ADVOCACY REPORT
FALL 2024

University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

Email: gso@louisiana.edu

Website: gso.louisiana.edu

Facebook: @ULLafayetteGSO

Instagram: @ULLafayettegso

UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA LAFAYETTE | Graduate Student Organization

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.

Photos from GSO Activities Throughout the Fall 2024 Semester

FALL 2024 REFLECTIONS

By-Law Amendment

During the Fall 2024 semester, the GSO General Council passed the amendment below.

1. **Expansion of the List of Eligible Exams for GSO Funding**
   - The GSO Council voted to amend the definition of the Professional Development funding category *to include "... any exams that provide demonstrated enrichment to student's future degree program, under the discretion of the funding committee"*.
   - This resolution will go into effect in Spring 2025 and will allow students to apply for funding for exams such as the GRE and GMAT to further advance their professional development.

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)

- **Close to 90% of departments were represented in GSO**. The highest percentage since the 2022/2023 academic year.

Fall 2024 Department Representatives Table

Department	Representative
Accounting (ACCN)	Vacant
Architecture (ARCH)	Tyrone Wilson
Biology (BIOL)	Kevin Torgersen
Business Administration (MBA)	Darian Cheramie
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)	Sabreelyn Villalpando
Criminal Justice (CJUS)	Heaven Rodrigue
Educational Curriculum & Instruction (EDCI)	Vacant
Educational Foundations & Leadership (EDFL)	Brianna Doucet
Electrical Engineering (EECE)	Shayan Ebrahimi
English (ENGL)	Bilal Khan
Geosciences (GEOS)	Precious Batubo
History (HIST)	Taylor Townsend
Industrial Technology (ITEC)	Sohel Ahmed
Kinesiology (KINE)	Sumona Hoque Mumu
Mathematics (MATH)	Agnideep Aich
Mechanical Engineering (MECH)	Abdelrahman Garbie

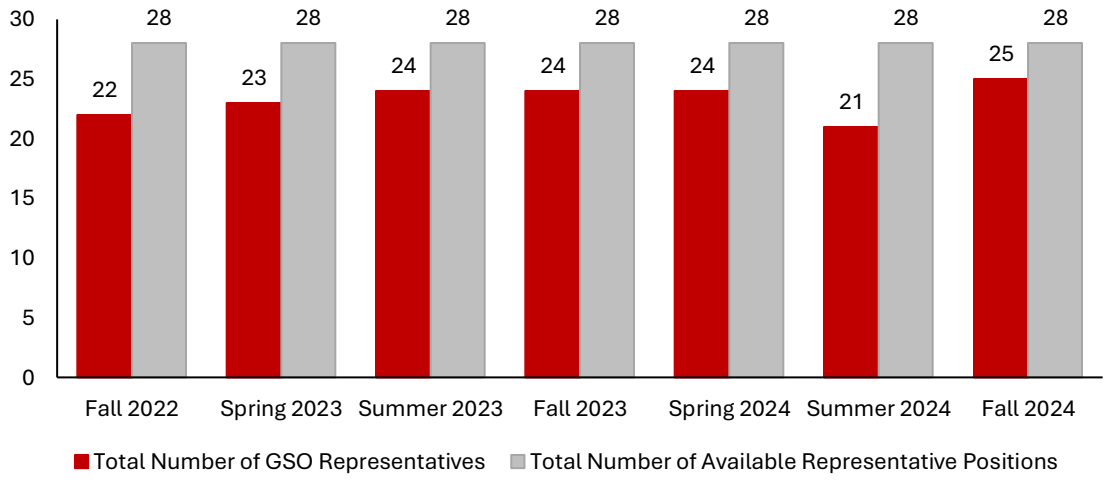
Modern Languages (MODL)	Pierre-Olivier Pire
Music (MUSC)	Vacant
Nursing (NURS)	Vacant
Petroleum Engineering (PETE)	Silver Damigoru
Physics (PHYS)	John Miller
Psychology (PSYC)	Taylor Roussel

Key:

Vacant Departments	Departments which received funding

Departments not able to fund.

