provides me with a conversation starter for when I see the students around campus.”

LETU students, administrators and faculty are using Facebook to get the word out about upcoming student events on campus as well. The YellowJacket Activity Council has its own page and calendars for all of its upcoming events. Using Facebook offers advantages over e-mail because it is interactive and allows students to participate and add details and photos to event announcements. Students can even RSVP to attend events, giving event planners an idea of the number of students coming to an event.

Written and Photographed By Tom Barnard
Students have also utilized Facebook to share their feelings with the university about areas in which they’d like to see improvement. Over the last year, these have included suggestions about the quality of food in the dining hall and the prohibition of backpacks in the new Belcher Center. Through Facebook, students are given the opportunity to voice their opinions about aspects of the university that affect their daily lives.

On a recent mission trip to Hungary over Christmas break, LETU students were surprised that the first question asked of them by students at a Hungarian university was, “Are you on Facebook?”

LETU student Katie Leatherwood said, “We came home and are continuing to communicate with the new friends that we made over there. We are sharing photos and experiences from our trip with our new friends. Without Facebook, we’d have probably had to end those relationships as soon as we got on the plane.”

Facebook is not limited to social functions though. The LETU Office of Admissions is using Facebook to reach out to high school students who are interested in learning more about the university.

Beth Rountree, assistant director of admissions for LETU, said that Facebook allows her office to meet high school students on their turf.

“We can become a part of their daily life and connect with them in a way that makes them feel like they’re already members of the LETU family,” Rountree said. “Students of this generation want to be connected—and not just technologically—but relationally as well. Facebook allows our staff to form relationships that are a pivotal part of the recruiting process.”

Biology professor Karen Rispin uses Facebook to post pictures of course activities.

“I am the faculty sponsor for the Outdoor Club,” Rispin said, “and the students have set up a Facebook group that I participate in and check out pictures regularly. I’ve also used Facebook several times to contact alumni whose e-mail addresses have changed.”

Alumni can also benefit from participating in the online social networking features that Facebook offers. LETU’s new director of alumni and parent relations, Marta E. Martin, is using the service to
connect with alumni as well as current students who will soon become alumni after graduation.

“I think we’re only beginning to see the potential of how social networks like Facebook can help our alumni stay in contact with the university and with each other,” Martin said.

This spring, LETU is launching its own online community dedicated to LETU alumni.

Known as MyCOMMUNITY, this new service will allow alumni located all over the world to connect with each other, share memories and stories though discussion boards, plan and schedule events and keep up with what is going on with their alma mater. This new tool is not meant to compete with Facebook since its use will be limited only to the LETU alumni community.

If you ask a college student whether they’ve checked their Facebook today, more than 85% of them will answer, “Yes, several times.” The number of users on the service is increasing by a million new users every four days, and there seems to be no signs this trend is going to slow down any time soon.

At LETU, Facebook is providing students, faculty and administrators new and exciting ways of communicating with each other. And as a university, we’ve only begun to realize the opportunities that this service will continue to provide.
When university president Dr. Dale A. Lunsford first came to LeTourneau University last summer, all eyes were on him to see what changes he would make.

He didn't rush. Instead, he spent the first six months listening to students, faculty, staff, alumni, community members and board members to learn more about the university.

Lunsford has stated publicly that his vision is simply to find God’s vision for LETU, a vision that is “from Him, and through Him and to Him” (Romans 11:36).

In January, Lunsford launched the LETU community into a university-wide visioning process, kicked off by a chapel service encouraging seven days of prayer based on the Lord’s Prayer. The week of Jan. 9 through Jan. 15 became a focused time to acknowledge God’s providence and sovereignty, to ask forgiveness and protection, and to ask God to reveal His vision for the future of the university.

Lunsford has been resolute that certain aspects of the university will not change. Honoring Christ as central to learning, living and leading will not change. The mission as an interdenominational university, united by a shared statement of faith, will not change. While the university has wide recognition in areas of engineering and aeronautical science, LETU considers itself a comprehensive institution. That will not change.

Following the week of prayer, the university community held brainstorming meetings by department to determine where God was already at work. The university vice presidents, deans and directors led discussions all across campus with questions like: In seven years, what will be LETU’s unique contribution? What will the university do better than anyone else?

The process is valuable for the LETU community to share collective thoughts and seek God’s will. Input gleaned from faculty, staff, the LETU Alumni Council and student leaders will be shared with Dr. Lunsford. Next, the president will articulate the vision to a board committee for review before it is voted upon by LETU’s full Board of Trustees when they meet in April.

This visioning process comprises intentional steps, prayerfully and daily, to seek God’s destination for the university.

