

Reflections of Stephen Michael Moret

I am an accidental Louisianan, yet because of LSU, this wonderful state has become my adopted home, and its advancement has become my professional focus and passion.

About 21 years ago, I was a high-school senior in Mississippi planning to pursue a dual degree in mechanical engineering and music performance. I had no connection to LSU or Louisiana – in fact I had never even visited the state. My long-time trumpet teacher, Sonny Hill, suggested that I try out for a music scholarship at LSU. I somewhat reluctantly accepted his suggestion, and soon auditioned for “The Golden Band from Tigerland”.

My parents made a compelling (financial) case that LSU was the perfect place for me after I was awarded a full scholarship. I wasn’t so sure at first.

I had never seen an LSU football game, not even on TV, so you can imagine my surprise when I lined up in the end zone for the pre-game show in Tiger Stadium for the first time (LSU vs. Georgia, 1990) and saw the stands full with passionate, screaming fans. I still get tingles every time I think about it. I quickly became a passionate LSU football fan for life.

After starting calculus during my first semester, I began to worry whether I would even graduate from college let alone complete a degree in mechanical engineering. Thanks to my terrific, patient,

calculus professor, George Cochran, and a lot of hard work, I earned an A in the course and soon after was awarded a Pasquale Porcelli math scholarship, for which Dr. Cochran submitted my final calculus exam as part of his recommendation. What a great memory and a great personal milestone.

My experience at LSU and in the College of Engineering was magical. My professors and instructors were outstanding. I met some of my best friends in my fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha, which also helped me to develop as a young man, given that my father had been largely absent from my life. I also honed my leadership skills through my involvement in the LSU Student Government.

I am deeply grateful to so many people at LSU who greatly contributed to my development, for example: former LSU Chancellor and President, William Jenkins, who has been a role model for me of public leadership and personal integrity; Elva Bourgeois in the School of Human Ecology, who was a trusted informal advisor; Bud Richey and Randy Gurie, who helped me develop as a student leader; my first-semester calculus professor, George Cochran, and my argumentative writing instructor, Shirley Mundt, both of whom had an immeasurable impact on my academic development; former LSU Chancellor, James Wharton, my outstanding chemistry professor who later became my most valued thought partner on higher education reform; and of course the

wonderful mechanical engineering faculty, including Dimitris Nikitopoulos, Mehdy Sabbaghian and Sumanta Acharya.

During my undergraduate years, I fell in love with LSU, then Baton Rouge, and then Louisiana. After representing LSU as student body president on a statewide reform commission (SECURE), which enabled me to grasp the untapped potential of our state, I decided to build my life here and to contribute to the advancement of Louisiana.

My professional aspiration is to help create the Louisiana Miracle – to work collaboratively with other Louisiana leaders to reposition our state to become the economic powerhouse of the South over the next 20-30 years. Without question, my education at the LSU College of Engineering set me on a path to fulfill that aspiration. Even though I no longer professionally serve as an engineer, I still regularly utilize the problem-solving capabilities, analytical rigor, and teamwork and communication skills that were so competently cultivated during my time in the College of Engineering.

I am deeply humbled that I have been selected as an inductee of the LSU College of Engineering Hall of Distinction. I hope in at least a small way that I have lived up to the charge implied in the final verse of LSU's alma mater: "Our worth in life will be thy worth; we pray to keep it true; and may thy spirit live in us forever, LSU."

LSU College of Engineering
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