GSO Representative Count



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.
- Addressing this lack of representation is crucial for our collective advocacy efforts.

GSO Graduates

From Left to Right, Tyrone Wilson (ARCH), Sabreelyn Villalpando (CNED), and Shayan Ebrahimi (EECE) are graduating in the Fall 2024 Semester

GSO Events

Graduate Student T-Shirt Design Competition (November 18th – December 13th)

- 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, which resulted in 18 unique entries. Following the submission phase, a voting form was distributed to the entire graduate student body to select their preferred design. The winning design will be printed on t-shirts available for purchase by graduate students, with proceeds directed to GSO's new fundraising account. This initiative not only supports future events but also fosters community engagement and school spirit among graduate students.

Stay Up and Write (October 23rd)

- 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, booking a room in the Student Union and providing catered food through Sodexo. The event saw participation from 12 students representing over five departments. From 7-9 PM, attendees engaged in various academic tasks, including grading, thesis writing, and software coding. Feedback was collected via surveys, with the majority expressing a strong interest in having this event more regularly. Based on this positive response, we plan to host Stay Up and Write sessions monthly starting in Spring 2025.

Shoutout Your GSO Representative (September 9th)

- The Shoutout Your Rep initiative was developed to enhance connections between GSO representatives, their departmental graduate students, and the Executive Board. The Communications Committee launched a form allowing graduate students to recognize their departmental representatives for outstanding communication, helpfulness, or notable academic accomplishments. This form was distributed via email and made accessible through the GSO Instagram bio, accompanied by a pinned explanatory post. During the Fall 2024 semester, five submissions were received, and these shoutouts were shared during the subsequent general board meeting. To further acknowledge the contributions of these representatives, certificates of recognition were created and distributed at the final general meeting of the semester. While submissions tapered off after the initial response, the form will be reintroduced in Spring 2025 to encourage continued participation and recognition of exemplary representatives.

Advocacy

- Shopper Shuttle Initiative
    - The Fall 2024 semester marked the first full semester of the Shopper Shuttle's regular operation following the pilot program in the Summer 2024 semester. GSO's focus shifted to active monitoring of the service and gathering data on its effectiveness and user experience.
    - Efforts were made to collect feedback from students utilizing the shuttle. This included informal surveys and direct interviews to capture a comprehensive understanding of their experience, focusing on:
        - Frequency of use and demand for the service.

        - Satisfaction with the routes and schedule.
        - Suggestions for improvements to the service.
    - The collected feedback will be analyzed to pinpoint areas for improvement and guide further refinement of the service.
    - This data-driven approach aims to ensure the Shopper Shuttle continues to meet student needs effectively and remains a sustainable resource. Future discussions with stakeholders are planned to address improvements.

- 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 collected feedback is analyzed in order to determine effective advocacy strategies to address student issues.

Funding

- Doctoral Research and Travel Grant Program
    - Starting in Fall 2024 semester, the GSO advocated program transitioned from requiring applications to be submitted by a fixed deadline to accepting them on a rolling basis. This allowed more flexibility in the application process for our fellow graduate students.
    - Also, the budget was increased by 100% to $100,000 per academic year.
- Compared to Fall 2023, **we received 12% more applications and funded 15% more applications**
    - 2020-2021 – **86** Applications
    - Fall 2023 – **74** applications, 3 cancelled applications.
    - Spring 2024 – **64** applications, 2 cancelled applications.
    - Fall 2024 – **83** applications, 1 cancelled application.

