ADVOCACY REPORT
SPRING 2025

University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

Email: gso@louisiana.edu

Website: gso.louisiana.edu

Facebook: @ULLafayetteGSO

Instagram: @ULLafayettegso

PREFACE

The following report identifies areas that the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) in partnership with others at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (faculty, staff, student organizations, and campus offices) can continue to develop to sustain our graduate students.

Our goal is to **raise awareness** of the role of GSO in advocating, funding, and communicating with and for graduate students to address the issues that they face throughout their graduate education.

Thus, this report will add value to the ongoing University-wide discussion on how to **better support graduate students** to develop professionally.

Using real student responses, this report also strives to **provide a platform for unheard graduate student voices**, candidly sharing ideas and sentiments that may otherwise never find an audience.

Lastly, the Organization has needed to adapt from 2020-2021, and our Department Representatives and Executive Board have put in more work than ever before to increase the Organization's profile and grow operations.

ORGANIZATION INTRODUCTION

All graduate students at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette are automatically members of the Graduate Student Organization (GSO).

We are here to advocate for you! The GSO supports graduate students in several ways:

Advocacy

One of the most important things we do is to represent the needs and concerns of our members to the university administration. The GSO president serves on the University Graduate Council, the Graduate Appeals Committee, as well as other administrative committees the Dean of Graduate School deems appropriate. Student representatives from graduate departments meet each semester to discuss issues that are important to graduate students.

Funding

Graduate students know that conducting research and presenting at conferences puts a strain on our limited budgets. The GSO uses student-assessed fees to help offset the cost of research and travel-related expenses! We also provide one-time grants for purchasing thesis, dissertation, or project supplies.

Communication

The GSO is one of many important relays to get vital information to graduate students. Check out Facebook and this website often for the latest GSO information. Your representative is also a reliable source of information. Find your representative here!

If there is an issue that you would like to see the GSO address, or if you are interested in helping, please do not hesitate to contact us at gso@louisiana.edu.

Like us on Facebook and Instagram.

GSO's Big Event Contribution

SPRING 2025 REFLECTIONS

GSO General Council Participation

- Maintained 100% occupancy on the Executive Board since Fall 2022:
    - Clement Tochukwu Okolo – President (August 2022)
    - Abdelrahman Garbie – Vice President (November 2023)
    - Farooq Azam Khanzada – Treasurer (August 2024)
    - Tessa Rock – PR Coordinator (November 2023)
    - Traelyn Brassaeux – Secretary (August 2024)