That vision, that destination, can provide direction for a new strategic plan to chart the university’s course for the future. Lunsford likens following a strategic plan to a GPS device that gives turn-by-turn directions to reach a destination. The key to a good strategic plan, is first to know the destination. See www.letu.edu/vision.
Students Making a Difference: Nathan Harper

Written By Lauren Bosecker, sophomore digital writing major

Nathan Harper, a junior majoring in Biblical Studies and Christian Ministries from Hallsville, Texas, will escape the heat and humidity of his home state this summer. Harper will serve as a team guide for Project Chugach in Anchorage, Alaska, from May 15 to Aug. 15. Project Chugach, a summer missionary assignment aiding the Chugach Baptist Association, is sponsored in conjunction with the Baptist Collegiate Ministry and the North American Mission Board.

As a mission guide for Project Chugach, Harper will be responsible for leading more than 30 short-term teams that will serve South Central Alaska. Additionally, he will oversee on site implementation and set up of several missionary projects. Vacation Bible Schools and five construction projects are on the summer’s agenda as well.

“I’ll be doing just about anything and everything,” Harper said.

Harper previously traveled to Alaska two summers ago as part of a short-term mission team with Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview, Texas. The director of the BCM, Brenda Crim, was so impressed with Harper that she invited him to return and participate in Project Chugach.

Harper is already anticipating his return to Alaska. “I look forward to experiencing God’s beautiful creation there again, as well as seeing Him through His creation,” Harper said.

Project Chugach has also found a special way to reach out to its local and largely “un-churched” community. One weekend every summer, the Alaskan natives are allowed to catch an unlimited amount of salmon from the local river. This year, Project Chugach will provide a large, transportable shower house, meals and a Vacation Bible School for those who come out to fish all day.

“It’s like Beach Reach,” Harper said, “Alaskan style!”

Participants in the outreach will also aid the natives in cleaning and transporting the salmon they catch.

As a Biblical Studies and Christian Ministries major, Harper feels his time spent at LeTourneau University has prepared him for this journey.

“My classes and professors have definitely provided me with a strong biblical foundation,” Harper said. “They have also given me the knowledge and skills necessary to actively engage in various ministries and missions.”

Harper believes his upcoming mission trip to Alaska will be a great learning experience and will enhance the mission mindset he has been developing.

“This ministry experience will surely benefit me as far as missions goes,” Harper said. “I am looking forward to improving my philosophy of religion as well as practically applying a mission-minded lifestyle.”

Written By Lauren Bosecker, sophomore digital writing major

Students Making a Difference: Nathan Harper
STUDENTS RAZE, REBUILD SECOND HOME IN LONGVIEW
LETU students, armed with hammers, sledgehammers, crow bars and work gloves, joined members of Red Oak Baptist Church to tear down the home of 80-year-old Longview resident and church member Sye Jackson. The community service project is patterned after one the students did last year with Our Redeemer Lutheran Church when they razed and rebuilt a home for a disabled woman and her son. The total cost of the new home is around $50,000 with donations coming from the community. The students plan to have the house completed by mid-May.

SPRING ENROLLMENT BREAKS RECORD
The traditional spring 2008 enrollment marks the university’s all-time record for a spring semester with 1,218 enrolled. Traditional enrollment counts the students from age 18-22 at the university’s Longview campus. The school annually reports its official enrollment on the 12th class day. The spring 2008 enrollment marks the fifth consecutive year of growth. This year also marks the highest number of returning traditional students, totaling 1,130.

PREVIEWERS CONVERT WIND TO ENERGY
LETU attracted 120 high school students to a preview of the engineering and aviation programs during a weekend event in late January. Engineering students designed, built and tested models to convert wind power to stored energy, using only paper, paper cups, foam plates and scotch tape in their designs. Teams used their breath to simulate the wind and had less than an hour to complete the entire process.

STUDENTS HOST FILM FESTIVAL
Amateur filmmakers had the chance to compete for prizes ranging from $200 to $400 at the 8th annual LETU Film Festival Feb. 29. The students invited the local public to showcase its filmmaking talent through short films no longer than 15 minutes. They included comedy, drama, documentary and some fun mock advertisements. Awards were given for best screenplay, best acting, best picture and audience choice.

SPRING SCIENCE SEMINARS SHOWCASE RESEARCH
The public was invited to nearly a dozen one-hour science seminars throughout the spring semester featuring local experts and student research. The seminars included topics such as soil testing and water quality, pulmonary function research, nanoscience, computational chemistry and high energy physics. Student presentations included research on the LEGS project, knee research on damaged ligaments and work on building water wells in Ethiopia.

