



**New ULL coach lacks requisite degree  
N.O. native graduated from unaccredited online university**

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By Jeff Eisenberg  
Staff writer

Newly hired University of Louisiana Lafayette basketball coach Glynn Cyprien did not graduate from the University of Texas at San Antonio as he claimed on his résumé, according to the university registrar's office.

Cyprien, a New Orleans native, was hired in May to coach the Ragin' Cajuns but does not appear to hold the necessary degree from a university with accreditation recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. An employee in the Texas-San Antonio registrar's office said Cyprien attended UTSA from 1987 to '90 but did not earn a diploma. That information was confirmed by the National Student Clearinghouse, which verifies college enrollment and degrees for U.S. students.

A New Orleans native and Jesuit High School graduate, Cyprien holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Lacrosse University, an online school based in Bay St. Louis, Miss., that is not recognized by the major accreditation agencies. Lacrosse moved its operation to Mississippi from Louisiana in 2002 after the state Board of Regents voted unanimously not to renew its license. According to the Lacrosse Web site, a student can earn a bachelor's degree in 12 months, and up to 105 of the 120 semester hours required to earn a degree can be earned through work experience and what the school calls experimental learning.

The Lacrosse degrees may not have any bearing on Cyprien's status. ULL Athletic Director Nelson Schexnayder said Thursday that a bachelor's degree from an accredited school is needed to hold the head coaching job.

"That's a university requirement," he said.

When reached Tuesday by The Times-Picayune and asked about the discrepancy over his UTSA career, Cyprien, 37, said he graduated.

"I have the transcripts to prove it," he said. He said he was not concerned about the matter.

Cyprien was boarding a plane for a recruiting trip and said he would call back. He made an unsuccessful attempt to reach a reporter Tuesday night and did not return phone calls Wednesday and Thursday.

ULL officials said they were looking into Cyprien's background but would not discuss it further

until meeting with the coach. Schexnayder said Cyprien's education was not discussed during his job interview, but he said he was certain a bachelor's degree from UTSA was listed on Cyprien's résumé. The athletic director said he did not look into the Lacrosse degrees because Cyprien appeared to have a degree from UTSA.

In a statement released Wednesday, ULL President Raymond Authement said, "We were made aware of the potential problem a day and a half ago, and we are investigating the situation. In fairness to coach Cyprien, we do need to speak to him in person about this matter, and we will do that when he returns."

Cyprien is expected back in Lafayette today, said Schexnayder, who said he has spoken to him by telephone. Schexnayder said the school could make an announcement regarding the matter as soon as today.

Cyprien earns a reported \$180,000 per year and has a five-year contract with the university.

#### Course work completed

Lacrosse University President Colleen Boyer said Cyprien called her this week and asked her to confirm that he completed the necessary course work to earn his degrees. Cyprien received a bachelor's degree in education counseling in 2000 and a master's degree in health and physical education two years later.

"He said people were saying that he bought his degree," Boyer said, "and that is absolutely not the case. He did complete the necessary work, but it's up to (the University of Louisiana Lafayette) to decide whether they will accept that."

According to a 2001 survey conducted by FBI consultant John Bear, an expert on distance learning institutions, fewer than 1 percent of all college and university registrars accept credits or degrees from Lacrosse University.

"None of my colleagues have told me it takes much to graduate from Lacrosse," said Alan Contreras, who runs Oregon's Office of Degree Authorization. "I'm surprised that Mississippi allows it to call itself a university."

When the Louisiana Board of Regents voted not to renew Lacrosse's operating license, state officials said the decision was based on the school's lack of accreditation.

Cyprien defended his Lacrosse degrees, citing multiple term papers that he says he wrote and turned in for grades.

Though Boyer acknowledges that Lacrosse does not provide a traditional education, she said that does not make a degree from the school less reputable.

"To me a diploma mill is someone who sells a degree for money," she said. "We do require students to complete course work to earn a degree."

#### Stress on academics

When ULL hired Cyprien, school officials said academics had not been enough of a priority under previous coach Jessie Evans and that they hoped bringing Cyprien aboard would help reverse that trend. Cyprien spoke strongly about the importance of players graduating.

"I am going to sit down with the players individually and stress to them the importance of academics," he said in May. "We've got some eligibility questions right now, but I can assure you that this will be a program where our guys graduate."

Schexnayder said he remains hopeful that the ULL basketball program will emerge from the

episode unscathed.

"I wish I didn't have to deal with it," he said, "but what (the investigation) reflects is that we take academics very seriously here."

The son of two longtime New Orleans basketball coaches, James and Janice Cyprien, Glynn Cyprien graduated from Jesuit in 1985, then played basketball for two years at Southern University in Baton Rouge before transferring to UTSA in 1987. He spent 17 years as a college assistant before landing his first head coaching job at the University of Louisiana Lafayette. He was an assistant under Eddie Sutton at Oklahoma State from 2000 to '04, helping the Cowboys earn a berth in the Final Four last season.

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