- Increased Fall 2024 semester funding budget by 50% from $15,000 to $22,500. 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 Fall 2024 semester was only about 4.4% (~$5,000) lower than in Fall 2022:**
        - **Fall 2022 Account Balance: $112,211.00**
        - **Fall 2024 Account Balance: $107,228.26**

- In Fall 2024, we funded…
    - Architecture (ARCH)
    - Biology (BIOL)
    - Chemical Engineering (CHEE)
    - Civil Engineering (CIVE)
    - Communications (COMM)
    - Communicative Disorders (CODI)
    - Computing & Informatics (CMIX)
    - Counselor Education (CNED)
    - Educational Foundations & Leadership (EDFL)
    - English (ENGL)
    - Geosciences (GEOS)
    - Kinesiology (KINE)
    - Mathematics (MATH)
    - Mechanical Engineering (MECH)
    - Modern Languages (MODL)
    - Psychology (PSYC)

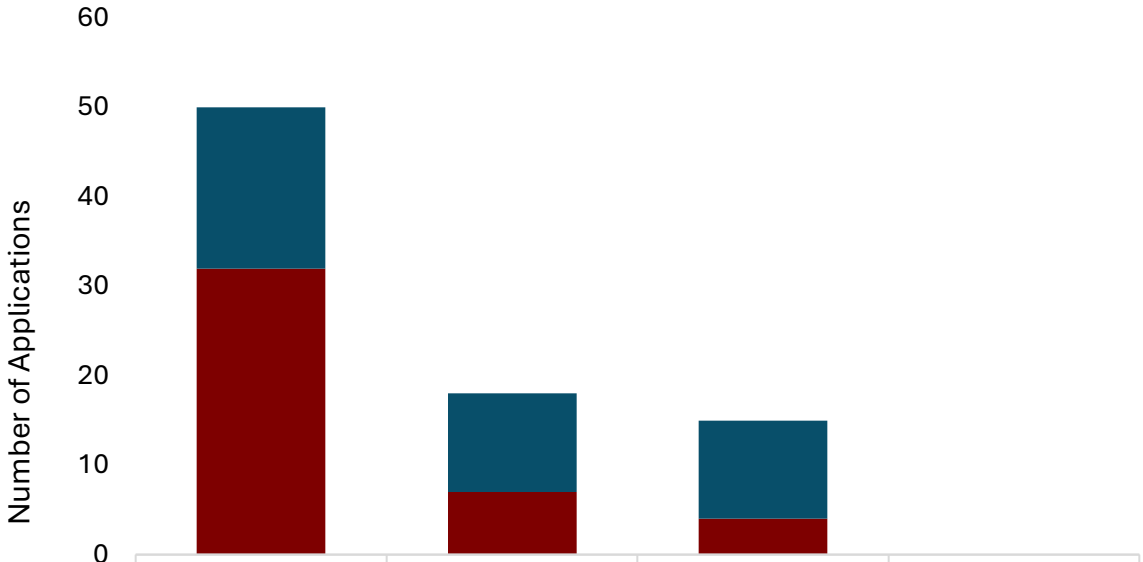
In the Fall 2024 semester, after supplementing our initial budget of $17,000 curated with student fees, with supplemental budget of $8,500, totaling $25,500, we did not fund 4 applications, 3 of which were ineligible. The eligible application that was not funded totaled $500. Surplus funds of $3275.03 were left in the research funds category, $1868.00 in the professional development category, $493.00 in the programming category, and $305.60 in the GSO Operations budget, totaling $5941.63 in unused funds which will go back into the GSO bank account.

GSO FALL 2024 FUNDING TABLE

DEPTS	TRAVEL		RESEARCH		PROF. DEV.		PROG	TOTAL FUNDED		TOTAL REQ.	
	W/ Duties	W/O Duties	Supplies	Printing	Fees	Exams		(#)	($)	(#)	($)
ACCN											
ARCH			10	1	1			**12**	1860	12	1860
BIOL	4	1	4	1	1			11	2461	11	2661
MBA											
CHEE					2			2	198	2	198
CHEM											
CIVE	2	1				7		10	1800	10	2300
COMM	1	1			1			3	450	3	550
CODI	11	1						**12**	5100	12	5350
CMIX	5							5	2500	3	800
CNED	2	1						3	500	1	100
CJUS						1		1	100		
EDCI											
EDFL					1			1	99	1	99
EECE	1							1	300	1	500
ENGL	7	1						8	2080	8	2330
GEOS	1							1	400	1	500
HIST											
ITEC											
KINE	2				1			3	650	3	865
MATH	1							1	300	1	500
MODL	3		2	0				3	600	3	1200
MUSC	3							5	460	5	1494
NURS											
PETE											
PHYS											
PSYC	1							1	400	1	500
TOTAL	**44**	**6**	**16**	**2**	**7**	**8**	**0**	**83**	**20258**	**83**	**24807**

