Ken Courtade
Director of Grounds ‘shapes-up’ USL

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Organizations Editor

Anyone who takes a stroll around the USL campus is bound to recognize the noticeable difference in the appearance of the grounds today from what it was just a few short weeks ago.

Ken Courtade, new director of grounds for USL, and his staff are responsible for these changes.

Courtade, a landscape architect, is at USL as a graduate student in city and regional planning. He took over as director of grounds on October 25.

Although Courtade is a graduate student, Lafayette is not just “a stop along the way,” he said. “I plan to stay in the area for a long time.”

Before USL, Courtade was the grounds supervisor for the State Capitol Complex in Baton Rouge, had his own consulting business for three years, and worked as project manager for a $900 million planned residential community in New Orleans.

Courtade, after reading an editorial dealing with the condition of the grounds and buildings here at USL in the Vermilion, gave me a call. He didn’t call to be defensive (like many of the others I received) or to criticize, but rather to say he realized a problem existed, that he had definite plans for improving the grounds, and to say he was willing to work with any organized student clean-up group.

In an interview, Courtade said the answer to the problem lies in making the entire student population aware of the problem, and not just one group.

“What’s really lacking is a certain amount of pride and responsibility for the University,” Courtade said.

“For example, one Friday afternoon I saw two girls go out of their way to crawl under a fence that has been constructed to keep people out of an area behind the Union where we are trying to grow things. They put more effort into crawling under the fence than would have been necessary to walk the extra 15 feet and go around,” Courtade said.

“That’s the attitude that prevails.”

“Students are spoiled. They are so used to doing what they want to do. The students should be developing maturity and responsibility, being on their own.”

Courtade said the present he was in the process of “evaluating what we have to deal with right now, not developing a comprehensive master plan, but rather a continuing master plan.”

“I am working with what I know will be funded on a year to year basis.” Courtade said.

Courtade is in the process of indexing the campus on a computer.

“The computer will give priority status to the jobs which need to be done. This is new application. North Florida State University is using it now for cost analysis,” Courtade said.

Courtade said every area on campus needed work, but he was mainly concerned right now with the areas of the campus which interact with the rest of the community, like University, Johnson, and St. Mary streets.

“We have also been trimming oak trees and cleaning out beds in front of Martin Hall and the President’s House. That is the biggest ‘public relations’ part of the campus.”

Grounds personnel can be seen everyday raking leaves and picking up litter. Courtade said that of his 20 person staff, over 30 percent of his employees were involved with picking up paper alone.

Courtade also said that future plans included moving the front entrance of the Union to where the back of the Union is now.

“We would do this by changing out the doors, using screen walls and hedging to hide the loading area and using trees for interest and color. The name would be put of the back of the building, and some new bike racks would be added. We would prune trees and add some plants for annual color. What is the front now would become a back porch ‘lounge-type’ area,” Courtade said.

Courtade said the students definitely need to be involved with cleaning up the campus, but only in areas which they can handle.

Courtade said the administration has plans for a major litter campaign to begin in the early spring, but no further details of the plan could be released.

“Students need to go out of their way to throw trash in trash cans. A little peer pressure is also in order. If you see someone throwing trash on the ground, don’t just pick it up, but mention it to them. Until peer pressure is strong enough, the shape of the campus is going to be a problem.”

“With the long range plans we have now, by the time this freshman class graduates, the incoming freshmen will be entering into a new era visually,” Courtade said.

Football Mums’ were planted by grounds personnel to brighten up the campus for Homecoming. A “Keep Off The Grass” sign by Cypress Lake warns students of freshly planted grass. The sign, along with fences around greenery, was ignored by some students, however.

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