

Center for Bayou Studies at Nicholls as a Successful Research Partner

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Abstract

Nicholls State University is the smallest four-year state university in Louisiana. Despite its small size, it has maintained a strong program in marine biology, taking advantage of its proximity to the wetlands of the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary System, which lies between the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers. We have recently expanded these efforts by creating the Center for Bayou Studies with a multi-disciplinary faculty that seeks to study and preserve the cultural heritage of communities that have developed within these endangered wetlands. Thus, the Center for Bayou Studies and BOEM have found a mutual benefit in our collaboration on several projects that emphasize the unique residents of SE Louisiana and their relationship to an ever-changing environment. With the increased capacity supplied by the current project we have watched transformative change occur within our program. We have built upon the primary goal of coding literature to recruit an exclusive group of high-achieving students from Nicholls undergraduate programs, as well as graduate programs at LSU and Tulane. Our team of mentors and coders have presented their work at several conferences, including an award-winning poster by K. Dalferes. Once the coding project was established, we found that new opportunities sprouted from the original plan, such as our integration with the Archives Office at the United Houma Nation. We foresee that even more projects will grow out of our alliance with the new Coastal Center at Nicholls State University, which is scheduled to open in 2024.