

THE FIRM LINE - IN THIS ISSUE:

Xavier's New President, Jindal Raids Coastal Funds, Rose Murray in NOLA to Angola Bike Ride



October 2015



Xavier's new president, Dr. C. Reynold Verret

The Next 100 Years at Xavier University

This month in *The Firm Line*, I'd like to focus on some recent developments at New Orleans' own Xavier University that I consider a huge win both for Xavier and for our city.

Xavier is one of America's 107 Historically Black Universities and Colleges, and it has always offered an extraordinary college education to promising students who -- in some instances because of social status, poverty or, in the past, race -- might not otherwise have been able to pursue higher education at all.

Under the guidance of Xavier's faculty and administrators, many of those students have not only exceeded expectations, they've totally blown them away:

- With only about 3,000 students, Xavier nevertheless ranks first among all American universities in the number of African American graduates who go on to complete medical school.
- Xavier also ranks first among all American universities in the number of African American students who earn undergraduate degrees in life sciences or physical sciences.
- Xavier's College of Pharmacy is ranked fourth in the nation for the number of African American Doctors of Pharmacy it graduates.

I am honored to serve as a member of Xavier's Board of Trustees, and when the school's beloved president Dr. Norman Francis announced he would retire this year -- after leading Xavier for 47 years -- I also chaired the committee that searched the country for Dr. Francis' replacement. That search process ended in success when we nominated Dr. C. Reynold Verret for the job. I am thrilled that the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to hire him.

Dr. Verret's resumé is dazzling. He has been provost of both Savannah State University and Wilkes University, dean of the Misher College of Arts and Sciences at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, and a faculty member at both Clark Atlanta University and Tulane University. He received his PhD in biochemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and he did post-doctoral work at MIT and at Yale.

I invite you to read the following excellent *New York Times Magazine* story about Xavier, as well as the other articles below which recall several of the most compelling chapters in Xavier's 100-year history.

[A Prescription for More Black Doctors](#)

The New York Times Magazine, 9/9/15

"How does tiny Xavier University manage to send more African-American students to medical school than any other college in the country?"

[Read More](#)

Should Governor Jindal Use Coastal Restoration Funds on a Highway Project?

On September 16, Governor Bobby [Jindal's office proposed a scheme](#) that would take money currently allotted to coastal restoration and use it on a project to elevate the bottom of State Highway 1, which goes to Fourchon -- a section of highway that is crucial to the oil and gas industry.



*Our disintegrating coast
(USGS satellite image)*

The governor's proposal immediately prompted [criticism from prominent republicans and democrats alike](#).

"Governor Jindal is wrong on this issue," said Lt. Governor Jay Dardenne, a republican candidate for governor. "The very future of our state depends on restoring and protecting coastal wetlands, and any attempt to change state policy in order to divert funds away from implementing the Coastal Master Plan is a mistake."

Rep. John Bel Edwards, a democrat who currently leads the race for governor, condemned Governor Jindal's plan even more harshly. "It's disappointing but not surprising that Bobby Jindal would once again engage in dishonest budgeting practices with respect to the critical priority of Coastal Restoration," he said.

The Advocate protested that Jindal's plan could [threaten our state's chances of getting federal aid](#) in the future. In an editorial, the newspaper pointed out that several US Congressman have already "denounced aid to Louisiana as a boondoggle," and suggested that Louisiana politicians will use any federal money they get not on coastal restoration, but on their own cronies.

"What will the U.S. government say as future governors plead for assistance on coastal restoration?" *The Advocate's* editors asked. "What we don't support is sacrificing our future credibility for federal aid...because Jindal has failed to fund properly a needed highway project."

This is not the first time Governor Jindal has raided coastal funds in order to pay for other projects. In 2013, [Louisiana's Wildlife and Fisheries Commission considered bringing a lawsuit against the Governor](#) for taking \$45 million from the state's Artificial Reef Development Fund to cover budget shortfalls and various local pork barrel projects.

Governor Jindal's proposal to use coastal funds on Highway 1 must be approved by Louisiana's Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority (CPRA) before it can be implemented. CPRA's chairman, Chip Klein, answers directly to the governor.



Photo from the NOLA to Angola website

Go Rose!

On October 16-18, Jones, Swanson, Huddell and Garrison will sponsor our own [Rose Murray](#) in this year's NOLA to Angola bike ride.

Every year, NOLA to Angola cyclists ride across 160 miles of Southeast Louisiana to raise funds for the Cornerstone Builder's Bus Project, a free monthly bus service from New Orleans to five of Louisiana's detention centers, for those who might not otherwise be able to visit their loved ones in detention.

NOLA to Angola is not a race -- anyone with a bike and a sponsor can ride in it. If you're interested in riding or sponsoring a rider, you can find out more about it [here](#).



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