GUITARIST DOYLE DYKES ROCKS BELCHER CENTER
Master finger-style guitarist Doyle Dykes performed in concert Feb. 15, in the S.E. Belcher Jr. Chapel and Performance Center. Dykes has been called a guitar legend in the making, with musical influences ranging from Chet Atkins to the Beatles.
ENGLISH PROFESSORS HELP CHILDREN WRITE BOOKS
Julie Teel and Kathy Stephens, faculty members in LETU’s School of Education, worked with staff members at St. Mary’s Catholic School to help them prepare elementary school students to write books as part of the Nationwide Learning National Book Challenge. The students wrote and illustrated books that were printed by Student Treasures. LETU education students also worked with the children on their books, giving them real-world teaching experience.

STUDENTS ASSIST POOR WITH INCOME TAXES
Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) club members are offering free assistance filing 2007 income taxes to low-income and elderly individuals in South Longview. SIFE members were trained as volunteers through the Internal Revenue Service’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

PROFESSOR WINS AIRPLANE
Bruce Chase, an assistant professor and assistant flight instructor, won a $5,000 research grant and a newly refurbished 1977 Cessna Cardinal 4-seater aircraft, valued at $127,000, from the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association’s “Catch-A-Cardinal” sweepstakes. The airplane was refurbished throughout 2007, receiving a new interior, instrument panel, paint and engine.

DR. YONI ADONYI MAKES A FRENCH CONNECTION
With only two fingers, LETU Materials Joining Engineering professor Dr. Yoni Adonyi holds up the Viaduc de Millau, the tallest bridge in the world, hailed worldwide as one of France’s highest architectural and engineering accomplishments of the past few years. Adonyi went to France at the invitation of Dr. Jaques Riviere, vice president for international relations at Universite Montpellier 2, to participate in the Second Annual Symposium on International Cooperation and Industrial Relations. Adonyi spoke on the status of LETU-French collaboration with the French university, internship opportunities for students and other materials-joining research topics. During his visit, Adonyi also met with professors from Cranfield University (UK), the University of Southern Australia, University of Barcelona (Spain) and Politecnico Torino (Italy) as well as French industry representatives from the nuclear and aerospace sectors.
STUDENTS COMPETE FOR $750,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS
Nearly 100 top high school students from across the country competed in February for 10 Heritage scholarships worth $75,000 each. Candidates wrote essays and participated in personal interviews with LETU faculty and staff. To qualify, the students had to have scored a 1300 on the SAT or 29 on the ACT and have a cumulative high school grade point average of 3.65.

LETU STUDENT COMPETE FOR TRUMAN SCHOLARSHIP
LETU junior David Niedrauer of Winnsboro, Texas, is one of only 187 finalists from major universities across the nation to be considered for a graduate scholarship from the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation. Niedrauer, a double major in English and history and political science, is the university’s first student ever to be considered for this prestigious graduate school scholarship which provides $30,000 for graduate study. The Truman Scholarship Foundation seeks to recognize college juniors with exceptional leadership potential who desire careers in government, nonprofit or advocacy sectors, education or public service.

Ralph Wood, a renowned scholar who has written extensively on Christian authors such as C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, G.K. Chesterton and Flannery O’Connor, was the keynote speaker.

LETU HOSTS ENGLISH CONFERENCE FEB. 22
More than 50 scholars from across the country presented papers at the South Central Conference on Christianity and Literature at LETU Feb. 22. The conference theme was “In Search of the Peaceable Kingdom: Studies in the Literature of Conflict, Struggle and Hope.”

Three members of the LETU community earned doctoral degrees this past December. Vice President for Student Affairs Doug Wilcoxson earned a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas; School of Education Assistant Professor Kathy E. Stephens earned a Doctor of Education from Texas A&M University in Commerce, Texas; and Educator Certification Officer Pamela Ann Johnson earned a Doctor of Education from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale-Davie, Fla.

FREE HEALTH FAIR BENEFITS PUBLIC
LETU’s 6th annual health fair on Feb. 7 in the Solheim Arena attracted nearly 900 community members for a variety of health screenings, nutritional education and healthy lifestyle promotion. Participants got more than $400 in medical testing services free of charge. The health fair embraced prevention and education to aid in reversing our nation’s epidemic of obesity, heart disease and stroke.

LETU ADVERTISING WINS AWARDS
LETU’s Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management and Market Research Chris Fontaine, left, holds some of the advertising awards won by LETU’s advertising agency of record, Encore Multimedia, owned by alumnus Dean Waskowiak (’85), right. Encore Multimedia has won five Telly Awards and eight Addy awards for commercials produced promoting LeTourneau over the past few years.
Campus is starting to show signs of spring and that means it is decision time for many high school seniors about which college they will attend. We look forward to the arrival of our incoming class in August, with students joining the LETU community from Texas, across the country and around the world.

Keeping up with high school seniors is a challenge for admissions officers and many, including LETU, have turned to the Web to solve part of the puzzle. Today’s teens and tweens are the most connected generation ever, and to keep in touch with them we are using phone, e-mail, chat, instant messaging and social networking sites—primarily Facebook.