Spring 2025 Department Representatives Table

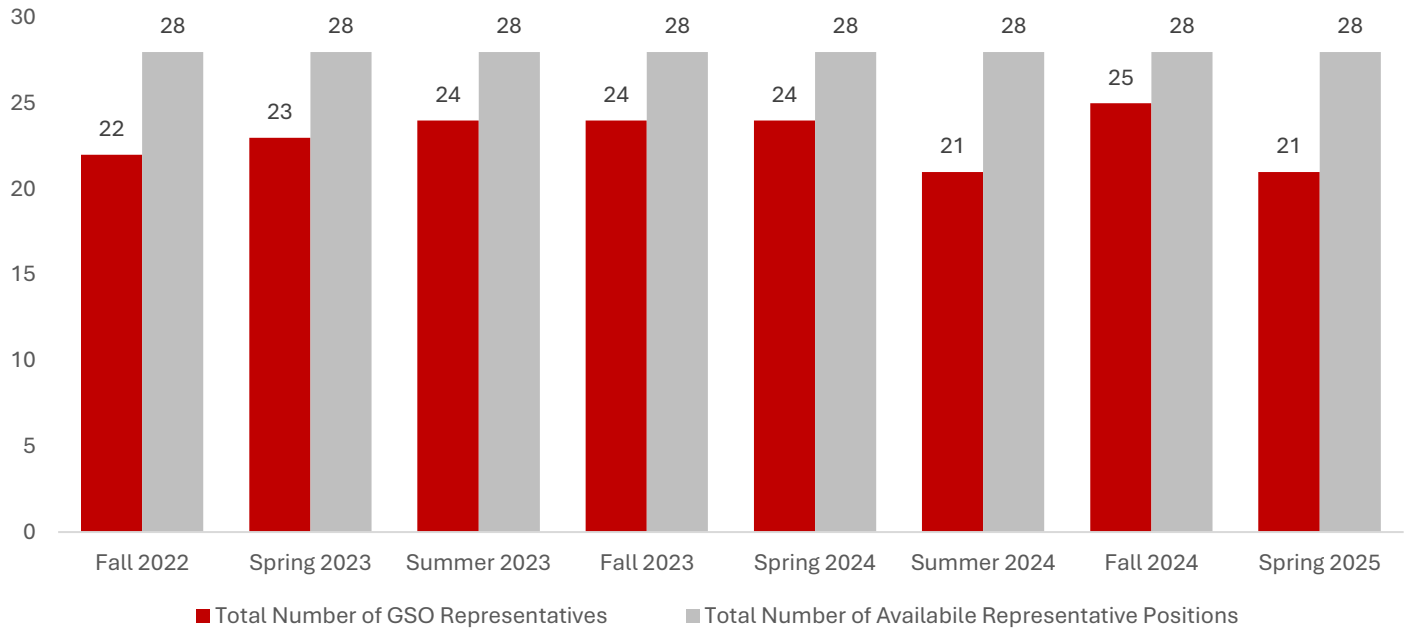| Department	Representative
Accounting (ACCN)	Vacant
Architecture (ARCH)	Vacant
Biology (BIOL)	Kevin Torgersen
Business Administration (MBA)	Vacant

Chemical Engineering (CHEE)	Elizabeth Boyd
Chemistry (CHEM)	Esau Obuong
Civil Engineering (CIVE)	Farooq Azam Khanzada
Communications (COMM)	Taiwo Oluyinka
Communicative Disorders (CODI)	Mary McMahon
Computing and Informatics (CMIX)	Traelyn Brasseaux
Counselor Education (CNED)	Reem Ahmed
Criminal Justice (CJUS)	Heaven Rodrigue
Educational Curriculum & Instruction (EDCI)	Vacant
Educational Foundations & Leadership (EDFL)	Brianna Doucet
Electrical Engineering (EECE)	Mohamed Ghoneim
English (ENGL)	Yazdan Mahmoudi
Geosciences (GEOS)	Precious Batubo
History (HIST)	Taylor Townsend
Industrial Technology (ITEC)	Sohel Ahmed
Kinesiology (KINE)	Vacant
Mathematics (MATH)	Agnideep Aich
Mechanical Engineering (MECH)	Abdelrahman Garbie
Modern Languages (MODL)	Pierre-Olivier Pire
Music (MUSC)	Madeline Starck
Nursing (NURS)	Vacant
Petroleum Engineering (PETE)	Silver Damigoru
Physics (PHYS)	John Miller
Psychology (PSYC)	Taylor Roussel

Key:

Vacant Departments	Departments which received funding

GSO Representative Count

Term	Total Number of GSO Representatives	Total Number of Availabile Representative Positions
Fall 2022	22	28
Spring 2023	23	28
Summer 2023	24	28
Fall 2023	24	28
Spring 2024	24	28
Summer 2024	21	28
Fall 2024	25	28
Spring 2025	21	28

■ Total Number of GSO Representatives ■ Total Number of Availabile Representative Positions

Vacancy

- The Departments of Accounting (ACCN) and Educational Curriculum & Instruction (EDCL) have been unrepresented for over a year.
- The Departments of Music (MUSC) and Nursing (NURS) have been unrepresented since Spring 2023.
- The Departments of Architecture (ARCH) and Business Administration (MBA) became vacant due to failure to replace graduating representatives.
- Addressing this lack of representation is crucial for our collective advocacy efforts.

