



NATURAL SCIENCE COLLECTIONS ALLIANCE

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President Nick J. Bruno
President, University of Louisiana Monroe
Library 632
700 University Avenue
Monroe, LA 71209

Dear Dr. Bruno:

The Natural Science Collections Alliance learned late yesterday that your institution has decided to rapidly dismantle your renowned natural history research collections. We certainly hope these reports are wrong and encourage you and your staff to reconsider such precipitous action.

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a national, non-profit association that supports natural science collections, their human resources, the institutions that house them, and their research activities for the benefit of science and society. Our members include the leading museums, living stock centers, and other groups associated with museum collections in the United States. We are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities and other institutions that house natural science collections and use them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities. We stand ready to consult with natural history museums to help them remain as viable and integral infrastructure at a time of declining state and federal support.

Natural history museums nationwide are experiencing renewed interest and vitality, so it is disturbing to learn that an emerging university is electing to jettison important research infrastructure and the educational benefits derived from this resource, especially the specimens and associated data gathered by your faculty over decades of research on the biological and ecological systems of northern Louisiana and across the region. These specimens and associated data are irreplaceable national treasures that are critically important to research into the natural history of Louisiana and surrounding region. Because the ULM collections also shed light on how regional biodiversity is changing in response to rapid environmental change, your natural history museum is of national importance.

Regional collections, such as those held at your institution, provide valuable data that are not available elsewhere. Indeed, natural science collections, such as your large fish and herbarium collections, are part of a global biodiversity network that is the focus of an ever-increasing research and educational communities and are triggering new interdisciplinary research, while providing unique educational experiences to students of all ages and abilities. Museum specimens and the data that accompany them represent an extraordinary resource for teaching core concepts in biology and anthropology at the undergraduate and graduate levels and could provide a source of funding for novel educational programs, as realized in other institutions in your region (<https://www.astate.edu/news/national-science-foundation->

approves-5-48-million-in-grants-for-biodiversity-projects-led-by-a-state-researchers). Destruction of these collections is unconscionable.

At a minimum, if your institution can not prioritize biological research and education using these collections, we certainly hope that you will show due respect to the specimens and the decades of work done by your faculty and former students and allow for an adequate time frame for your staff to find an acceptable facility (or facilities) to accept your collections, and to provide ample resources to plan for the transfer of state heritage assets. From our community, we can help to identify potential solutions if needed. As I am sure you can imagine, moving 3,000,000 fish specimens and more than 470,000 plant specimens requires planning and resources.

On behalf of the Natural Science Collections Alliance, I encourage you to reconsider this decision.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Cook, PhD

President, Natural Science Collections Alliance

Director, Museum of Southwestern Biology, University of New Mexico