The student and staff teams within the Admissions Office make more than 100,000 calls and send out that amount of e-mails each year to students and parents. The Admissions Office hosts monthly chat events on topics that include academic programs, student life, the admissions process and how to apply for financial aid. To find upcoming admissions chat events, go to www.letu.edu/admissions and click on the “Chat Events” link.

In 2007, the admissions counselors used both Facebook and MySpace to connect with future students. We’ve found that younger students typically use MySpace and high school and college students use Facebook to stay connected with friends. Right now over 100 students chat, share pictures and videos, ask questions and search for future friends and possible roommates through the LETU Class of 2012 Facebook group. Any student who is considering LETU for 2008 is welcome to join!

Also, students who have paid their deposits have access to their LETU e-mail accounts prior to starting classes earlier than ever before. By having access to their LETU e-mail accounts, they can begin communicating with LETU, send e-mails to their fellow high school students (proudly showing their college choice) and join the LETU Facebook network.
Bedford Students Project Growth For City of Anna

Written by Janet Ragland
Traveling north along U.S. Highway 75 Central Expressway from Dallas takes you through the cities of Richardson, Plano, Allen and McKinney, which have each grown steadily over the past several decades as the Metroplex expands. About 12 miles north of McKinney, or 45 miles north of downtown Dallas, lies the city of Anna, Texas, population 9,000.

The city of Anna, located in northern Collin County, has grown 33 percent over the past five years. Historically rural, the city’s Economic Development Corporation is interested in a plan for managing the growth of the city while attracting clean industry and high-quality residential developments.

LeTourneau University business students in Dr. James Tew’s Business Research class at the university’s Bedford location answered the call to research and write a business plan for the growth of the city. When the 17 working adult students in BBA 0807 met on the first night of their six-week course on Jan. 2, they were assigned a class project that would not only fulfill their course requirements, but would also benefit the city.

“These students exceeded the course requirements with their work,” Tew said. “I couldn’t have been more proud of them.”

The project got started when the city of Anna’s Economic Development Corporation treasurer Dr. Charles Vance contacted Tew to discuss asking his class develop a business plan. Vance teaches psychology and Bible classes for LETU, as well as serving as a pastor of Calgary Baptist Church in Anna. Vance knew other LETU students had success in developing a business plan for the Ferguson Road Initiative, a Dallas-area nonprofit that garnered a $1 million grant to fight crime and improve quality of life.

The EDC met with the students and outlined goals to make the city adhere to “green” environmental standards and to provide wireless Internet throughout the 90 square miles of the city while attracting clean corporations to provide employment for a larger volume of affluent residents.

The students formed four teams to research the city’s infrastructure. They assessed growth potential of city utilities such as water, sewer, natural gas, electricity, telephone, television and Internet services; public services such as police and fire service, parks and recreation, schools and hospitals; and construction issues such as roads and streets, railroads and residential housing.

In a two-hour slide presentation, the students shared their research with three members of the EDC. The students made a variety of recommendations that included offering tax incentives and taking advantage of existing rail lines in the city by building an industrial park to attract larger employers to the area. They discussed benefits of using solar power for some of the city’s electrical needs. They suggested investing in technology to make the city completely “wireless” for Internet connectivity and then using that technology as a selling point for residential and business growth. The students also recommended upgrades to schools and medical facilities to attract families and suggested rezoning to attract business and encourage residential development.

The students also developed some public relations initiatives, including building a new city Web site, recommending a new city slogan, networking with other cities through chamber of commerce functions and developing an annual festival to attract tourism.

After the presentation ended, the students provided their recommendations in a 59-page report to the members of the panel, who praised their work, saying the research confirmed some of the board’s ideas and provided new ideas for consideration.

“You’ve given us a lot of good information that we need to fight political battles,” Vance told the students. “Your research will help us be more successful because this is a report from an outside group saying it.”

Besides giving the city a new plan, and giving the students practical experience in research and writing business plans, another benefit of the City of Anna business plan project came about for one student who reported that after she made contact with Atmos Energy, which provides gas to the city, she was offered a job interview when she graduates.
Instead of flipping through an outdated alumni directory, LETU alumni can use a new, free, online resource called MyCOMMUNITY to find old classmates. Searching for old floor mates, teammates and even ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends is now easier than ever.

“MyCOMMUNITY is an exclusive online community, available only to LETU alumni, that serves as an up-to-date online alumni directory for any alumni who register on the site,” said LETU’s new alumni director, Marta E. Martin. “MyCOMMUNITY precludes the need for printed directories, which will no longer be produced.”