GSO Graduates

From Left to Right, Heaven Rodrigue (CJUS), Taiwo Oluyinka (COMM), Pierre-Olivier Pire (MODL), and Sohel Ahmed (ITEC) are graduated in Spring 2025

GSO Events

GSO Cane's Giveback Night Fundraiser (May 7th)

- As another fundraiser initiative for the spring semester, the President Okolo, Treasurer Khanzada, and PR officer Rock worked with the managers at the Cane's on Pinhook to host a Giveback Night. The fundraiser was open the entire time that location's restaurant was open and anyone could go, say they are there for the fundraiser, and then order food. **15% of the net sales** from customers who said GSO fundraiser at checkout will go to us as an organization. **$100 was generated** from this fundraiser and the check was cashed into the fundraiser account.
- Additionally, as an incentive to go to this Cane's location and say GSO Fundraiser at checkout, we worked with the managers at Cane's to offer a Cane's gift basket as a

raffle prize. The PR executive officer created a Microsoft form where people can upload their receipt to prove they went and participated in the fundraiser. Then a random number generator was utilized to fairly pick the winner of the basket.
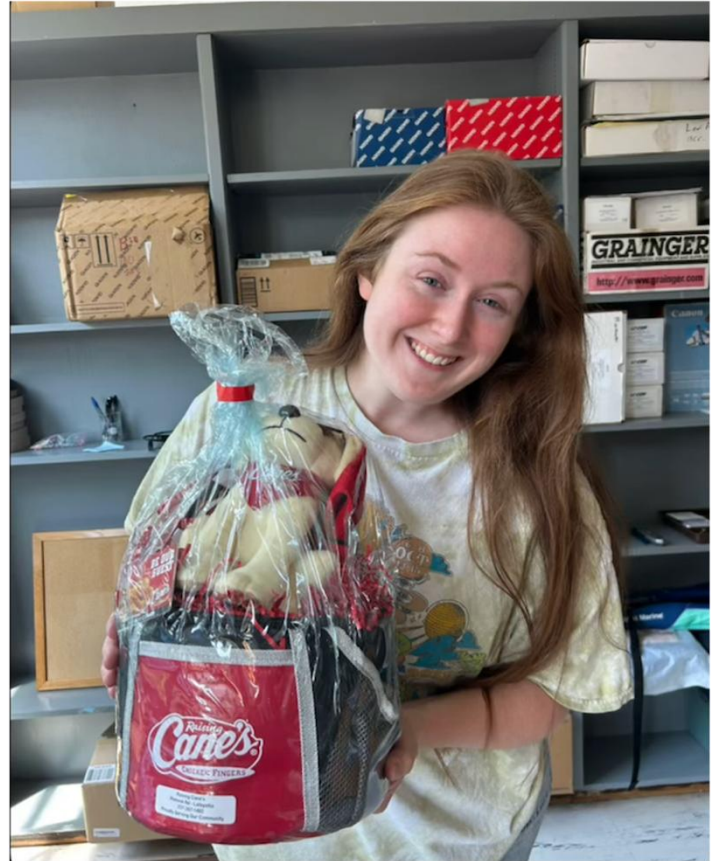
Raising Cane's Gift Basket Winner, Brianna Burns (Speech Language Pathology, CODI)

Graduate Student Appreciation Week Scavenger Hunt (April 7th- 11th)

- For GSAW week we decided to do a weeklong scavenger hunt around campus. Students could access the Microsoft form with the six prompts all week. They had to go to each location and take a selfie or a picture of the space proving they went to the correct location. We allowed for teams of students to participate as well and the instructions were clear as a team of 3 students did participate together. All participants were entered into a raffle where they could win a basket full of UL Lafayette merchandise and various gift cards. There were 8 participants, 3 belonged to a team.

