



# ADVOCACY REPORT FALL 2022

## University of Louisiana at Lafayette Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

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**GSO**  
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 rebuild from disruptions caused by the pandemic, and our Department Representatives and Executive Board have put in more work than ever before to increase the Organization's profile and maintain operations despite exclusively remote meetings. This report seeks to **honor the initiative of our graduate student leaders** during this particularly challenging time in searching for new ways to represent (and care for) our fellow students.

# 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](mailto:gso@louisiana.edu).

[Like us on Facebook and Instagram!](#)



Grad Trivia Night Photos, Courtesy of GSO and The Graduate School

## FALL 2022 REFLECTIONS

### By- Law Amendments

- Approved that GSO funding will be considered for expenses incurred during travel that are directly related to graduate student research.
- Approved that the General Council may vote to withdraw no more than 50% of a semester's encumbrance total from the GSO account to fund as many outstanding applications as the supplemental funding will allow, in the event the allocation for a given funding category is exhausted and money is available in the GSO account.

### Increased Participation

- **Achieved 100% occupancy** on the Executive Board:
  - Clement Tochukwu Okolo- President (July 2022)
  - Stacey Calhoun- Treasurer (July 2022)
  - Jeremy LaBorde- Public Relations Officer (October 2022)
  - Brice Gutshall- Vice President (October 2022)
  - Allison Comeaux- Secretary (November 2022)
- **About 80%** of departments are represented in GSO; 6 departments are vacant
- Out of the 22 departmental representatives, **over 50% (12) were new GSO representatives**

Department	Program
Accounting	Vacant (2020- 2022)
<b>Architecture</b>	<b>Brice Gutshall</b>
Biology	Stacy Calhoun
Business Administration	Alexandra Dufour
Chemical Engineering	Elizabeth Boyd
<b>Chemistry</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
Civil Engineering	Pubali Sarker
Communications	Mary Pritchard
<b>Communicative Disorders</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
Computing and Informatics	John Olajire
Counselor Education	Abby Wolford
Criminal Justice	Romy Zingraff
Educational Curriculum & Instruction	Victoria Landry
Educational Foundations & Leadership	Allison Comeaux
Electrical Engineering	Conner Chaney
English	Faryal Atif
Geosciences	Precious Batubo
History	Vacant
Industrial Technology	Jeremy LaBorde
Kinesiology	Vacant
Mathematics	Yusuf Afolabi
Mechanical Engineering	Juliette Okoronkwo
Modern Languages	Pierre- Oliver Pier
Music	Morgan Burroughs
Nursing	Vacant (2020- 2022)
Petroleum Engineering	Anireju Dudun
Physics	John Miller
Psychology	John Patric Veal

### Fall 2022 Department Representatives Table

**Key:**

Vacant  
Departments

Departments  
which received  
funding

**Departments not  
able to fund**

- **500 stoles were acquired** for current and future graduating GSO Representatives to don at their graduation ceremony **as a token of appreciation for their hard work in the organization.**



Graduate Stole photos, courtesy of GSO President Clement Tochukwu Okolo

## Grad Trivia Night

- Held GSO's **first in-person social event** since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Collaborated with the graduate school** on planning.
- Graduate students, Staff and professors appreciated the casual event.
- The **downtown location** gave out-of-state and international students an opportunity to explore the town they will be living in for several years and a chance to build relationships with fellow graduate students with different disciplines.

## Advocacy

- We investigated graduate student concerns on food, housing, and other concerns by reaching out to official university channels for assistance on the:
  - [Swipe Your Hunger program](#)
  - [Care Network Online Form](#)
  - [Advocacy Committee Online Form](#)
- Connected with the programs in [Office of Campus Diversity](#)
  - James Jackson Community of Scholars
  - Project ALLIES
  - Women in STEM
  - First generation graduate students
- Connected with the [Guilbeau Center](#) about resources for computer hardware and software for all graduate and doctoral students for research

## Funding

- Received about **20% more applications** than the entire 2020-2021 academic

- year
  - 2020- 2021- **86** applications
  - Fall 2022 - **102** applications
- Funded about **25% more applications** than the entire 2020-2021 academic year
  - 2020- 2021- **65** applications
  - Fall 2022 - **81** applications
- **Increased** semester funding budget by **50% from \$16,000 to \$24,000**
- **Recovered surplus fund of \$112,211** from previous semesters allocation

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main content is a slide with the following text:

## Updates on GSO Budget

- Unspent funding from previous semesters rolls back into the GSO account
  - Account balance: **\$112,211.00**
- This gives us a bit of a cushion and the opportunity to fund more applications than the semester's encumbrance allows
- We would like to use some of this money now, to fulfill more applications and are looking into some avenues of using this money to set up more stable funding for GSO in the future

On the right side of the slide, there is a vertical list of participant video thumbnails. From top to bottom, they are: Stacy Calhoun-Grosch | BIOL..., Clement Okolo - President, Jeremy LaBorde STEC, ENGL-Faryal Atif (she/her), MArch.Rep Brice (she/her), and Remil Aguda | VP | Chemi... The Zoom meeting controls are visible at the bottom of the screen.

General meeting on Zoom, courtesy of GSO President Clement Tochukwu Okolo

- We Funded
  - Biology
  - Business Administration
  - Chemical Engineering
  - Civil Engineering
  - Communications
  - Computing and Informatics
  - Education Foundations and Leadership
  - English
  - Geosciences
  - Industrial Technology
  - Mechanical Engineering
  - Modern Languages
  - Petroleum Engineering
  - Physics
  - Psychology
- We were not able to fund
  - Architecture (ineligible applications)
  - Communication Disorders (no department representative)
  - Chemistry (no department representative)
  - Student requests exceeded the amount of total eligible funding, we need double the funding we had to accommodate all applications.

