Weathering the sudden storm
Students, faculty recover from historic flooding

Freshman Ann-Marie Stelly’s home in Maurice sits immersed in 10 inches of water after storms
“hammered down” on the parish.

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Although the University of Louisiana at Lafayette did not sustain damage from the flash floods, its students, faculty and staff are recovering through help from inside and outside of the university.

From the early morning of Aug. 12 to late Aug. 14, South Louisiana experienced a torrential downpour the Red Cross reported was the worst natural disaster since Hurricane Sandy. In parts of Livingston Parish, more than 31 inches of rain fell in 15 hours, according to CNN.

Ann-Marie Stelly, a freshman nursing major, was one of more than 20,000 people affected by floodwaters. Although her family’s home in Maurice escaped the waters initially, Saturday’s storms brought in 10 inches of rain.

“We lost a lot of our memories, like our photos from when I was really young,” Stelly said. “Other than that, we tried to save a lot ... It came in so fast that we didn’t have time to move things.”

Unable to live in her home, Stelly moved to a camper outside her parent’s house while the house’s interior dries — a process that may take a month. She said she anticipates moving back in two to three months.

“I thought I was prepared for college,” Stelly said, “and then the stress and the overwhelming sensation of everything around the house and knowing that if I go home to study, that's in a camper that’s 20 feet in length with two people living in it.”

Stelly is one of a plethora of students who is starting college while displaced.

“Many UL Lafayette students, including incoming freshmen, have lost their homes and possessions, putting them at risk of not being able to attend school this fall,” said UL Lafayette President Joseph Savoie in an Aug. 19 news release.

Bill Crist, director of Facilities Management, said the University of Louisiana at Lafayette made it through the weekend of Aug. 12 without flooding.

The university moved freshman move-in from Aug. 14 to Aug. 17 because of the flooding. Students moved in with as much as they could recover from the flood's aftermath. Orientation and Cajun Connection dates were kept in place, with plans made in the event of inclement weather.

UL Lafayette also launched an initiative to raise funds for students affected by the historic flooding. Any donations for the University Annual Fund, which was made to aid students with financial need, will directly help students who are suffering from the flood. According to the university’s website, students must apply online for aid. Students whose attendance requirements are at stake due to extenuating circumstances will have priority.

Alpha Omicron Pi will host a blood drive Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in front of Dupré Library. Kappa Delta hosted a donation drive from Aug. 16 through Aug. 19.

Outside of UL Lafayette, United Way of Acadiana is accepting donations such as pillows, blankets, cleaning supplies, shampoo, buckets and school supplies. Donations can be dropped off at 215 E. Pinhook Rd. from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

The University of South Alabama Athletic Department sent trucks filled with donations for UL Lafayette students affected by the flooding. The team held collections for non-perishable food, clothing and cleaning supplies during its soccer opening against Samford University.

“It’s going to be pretty hard, but we’ll have to manage because there’s not much else we can do,” Stelly said.