Graduate Student Appreciation Week Scavenger Hunt

GSO T-Shirt Fundraiser (March 5th – March 19th)

- The T-Shirt Design Competition, initiated by the Communications Committee and Executive Board, was designed as a fundraiser for upcoming GSO events. Graduate students were invited to submit original designs through a submission form, and the winner was voted on by all graduate students. The design was selected and the communications committee worked with Perfect Fitz in Broussard, LA to format the t-shirt and create an online store. The store was open for two weeks where students, staff, and faculty could purchase as many T-shirts as they wanted. **56 people ordered from the online store**. Initially we were only offering a pickup on campus but after communicating with multiple online students we were able to work with the store to offer a shipping option as well. Personal emails were sent to every purchaser to pick up their shirts at the Monday GSAW event and if they could not make it then the PR executive worked with them 1:1 to deliver the shirt. **$145 was generated** from this fundraiser and was put into the GSO fundraiser account.
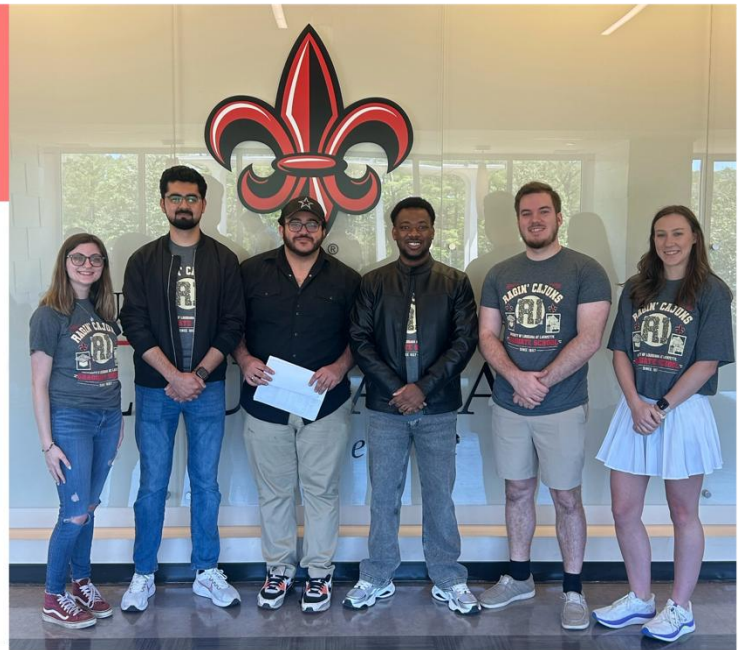
GSO Executives wearing the New T-Shirt at the SP25 Third General Meeting

Stay Up and Write (February 19, March 19, April 16)

- The Stay Up and Write event was conceptualized as an evening counterpart to the Graduate School's weekly Wake Up and Write. Feedback from graduate students highlighted the demand for a nighttime alternative, as many were unable to attend the morning sessions due to personal commitments or scheduling conflicts. In response, we piloted the event in October 2024, booking a room in the Student Union and providing catered food through Sodexo. We had positive feedback and decided to host the event multiple times in the spring semester. The event saw, on average, 9 students participating, representing over five departments. From 7-9 PM each night, attendees engaged in various academic tasks, including grading, thesis/dissertation writing, and coding projects. Feedback was communicated in person from attendees to the PR executive officer, and many were thankful for the peaceful and welcoming space to work.

Spring 25 Stay Up and Write

GSO Flock BIG Event-The GRADiators (March 29th)

- The Graduate school and GSO worked together to create a flock for the BIG event 2025. GSO created a form for people to register to be a part of our flock, and the graduate school then sent the list to the admin of the BIG event. Graduate students and graduate school staff worked together to write letters to teachers and create gift baskets for teachers in the Lafayette Public School System.

The GRADiators at the BIG Event

Advocacy

- Addressing Student Concerns
  - Recognizing the importance of addressing a wider range of concerns, GSO maintained and will continue to maintain open channels for graduate students to share their feedback about university departments and their related services and power-based violence.
  - GSO actively solicited and gathered specific feedback from students related to their interactions with various university departments. The objective is to identify areas of concern and potential barriers that students may face.
  - The feedback collected is analyzed to determine effective advocacy strategies to address student issues.