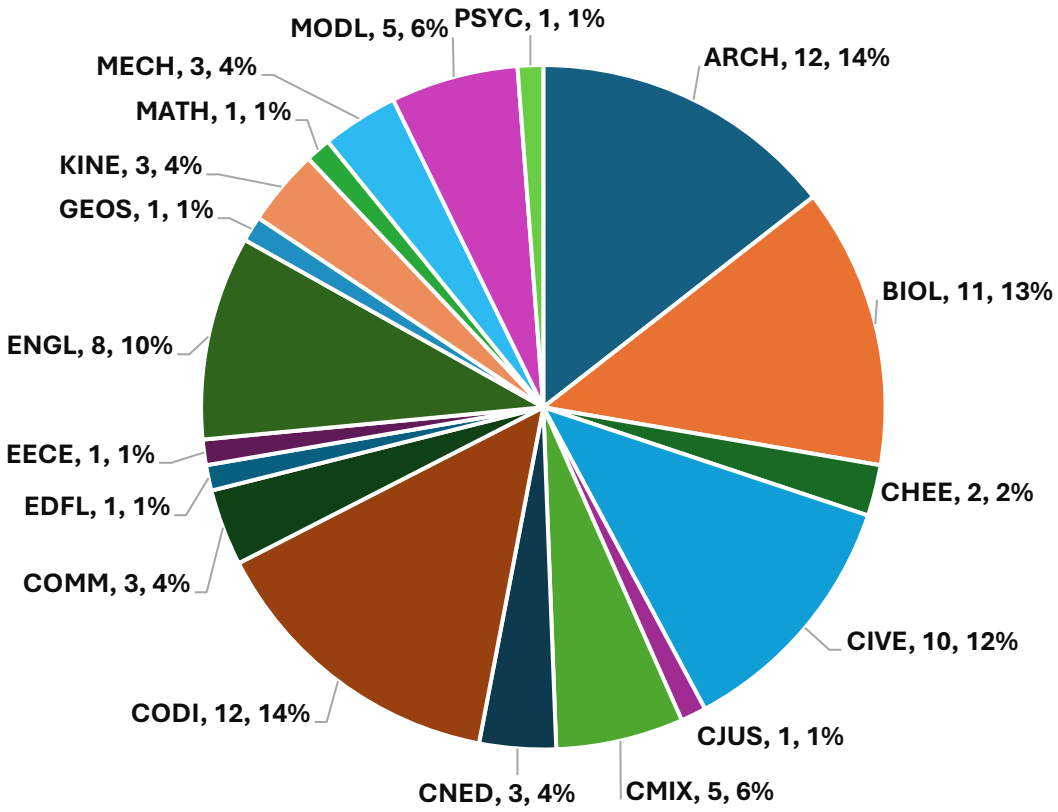
Total apps: **83** Total requested funds: **$24,806.97** Total eligible requested funds: **$20257.97**