Kendall Harper has been involved since MyCOMMUNITY’s inception last year. As the secretary to the Office of Alumni and Parent Relations, she says it will be a more effective way for alumni to get information.

“As soon as the old directory was printed, it became obsolete because people moved, changed jobs and couldn’t update their information in the printed directory,” she said. “Now, as soon as a change is made in our system, that information is automatically updated online in MyCOMMUNITY.”

To register with and use MyCOMMUNITY, alumni should go to www.letu.edu/mycommunity, fill in the required information for registration, choose a personal login name and password, and then wait 24-48 hours for registration to be approved by the alumni office.

“If one of our alumni is on a trip and wants to look up and see if one of their old friends is located nearby, all they have to do is search for them on MyCOMMUNITY,” Harper said.

Users can also upload class notes, post on community message boards, add pictures to their profiles and join affinity groups dedicated to organizations they were involved with while in school.

Martin said she hopes alumni will enjoy using it. “It will be easy for our alumni to reconnect,” she said. “We also hope to be adding more interactive features in the future.”

For those worried about privacy on MyCOMMUNITY, users can access privacy controls. Each member controls their privacy levels and can change some of the information shown to others. However certain information is public by default, such as: names, titles, graduation year, major, current city and state, current company and involvement areas while alumni were students.

“Our goal in providing MyCOMMUNITY to our alumni,” Martin said, “is to help provide a fast, easy way for them to be connected back to LeTourneau University, and to find those friends with whom they have shared special memories.”
Sports Update

Written by Shane Meling, Sports Information Director
Photographed by Naomi Downs

The close of February means that basketball season has ended at LETU, but it also means the baseball, golf, softball and tennis seasons have just arrived.

Both the men’s and women’s basketball teams ended the season by winning their final two games at home over East Texas Baptist University and University of the Ozarks. Unfortunately, that was not enough to get either team into the American Southwest Conference Playoffs.

The YellowJacket women finished the year 6-19 under the guidance of first year head coach Corey Thomaston. The team showed great improvement throughout the season and it appears that a solid foundation has been laid for the future.

The biggest win of the season came on Feb. 19, when the team defeated archrival ETBU, 69 to 67. On the year, sophomore Kristen Baskin led the team scoring with 12.4 points per game and 67 assists. Sophomore Stephanie Bush was the team’s top rebounder averaging 6.3 boards per contest, while senior Erin Wait led the team with 27 three-pointers for the year.

The men’s basketball team entered the final week of the season needing to win both of its games and have ETBU lose its final game to make the playoffs. The YellowJackets took care of their end of the bargain, but the Tigers spoiled the team’s post-season plans by defeating Ozarks on the last day of the season.

Despite not making the playoffs, the team went 12-13 to give it back-to-back 10-win seasons for the first time since the late 1980s. They started the season by defeating Hardin-Simmons University and McMurry University on the road for the first time in school history.

The team’s biggest win came on Feb. 2 when it upset visiting Mississippi College for the second straight year. Once again, it was a YellowJacket tip-in at the buzzer that won the game.

The season finale against Ozarks proved to be a historical day as both junior Dusty Evers and junior Dewones Smith scored their 1,000th career points. They became the 17th and 18th members of the YellowJacket 1,000-point club. Smith finished the season leading the team in scoring 14.6 points per game, rebounding 7.2 per game, 66 assists, 40 steals, and 43 three-pointers.

While third-year head coach Bob Davis is disappointed that his team did not make the playoffs, he can take heart knowing he does not lose a single player from this year’s team to graduation.
Where in the world is Marta Montenegro? I’m here at LeTourneau! And I’m now Marta Martin! My maiden name, “Montenegro,” means “Black Mountain” in Spanish, so I titled this, my first column, “The Black Mountain Returns.”

Little did I know a few months ago that “my next mission” would be serving as LeTourneau University’s new Director for Alumni and Parent Relations.

Six months ago, I was in Houston, planning my dream wedding to Mr. Matt Martin and relaxing… Fast forward three months to January, and I am in Longview, living in the country, newly married, tilling a garden, with a lively donkey as a neighbor, coyotes for night music, and unpacking cardboard boxes! It has been a whirlwind…but God has been with us all along. I have my dream job and Matt has landed his dream job, working for the Longview Economic Development Corporation.

Since our arrival in Longview, Matt and I have been blessed by the terrific LeTourneau community. I invite you and your families to also enjoy our diverse LETU community. “Did you know” that whether you are stateside or overseas, you can probably find a LeTourneau alumnus or parent close to where you live?

Because our LETU family is global, we have worked diligently to update our communications with you. My assistant Kendall Harper and predecessor Allison Gardner and I have updated your alumni and parent pages at www.letu.edu. We are committed to keeping the information up-to-date so that you know what is going on, when and how you can get involved!
For example, Homecoming 2008 is coming up on April 4 & 5, 2008! Yes, Homecoming was in the fall but we moved it to the spring so you can enjoy Hootenanny, intersociety rope-pull, baseball and some fine East Texas spring weather. Make plans to join us!