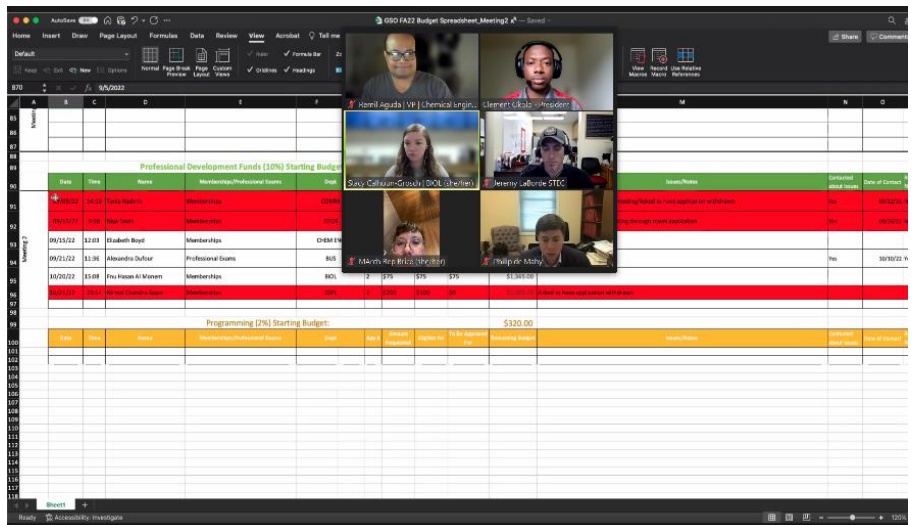
### GSO FALL 2022 FUNDING TABLE

DEPTS.	TRAVEL			RESEARCH (RES.)		PROF. DEV.		P R O G	TOTAL FUNDED		TOTAL NOT FUNDED	
	W/ Duties	W/O Duties	Res.	Supplies	Printing	Fees	Exams		(#)	(\$)	(#)	(\$)
ARCH		8							0.00	8	800.00	
BIOL	12		2	9		1	1	23	5970.10	1	100.00	
BA		1						1	100.00			
CHEE	4			1	2	1	1	9	2009.17	1	300.00	
CHEM	1								0.00	1	500.00	
CIVE	2							2	1000.00			
CJUS		1							0.00	1	100.00	
CMIX	5	1			1			7	2334.30			
COMM	2		1			1		3	1100.00	1	300.00	
COMM DIS	2								0.00	2	200.00	
EDFL	2	1		3		1		6	700.00	1	300.00	
ENG	1							1	500.00			
ENGL	4	1		1				6	1660.00			
GEOS	3					1		3	1300.00	1	95.00	
ITECH				1				1	160.00			
MCHE	4							3	1300.00	1	400.00	
MODL				1			1	2	97.02			
MUSC	1	1						1	300.00	1	300.00	
PETE	1	2						2	800.00	1	250.00	
PHYS	5							4	1500.00	1	400.00	
PSYCH	5			1		2		7	2410.00	1	250.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>23,240.00</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4295.00</b>

Total applications: 102

Total requested funds: \$27,535.00

The **total funds** graduate students applied for compared to our initial budget of \$16,000, is almost **twice the initial budget** curated with GSO student fees alone. Even after diving into our surplus funds totaling \$8000 dollars for the semester, **we still needed over \$4,000 more to cover all eligible applications.**



General meeting on Zoom, courtesy of GSO President Clement Tochukwu Okolo



# SPRING 2023 OBJECTIVES

## Increase Funding

We plan to:

- **investigate alternative funding sources** to expand our semester budgets in order to meet the increasing needs of graduate students
- encourage graduate students fiscally supported by UL GSO to:
  - Use our **UL GSO Hashtags** (which will be created) on their social media posts to **increase our visibility and engagement**
  - **Recognize UL GSO** in the acknowledgements section of their thesis and/or dissertation w/ logos and text provided with our funding instructions
  - This will help us get the recognition we need to **gain more funding for UL Graduate students**

## Hold Primarily In-Person General Meetings

- We will return to **in-person general meetings** to foster a stronger sense of personal connection and rapport between GSO council members, which can be beneficial for **team cohesion, networking, and engagement**.
- Meeting rooms will need to be reserved at the beginning of the semester with technological accommodation to allow for seamless in-person events with a virtual option to ensure that **online students can participate**.

## Improve Committee Meeting Attendance

We plan to:

- enact official **sign-up sheets** for our committee
- take **roll** at committee meetings
- keep our committee meetings **virtual**
- ensure student representatives **remind their departments** of our advocacy committee meetings; they are **open to all graduate students**

## Improve Our Advocacy Efforts

- We will do more questioning to figure out why graduate students do not use our **online advocacy form** and if this method is effective.
- We will **emphasis** the needs of **transfer and international graduate students**.
- Use our influence to aid in **addressing housing and insurance needs**.

## Host More In-Person Events

- This is an **essential networking tool** for graduate students, especially transfer and international students.

- This will **aid in the mental health** of graduate students.

## Collaborate with Other Universities

- We plan to reactivate our participation with the **National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS)** to gain insight on our objectives and events with our colleagues in other institutions of the United States.

## IN CONCLUSION

After rebuilding our organization, UL GSO aims to use its resources and influence on better addressing graduate student needs, especially transfer and international students. To do this we must create measures to aid in the physical and mental attendance of our members and gain recognition for our fiscal support. In the past graduate students have supported their own research through the UL GSO fee. In lieu of recovering surplus funds from graduate fees paid during the COVID-19 pandemic, we want additional funding resources, especially since the quality of our research maintains UL's reputation as an R-1 University.

Sincerely,

UL GSO Fall 2022 Executive Board



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