Funding

- Doctoral Research and Travel Grant Program Update
  - In Fall 2024, the GSO successfully advocated for key improvements to the Doctoral Research and Travel Grant Program, including the shift to a rolling application process and a **100% increase in funding to $100,000 per academic year**.
  - As of Spring 2025, we regret to inform you that the program has been **temporarily paused.** We are in communication with university stakeholders to understand the timeline for its resumption and will keep graduate students informed of any updates.

- Compared to Fall 2024, **we received 15% more applications.**
  - 2020-2021 – **86** Applications
  - Fall 2023 – **74** applications
  - Spring 2024 – **64** applications
  - Fall 2024 – **83** applications
  - Spring 2025 – **95** applications

- Spring 2025 semester funding budget **increased by 50% from $16,000 to $23,600**. This supplemental fund allowed us to fund more graduate students' research and professional development.
  - Despite withdrawing 50% of the semester encumbrance from the GSO account every Spring and Fall semesters since 2022, the account balance at the start of the Spring 2025 semester was **13.9% (~$15,000) higher** than in Fall 2022:
    - Fall 2022 Account Balance: $112,211.00
    - Spring 2025 Account Balance: $127,855.51
- The GSO fundraiser account, which was created in Fall 2024, started with an opening balance of **$0** at the beginning of the Spring 2025 semester and closed with a total of **$245.00** at the end of the semester.
- In Spring 2025, we funded:
  - Biology (BIOL)
  - Chemical Engineering (CHEE)
  - Chemistry (CHEM)
  - Civil Engineering (CIVE)
  - Communication (COMM)
  - Communicative Disorders (CODI)
  - Computing & Informatics (CMIX)
  - Counselor Education (CNED)
  - Educational Foundations & Leadership (EDFL)
  - Electrical Engineering (EECE)
  - English (ENGL)
  - Industrial Technology (ITEC)
  - Mechanical Engineering (MECH)
  - Modern Languages (MODL)
  - Music (MUSC)

- o Petroleum Engineering (PETE)
- o Psychology (PSYC)

- In the Spring 2025 semester, after supplementing our initial budget of $16,000, which was curated with student fees, with a supplemental budget of $7,600, totaling $23,600, we were unable to fund 34 applications, 4 of which were deemed ineligible. The applications that were not funded were eligible for $7,390.46, if funds were available. Surplus funds of $4,348.46 were left in the research funds category, $2,222.00 in the professional development category, $456.00 in the programming category, and $369.83 in the GSO Operations budget, totaling $7396.29 in unused funds, which will go back into the GSO bank account.

GSO SPRING 2025 FUNDING TABLE

DEPTS	TRAVEL		RESEARCH		PROF. DEV.		PROG	TOTAL FUNDED		TOTAL REQ.	
	W/ Duties	W/O Duties	Supplies	Printing	Fees	Exams		(#)	($)	(#)	($)
ACCN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ARCH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BIOL	1	0	4	0	0	0	-	3	323.54	5	1,140
MBA	1	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	1	1,340
CHEE	0	0	0	0	1	0	-	1	100	1	100
CHEM	0	1	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	1	1,538
MECH	0	1	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	1	1,000
CIVE	0	1	0	4	0	0	-	4	400	5	500
COMM	4	0	0	0	0	0	-	1	300	4	1,600
CODI	5	2	0	0	3	0	-	8	2,125	10	3,000
CMIX	6	1	0	1	1	1	-	8	2,300	10	2,652
CNED	0	0	0	0	0	1	-	1	100	1	100

DEPTS	TRAVEL		RESEARCH		PROF. DEV.		PROG	TOTAL FUNDED		TOTAL REQ.	
	W/ Duties	W/O Duties	Supplies	Printing	Fees	Exams		(#)	($)	(#)	($)
CJUS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EDCI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EDFL	2	1	0	2	1	0	-	4	700	6	1,300
EECE	1	1	0	0	1	0	-	2	351	3	600
ENGL	14	1	0	0	1	0	-	8	2,742	16	5,244
GEOS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
HIST	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ITEC	0	0	0	1	0	0	-	1	100	1	100
KINE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MATH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MODL	5	0	0	0	0	0	-	1	192	5	1,587.41
MUSC	1	0	0	0	0	0	-	1	300	1	300
NURS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PETE	7	0	0	0	0	0	-	6	2,400	7	6,276
PHYS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PSYC	17	0	0	0	0	0	-	12	4,400	17	6,050.43
TOTAL	64	9	4	8	8	2	-	61	16,833.5	95	34,427.8