If you are an alumnus, we are also launching MyCOMMUNITY – an online social network only for LeTourneau alumni. It’s a cool way to find old classmates and catch up. (See MyCOMMUNITY story on page 16.) It’s also an easy way for your old friends to find you! So don’t be shy, go to the alumni pages at www.letu.edu/mycommunity and make your profile. You can post photos, form groups, post class notes and a multitude of other fun stuff.

All in all, I just wanted to say “hello” and introduce myself. For more musings on all things LeTourneau, you can visit martaatletu.blogspot.com, its my blog and includes a thrice-weekly dose of my rantings, musings and other LETU information.

Our office of Alumni and Parent Relations is here to help you connect and keep in touch with all things LeTourneau. Let us know if we can help or assist in any way. We hope to see you soon!

About Marta

Written by Kyle Gunnels

- Marta E. (Montenegro) Martin moved to San Francisco, Calif., from her native El Salvador when she was eight years old.

- At 16, her family moved to Longview, Texas, so her brother could attend LETU.

- Marta says she fell in love with the LETU community and followed her brother into LETU, graduating with a degree in history and political science in 1997 before earning a law degree from Baylor Law School in 2000. She was certified the next year and practiced law for four years.

- LETU was never far from her mind, because she gave back to the university by serving as an Alumni Ambassador, serving on the Alumni Advisory Council and also as the Alumni Representative on the LETU Board of Trustees.

- Marta’s goals for her new role are to plan programs and services to attract more alumni back to the university. “There’s no reason we shouldn’t have 500-750 people for Homecoming,” she says. “Our campus is a special place and should be a hub of activity for our alumni and LETU parents.”

- Marta realizes the importance of alumni attendance, communication and financial support, but also sees a need for support of a higher power. “I want a core group of alumni and parents to dedicate some of their time to pray for the university and our students,” she said. “Having that body of people supporting us through prayer is the most important thing.”

- One of Marta’s first challenges is communicating with LETU’s broad alumni base spread out, literally, across the globe. “We need a more systematic approach to communicating with our alumni,” she said. “This involves blogs, news updates, e-mail correspondence and other initiatives to engage our alumni and get them back to campus and connected to others.”
**MEMORIALS**

Noel Fielder ('51 IS) died Feb. 11. Noel lived in Hallsville, Texas and is survived by his wife, Jeannette, three children and eight grandchildren.

Roy Johnson ('51 MES) died Jan. 29, in Longview, Texas. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Helen Ruth Johnson.

Arlyn Lipstraw ('55 MES) died on Nov. 10, 2007. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn.

George “Pat” Bowers ('73 ATBS) of Raleigh, N.C. died on Nov. 20, 2007.


**BIRTHS**

Chris ('90 ATBS) and Debbie Klynstra announce the birth of their son, Benjamin Daniel, on Sept. 30, 2007. Benjamin was welcomed home by big sister Sarah. Chris continues his work at Quest Aircraft in Sandpoint, Idaho.

John ('94 ME) and Jenny Cross have a baby daughter. Kylie Celisse was born Jan. 21. The Cross family lives in Lewisville, Texas. John works as a facility manager for Fujitsu Network Communications, Inc.

Megan ('94 MAE2) Hollow’s daughter, Olivia Joy was born Nov. 9, 2006. Megan works as an accountant for Penmac in Springfield, Mo.

**MARRIAGES**

Marta Montenegro ('97 HIPL) married Matthew Martin on Nov. 17, 2007. Marta and Matt live in Longview, Texas, where Marta works for LeTourneau University as director of alumni and parent relations and Matt works for the Longview Economic Development Corporation.

Jessica Jolene Kious ('00 BYBS) married Justin Kenneth Fry at the Balcones Springs Resort in Austin, Texas on May 12, 2006. Justin is a project manager in commercial construction for Brassfield and Gorrie. Jessica is a nurse at Duke University Hospital in Durham, N.C.

**ALUM NEWS**

50’s

Paul G. Reitzer ('54 CHS) was elected president of the Fellowship of Baptist Educators. The Fellowship sends boxes of Christian literature to mission locations around the world, operates a pen-pal ministry for young people and arranges short-term mission trips. Dr. Reitzer presently serves on two committees of the Baptist World Alliance and is past president of the Chief Academic Officers of the Southern States.

60’s

Bill Barbary ('62 IE) and wife, Lucille, live in Butler, Penn. Bill is self-employed and is active in the local Masonic lodge. He also enjoys hunting and fishing.

