UL to offer new program to assist those who are in need

Elliot Wade
elliot.wade@thevermilion.com

The first semester in college is always the hardest. I was in honors and AP classes my senior year of high school and my mom graduated from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 2008. Without that insight, I would have been totally unprepared for the way that college-level courses are run.

College is tedious, time-consuming and stressful by design. Universities began to pop up in the U.S. around the 1700s, they were only accessible to the wealthiest young men in the country. These young, rich white men had ample time and resources to do nothing but pursue a higher education. When any form of education is rare, a college degree was an important credential to establishing yourself in high society.

As a result, we’ve sold the narrative of college being necessary for monetary success for generations. Though there is value in a college education, it is not a feasible option for everyone. As long as a college education costs an exuberant amount of money, it will serve as a class gateway.

College is not easy. Unless you are a “traditional student” who lives on campus and doesn’t have to work to pay for school, you’ll find that college is going to be that much more difficult for you. It is no small feat to balance daily lessons, homework, projects, part-time jobs, and extracurriculars with a social life, a good diet and attention to your mental health, not to mention any other responsibilities you might have. This is precisely how so many people fall through the cracks here at UL Lafayette. The workload can just be too much.

UL Lafayette’s new Louisiana Educate Program will hopefully be able to serve as an extra safety net to get students to graduate. According to Rachel B. Sam, LEP’s academic success coach, the program came together when the VP of Enrollment Management, DeWayne Bowie, Ph.D., took note of the low retention rate for students from low-income households.

“Students with an estimated financial contribution of zero were not graduating. So, our retention rate was not as high as we expected. However, many of the black students in the athletic program with an EFC of zero had a graduation rate of about 75 percent. Our current retention rate of students, not in the athletic program, with an EFC of zero is about 35 percent,” Sam told KATC.

Sam also went on to report students involved in the program get a different kind of adviser, a financial aid coordinator, and a scholarship coordinator. They are also required to meet with her weekly, get involved with one social and one professional organization, and do study hall hours.

This is a huge step forward for the university and will make earning a college degree at UL Lafayette a possibility for so many students. Unfortunately, all the students in LEP are from New Orleans charter schools. The program came into fruition only after a private donor stepped in to fund it. The university has expressed a desire to continue and expand the program.

Over the break, UL Lafayette also opened The Campus Cupboard as a resource for students who require short-term assistance meeting their food needs. It is located in UL Lafayette’s Intensive English Program building, 413 Brook Ave.

The Cupboard will be accessible from 2-5 p.m. on Tuesdays and from 9 a.m. to noon on Fridays for the remainder of the fall semester; winter break hours TBA.

AFRICAN AMERICAN continued on page 11