



DR. LARRY HOLLIER

# CHANCELLOR'S *Notes*



December 2, 2011

## Dr. John Lombardi Statement

"Allen Copping's contributions to the history of the Louisiana State University System and this state are remarkable. His stewardship of the Health Sciences Center in New Orleans secured that institution's future as a premier health sciences center and research enterprise. His vision for the organization, management, and operation of what is now the LSU Health hospital network has served to reinforce the emergence of LSU Health Shreveport as a major academic medical center and the continued growth and distinction of LSU Health New Orleans.

His commitment to research persuaded "Doc" Pennington to provide the foundational gift for what has become the nation's premier center for obesity, diabetes, and nutritional research at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center. His term as president of the Louisiana State University System applied the same broad gauge vision to the academic development of campuses and programs throughout the state. A mentor for many of Louisiana's academic and health care professionals, Dr. Copping's legacy will remain as a permanently enduring testimony to the exceptional leadership that defines America's best academic institutions." ■

## Former LSUHSC Chancellor & LSU System President dies

**D**r. Allen A. Copping, former Dean of the LSU School of Dentistry, Chancellor of the LSU Medical Center, and President of the LSU System died yesterday at his home in New Orleans, following a lengthy illness. He was 84.

When he was inaugurated as President of the LSU System on June 26, 1985, it was as the first health sciences professional to achieve the rank.

Dr. Copping, a New Orleans native, studied dentistry at Loyola University in New Orleans, receiving his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree in 1949. He served in the U.S. Navy for five years during the Korean War. His time in the military included a stint as head of oral surgery on a hospital ship. After discharge, Dr. Copping returned to New Orleans where he maintained a private dental practice before going into medical education and rising rapidly through the administrative ranks.

He was head of the Loyola University School of Dentistry Department of Dental Anatomy from 1956 to 1970 and subsequently served as associate dean and then dean of the LSU School of Dentistry from 1971 to 1974. In 1974, he was named chancellor of the LSU Medical Center in New Orleans and was appointed to lead the LSU System by the Board of Supervisors on March 16, 1985, succeeding Dr. Martin D. Woodin as the third system president.

Known among colleagues for his quiet dignity and self-effacing demeanor, Dr. Copping became the system's chief executive, however, at a time when the state's oil patch went bust, triggering a plunge in state revenues and repeated budget cuts to higher education.

Dr. Copping once said the high point of his tenure at LSU was his helping to secure the \$125 million gift from Baton Rouge oilman C. B. "Doc" Pennington that led to the founding of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, which has since developed an international reputation for obesity and diabetes research.

"I met with him and we talked," Copping once recalled of his meeting in 1983 with Pennington. "At the end of the conversation he held up his hands and said, 'OK, the \$100 million is yours.' I was shocked. I thought we were talking about \$5 million."

At the time, The New York Times reported Pennington's gift was the largest single contribution ever made to an educational institution.



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Allen Copping transformed the LSU Medical Center from a building on Canal Street that we didn't own to one of the largest complexes in the City of New Orleans and Louisiana's academic health leader. His impact on higher education in Louisiana was unprecedented, and his legacy will live on through the generations of health care professionals he directly influenced as well as those whose education will continue to be shaped by his vision and leadership.

In 1992, after former Governor Edwin Edwards won legislative approval to set up a casino in New Orleans, he asked Dr. Copping to serve as chairman of the nine-member commission that regulates the casino.

Dr. Copping, however, chose to stay at LSU where he spearheaded efforts to acquire the Confederate Memorial Hospital in Shreveport, establishing the University's first teaching hospital, which is now known as the LSU Hospital in Shreveport. In 1997, the Legislature turned over management of the state's 10 public hospitals and 500 physician clinics to LSU.



*Dr. Allen Copping with Dean Henry Gremillion, DDS, at the School of Dentistry Alumni Day in 2008*

Dr. Copping retired as system president on March 31, 1999. His contributions to medicine and research are remembered annually with the Allen A. Copping Excellence in Teaching Awards, which recognize outstanding faculty at the LSU Health Sciences centers in New Orleans and Shreveport that have demonstrated a life-long pursuit of discovery and inspire their students.

Among those closest to Dr. Copping was Dr. Robert Rasmussen,

Assistant Vice President for LSU System Relations, who worked with him at the LSU Dental School, at the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, and at the LSU System Office in Baton Rouge.

"He was a visionary and compassionate leader who leaves an indelible mark on higher education in Louisiana," said Rasmussen. "We have lost a remarkable man. He was a devoted Tiger fan, and I know his spirit will be present when LSU wins the BCS National Championship."

Dr. Copping's wife, Betty, died in 2010. Three children, Allen T., Lisette, and Cherie Copping-Cobb, who reside in New Orleans, survive him.

Relatives and friends are invited to attend visitation at Lake Lawn Metairie Funeral Home starting at 9:00am on Monday December 5, 2011, followed by a Funeral Mass at 12:00pm. Interment in All Saints Mausoleum. In lieu of flowers please send donations to the Pennington Biomedical Research Foundation IDRP, 6400 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.