Cordel “Cork” ('64 ET) and Joan Bauer ('65 BIHI) Loken recently retired from 35 years of mission work with SIM and HCJB Radio.

Mal Ratcliff ('67 ATBS) lives in South Porcupine, Ontario. He works as a bush pilot for his own business, Ratcliff Aircraft, Ltd.

Mike Brown ('69 ET) is currently the manager of prestone applications engineering and technical services departments at Honeywell International, Consumer Products Group. Mike lives in South Windsor, Conn. with his wife Sandra.
David Healey ('69 ATBS) was recently promoted to branch manager of UBS Financial Services in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Ken Holloway ('69 MT/MABS) has retired from the Maryland Department of Public Safety. He now lives in Smyrna, Tenn. with his wife Dorothy.

Dave Whitten ('69 ME) and his wife, Cheryl, retired in 2006 after 37 years with General Motors. The Whittens currently live in Maine during the summer and in Michigan during the winter until they sell their Michigan home.

70’s

Karen Ryden James ('75 PE) retired from teaching in 2006 due to cancer. After undergoing extensive treatment for her cancer, she is doing better. She and her husband, Rod, have applied for graduate school at UNC in Chapel Hill, N.C.

Dan ('78 ME) and Cindi Webber mourn the loss of their daughter, Kristin Rebecca Webber, who died on Nov. 13, 2007. Kristin is survived by three siblings, Jessica, Jonathon and Brooke. The Webbers live in Athens, Georgia.

Marc Bacon ('79 ETWT, '06 MBMN) is the vice president of engineering at Plasco Energy Systems in Kanata, Ontario.

80’s

Glenn Butts ('80 ATBU) has a new job with West Bend Air in West Bend, Wis. He is also the pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene.

Russ Callison ('80 BUAT) lives in Cape Fair, Mo., and works for Northwest Airlines. Russ is a former employee of LeTourneau University from the 1980s.

David Larson ('80 MET) is a financial services professional with New York Life Insurance Company. David and his wife, Mary Frances, live in Hattiesburg, Miss.

Rick Bicknell ('81 BUAT) is now a simulator instructor/line check pilot for the DC-9 fleet with Northwest Airlines. Rick and his wife Susan live in Hurst, Texas.

Mark ('81 ETWT) and Carol Kerk celebrated 25 years in ministry with HCJB Global in Nov. 2007.

Ben Benedick ('84 ATBU) has been promoted to central manager in Madang, Papua, New Guinea, with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Kevin Brownlee ('84 IM) recently became president and general manager at Midwest Steel Industries, Inc. in Bozeman, Mont. Kevin stopped by LeTourneau’s Longview campus in January to visit with a student from Heritage Christian School in Bozeman where Kevin is a member of the school board. Kevin has been married for 21 years and has one teenage daughter.

Ken Dunkerley ('84 ME) is the senior pastor at Bradford Alliance Church in Bradford, Penn. Ken formerly worked as a missionary in Poland for C&MA missions. Ken and his wife, Becky, have three children, Kenny, 6, Karissa, 4, and Christina, 3.

Dan Pleshko ('85 MT) was named the first chief supply chain officer for the Goodrich Corporation. Goodrich is a Fortune 500 company focusing on the aerospace sector.

Jamie ('86 BUBS) and Murielle Vernaud ('87 EE) Friedman live in France with children, Joyanna, 14, Naomi, 12, and Michael, 7.

Andrew Hawker ('86 MT) recently joined E&M Sales in Littleton, Colo. as a sales engineer. Andrew and wife Lisa have two children, Chloe, 14, and Layla, 8.

90’s

David ('94 AT) and Kimberly Berryhill ('94 ATBS) Anderson live in Diana, Texas with their four children, Ilse, 9, Ethan, 7, Ivar, 5, and Asher, 2. Kimberly is a homemaker and David works for AT&T.

Rich ('93 ATBS) and Kerrie Wenzel. Tom ('93 ATFL) and Sharman ('95 PSYA) Kimbrough. Dave ('93 ATBS) and Sherry Libby, and Brian ('93 ATBS) and Becky Hendley all spent Thanksgiving 2007 together at Disney World. Disney World will never be the same.

Dana DeAndrea ('94 BBM) lives in Lewisville, Texas and works for American Heritage Academy as a librarian.

Terry Gunn ('96 BBM) was recently promoted to manager of relocations for the Harris County Right of Way Division. Terry lives in Houston, Texas.

Lottie Haswell ('94 PSYA) and her husband, Henry, have retired from 35 years in missions with the Presbyterian Church in Brazil. They continue live in Sapiranga, Brazil.

Aaron McGrew ('97 ATFL) is currently deployed as a Marine Aviator in Iraq with the US Marine Corp, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment.