Composition of Fall 2024 Applications

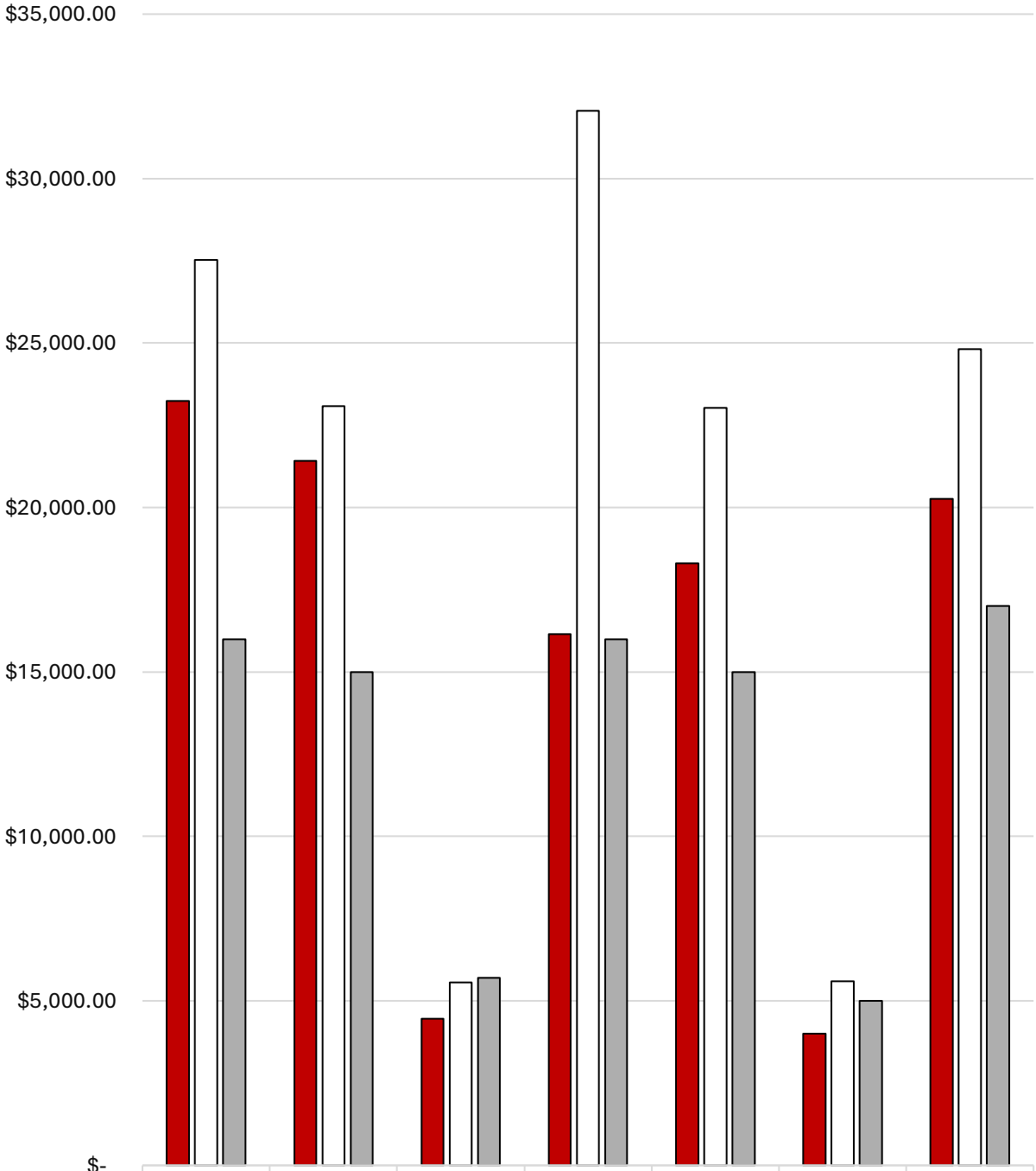


	Travel	Research & Supplies	Professional Development	Programming
Masters Applicants	18	11	11	0
Doctoral Applicants	32	7	4	0

Composition of Fall 2024 Application by Department



Total Funding Requests for the Last Two Years



	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024	Fall 2024
Total Funded	$23,240.00	$21,419.88	$4,457.86	$16,154.82	$18,307.24	$4,000.00	$20,257.97
Total Requested Funds	$27,535.00	$23,082.88	$5,563.86	$32,057.98	$23,023.92	$5,600.00	$24,806.97
Initial Budget	$16,000.00	$15,000.00	$5,700.00	$16,000.00	$15,000.00	$5,000.00	$17,000.00

Total Funded Total Requested Funds Initial Budget