Total apps: **95**   Total requested funds: **$34,427.8**   Total eligible requested funds: **$21,791**

Composition of Spring 2025 Applications

	Travel	Research & Supplies	Professional Development
Masters Applicants	34	4	5
Doctoral Applicants	39	8	5

Composition of Spring 2025 Application by Department

BA, 1, 1%
BIOL, 5, 5%
CHEE, 1, 1%
CHEM, 1, 1%
CIVE, 5, 5%
CMIX, 10, 11%
CNED, 1, 1%
CODI, 10, 11%
COMM, 4, 4%
EDFL, 6, 6%
EECE, 3, 3%
ENGL, 16, 17%
ITEC, 1, 1%
MECH, 1, 1%
MODL, 5, 5%
MUSC, 1, 1%
PETE, 7, 7%
PSYC, 17, 18%
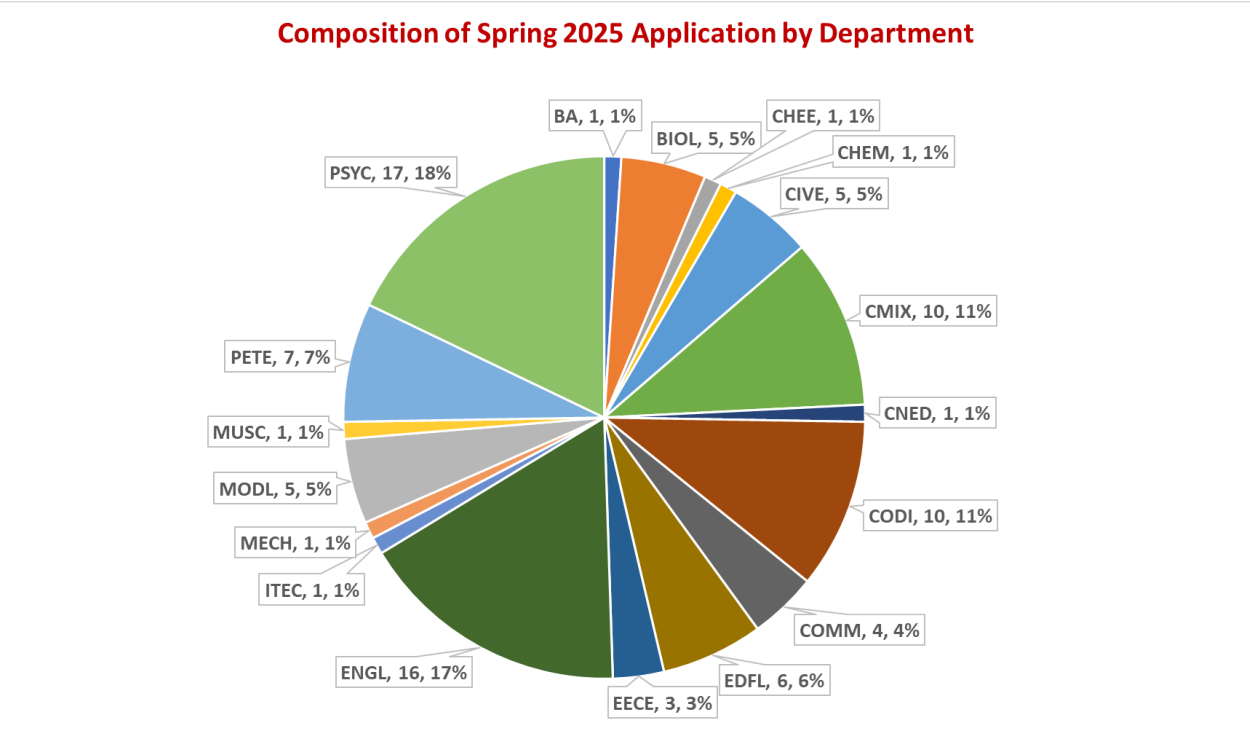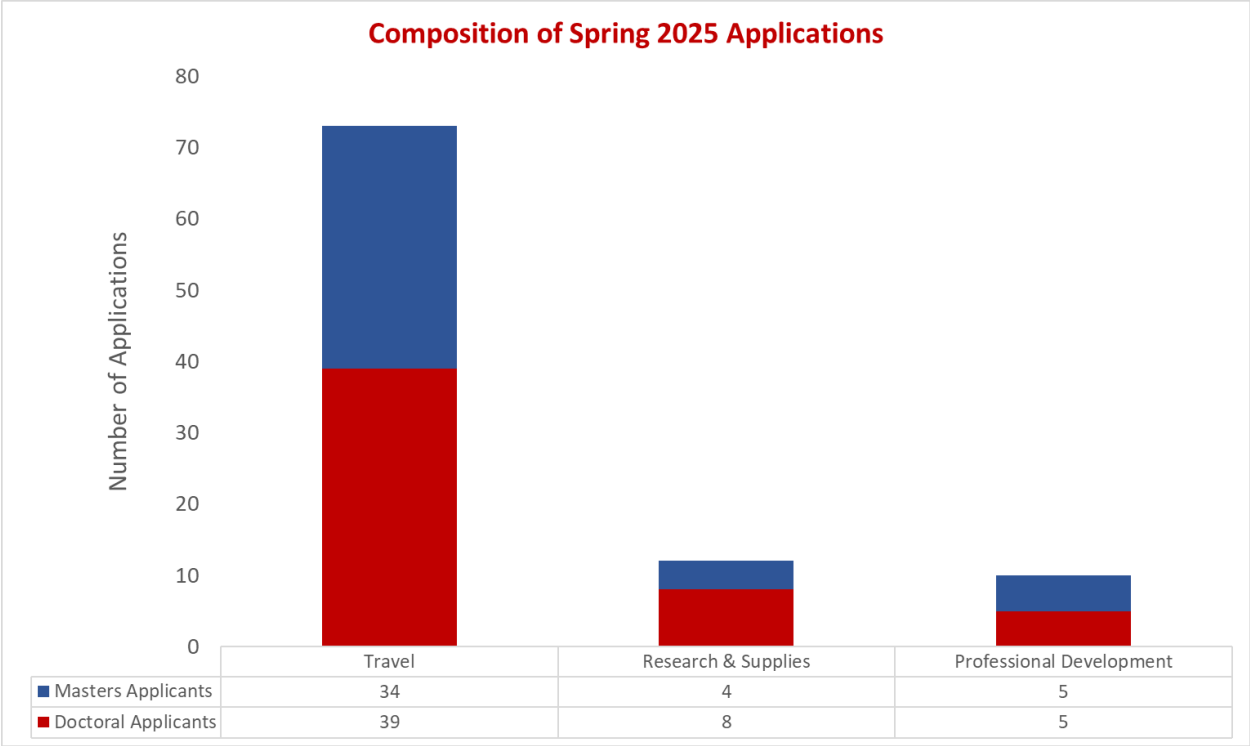
Semester-wise Breakdown of Funding Requests, Approvals, and Budgets

	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025
Total Funded	$23,240.00	$21,419.88	$4,454.86	$16,154.82	$18,307.24	$4,000.00	$20,257.97	$16,833.50
Total Requested Funds	$27,535.00	$23,082.88	$5,563.86	$32,057.98	$23,023.92	$5,600.00	$24,806.97	$34,427.80
Initial Budget	$16,000.00	$15,000.00	$5,700.00	$16,000.00	$15,000.00	$5,000.00	$17,000.00	$16,000.00