Brad Wooden ('97 ATFL) recently earned his Master Certified Flight Instructor accreditation. Of the approximately 91,000 CFI’s in the United States, fewer than 600 have achieved master status. Brad is one of only 28 Texas aviation educators who have earned this prestigious title. Brad is an assistant chief flight instructor at LeTourneau University.

James Barker ('99 BBM, '01 MBA) was named the director of health services at Central Michigan University. The director of university health services oversees and plans the financial, operational and personnel activities of the health services division of the university.

Dennis ('99 ME) and Kim Daharsh ('00 ME) Tweten live in San Antonio, Texas with their three children. Recently, Dennis moved into a new position with his company, Southwest Research. He is now in the mechanical
Editor’s Note: Jake Diel lives in Amarillo, Texas, with his wife, Vera. The Diels founded Excel Machinery Company, which designs and manufactures rock crushing and materials handling equipment for road building and mining operations. The Diels have supported LeTourneau University through regular gifts and a charitable gift annuity over the years. Jake Diel shared with us about his life and his relationship with the university.

About 55 years ago, I heard R.G. LeTourneau speak in Enid, Okla. At that time, my wife and I were living on a farm near Burlington, Okla. We had been led to Christ a couple of years earlier and were attending a Baptist church a few miles away. When a group of men from church asked me if I wanted to go hear R.G. speak, I jumped at the chance. Since I owned half interest in a bulldozer with my older brother, I wanted to see a man who had actually manufactured bulldozers.

What I heard R.G. LeTourneau say that night was a turning point for me. The first words he said as he stepped behind the pulpit were, “I’m a sinner saved by grace!” Then everything he talked about, the big machines they manufactured, the different countries they were used in and how God used ordinary lay people, challenged me. Would it be possible that Vera and I could start a business and operate it on godly principles? The seed had been sown.
As the seed sprouted and began to grow, our interest in farming gave way to another venture. We made the decision to sell out, quit farming and move to Texas. We had purchased a used LeTourneau Rubber-tired Tourneadozer and Scraper from a Christian man who lived in Muleshoe, Texas. We were in business. We had no other employees beside ourselves, but we were in partnership with God.

The bulldozer business got off to a much slower start than we anticipated. Therefore, Vera went to work at the Muleshoe State Bank to put beans on the table. Little did we know, she would spend the next 25 years working at banks. Our teamwork paid off, and within the next 10 years we added new road-building equipment and around 25 new employees.

Our church was the one that first exposed us to missions. My first mission trip was to Japan in 1962. Several years later, we began a series of mission trips that, over the next 45 years, would take us to Germany, Italy, Latvia, Jordan, Russia, Thailand, Paraguay and Mexico. What was happening in our spiritual lives overshadowed our business interests, or might I say gave us reason to carry on business.

Over the years, Vera and I have become a part of the support team for missionaries who are taking the message of Christ into some 24 countries. Our responsibility does not end by sending funds; we also pray for them regularly.

Who but the risen and ascended Christ could make life so challenging? Until He comes for us, we will continue to invest in Bible schools and training institutions, like LeTourneau University, that provide a wide range of preparation, all the way from teaching students to fly airplanes, to making sure they receive a Christian education that will prepare them for whatever profession in life they pursue.

Vera and I are partners, but first and foremost, we partner with God! He transformed a small bulldozer business into Excel Machinery Company, and since I stepped out of management, the six men who own the majority of the stock have more than doubled the profits. Imagine that! It just proves He can do great things through us.

We recommend supporting LeTourneau University, but only if you want your life to be filled with a lot of new and exciting things.

For more information on opportunities to touch the lives of LeTourneau students, contact: Bryan Benson, director of development, LeTourneau University, P.O. Box 7333, Longview, TX 75607, or visit our Web site at: www.letu.edu/plannedgiving, 800-259-5388, 903-233-3809.

Jake and Vera Diel have also faithfully supported missionaries in 24 different countries throughout the years. The Diels are shown in front of a bulletin board with photos of the missionaries that they have supported.
LeTourneau University’s Annual Fund comprises all undesignated gifts to the university. Annual Fund gifts are not given to a specific program, building, school or campaign, but are used wherever the need is greatest.

Gifts to the Annual Fund support scholarships, student projects and sometimes, even everyday expenses, like fluctuations in the light bill. Each year, the Annual Fund raises at least $800,000 between July 1 and June 30 to cover a portion of each student’s tuition, making the LETU education more affordable.

Annual Fund donations are vital to the university’s success and growth, for without them, many deserving young men and women would not be able to afford LeTourneau University.

Consider supporting the Annual Fund by going to www.letu.edu/waystogive, by calling call Kris Erickson, director of Annual Fund, at 903-233-3818, or by e-mailing KrisErickson@letu.edu.