



ADVOCACY REPORT SPRING 2023

University of Louisiana at Lafayette Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

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UNIVERSITY
OF
LOUISIANA
L a f a y e t t e

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 adapt in 2020-2021, 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.

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



Photos from Get on Board Day, Donation Drive, and the End of the Semester Social Event at ACA, Courtesy of GSO Event Organizers

SPRING 2023 REFLECTIONS

By- Law Amendments

- Approved an update concerning GSO operational costs which states: “The discretionary fund will amount to 5% of the semester’s encumbrance or \$500, whichever is more. If any discretionary fund is unused by the third general meeting, remaining funds will be transferred to the travel funds category.” At the last general meeting. These funds will be used to support GSO’s growing number of in-person events.

Participation

- Full Executive Board Voted in at the last General Meeting:
 - Clement Tochukwu Okolo- President (August 2022)
 - Faryal Atif- Treasurer (April 2023)
 - Jeremy LaBorde- PR Coordinator (November 2022- March 2023)
 - Brice Gutshall- Vice President (October 2022)
 - Allison E. Comeaux- Secretary (November 2022- April 2023)
- In-person General Meetings:
 - Held in the Helma B Constantine Forum, the in-person general meetings aided in encouraging community amongst GSO ECouncil.

Spring 2023 Department Representatives Table

Department	Program
Accounting (ACCN)	Vacant (2020- SP2023)
Architecture (ARCH)	Brice Gutshall
Biology (BIOL)	Kevin Torgersen
Business Administration (BA)	Grayson Stepanek
Chemical Engineering (CHEE)	Elizabeth Boyd
Chemistry (CHEM)	Vacant (FA2022- SP2023)
Civil Engineering (CIVE)	Ahmed Hossain
Communications (COMM)	Mary Pritchard
Communicative Disorders (CODI)	Mary McMahan
Computing and Informatics (CMIX)	John Olajire
Counselor Education (CNED)	Abby Wolford
Criminal Justice (CJUS)	Onyeka Enwesi
Educational Curriculum & Instruction (EDCI)	Vacant
Educational Foundations & Leadership (EDFL)	Vacant
Electrical Engineering (EECE)	Conner Chaney
English (ENGL)	Faryal Atif
Geosciences (GEOS)	Precious Batubo
History (HIST)	Benjamin Vidrine
Industrial Technology (ITEC)	Vacant
Kinesiology (KINE)	Sumona Hoque Mumu
Mathematics (MATH)	Md. Monzur Murshed
Mechanical Engineering (MECH)	Abdelrahman Garbie
Modern Languages (MODL)	Pierre- Oliver Pier
Music (MUSC)	Morgan Burroughs
Nursing (NURS)	Erica Piazza
Petroleum Engineering (PETE)	Anireju Dudun
Physics (PHYS)	John Miller
Psychology (PSYC)	John Patric Veal

Key:

Vacant
Departments

Departments
which received
funding

**Departments not
able to fund**

GSO Events

Get On Board Day (January 25th)

- Spread word about who GSO is and what we do by handing out pamphlets, and our then PR Coordinator, Jeremy LaBorde, made a 3-D GSO logo out of materials he used for his thesis prototype.

Donation Drive (March 3rd- March 15th)

- GSO worked with the International Student Council, Student Center for Research, Creativity, & Scholarship, and Department of English, and the Office of International Affairs to donate unused necessities such as socks and hand soap to those impacted by earthquakes in Turkey.

Graduate Appreciation Week Events (March 27th- March 31st)

- Grant Writing Workshop in partnership with the Office of University Research, Pre-award Services (OSRP) on Tuesday, March 28th. OSRP Staff member Jessica Baudoin directed Ph.D. and Graduate Students about how to navigate Grants and where to find them.
- Graduate Student Panel in partnership with the Graduate School, showed undergraduate students how to best prepare for graduate school entrance tests on Thursday, March 30th.

Insiders Salon (April 25th)

- End of the semester social event at the Acadiana Center for the Arts which informed graduate students of their complementary ACA memberships for the duration of their degree at UL Lafayette and kicked off Festival International.

Advocacy

- Investigated graduate student concerns on rising health insurance costs for primarily international students and the lack of insurance for their dependents. Jennifer Kansas, a navigator with the Southwest Louisiana Area Health Education Center (SWLAHEC) presented in depth, who they are and what options cater to graduate students' needs:
 - Added a path to get to SWLAHEC resources on the GSO webpage.
 - The SWLAHEC Meeting Minutes, the second Advocacy meeting for Spring 2023, was shared with all four public colleges in Louisiana by Dr. Mary Farmer Kaiser.
 - Affordable health insurance for international students and their dependents can be found through a Marketplace plan while lawfully residing in the U.S. These Marketplace plans utilize Tax Credits that can cover most insurance costs immediately after they apply.
- Connected with the Officer for Campus Diversity, Kiwana McClung in the [Office of Campus Diversity](#), to discuss the movement on the plans for a Multicultural center and how it could aid in temporary international student housing.

Funding

- One Pager completed by Stacy Calhoun to advocate for more funding.
- Decreased number of funding applications

- Fall 2022- **102** applications.
- Spring 2023- **81** applications, 1 canceled application
- Increased semester funding budget by 50% from \$15,000 to \$22,500
- We Funded...
 - Architecture (ARCH)
 - Biology (BIOL)
 - Chemical Engineering (CHEE)
 - Civil Engineering (CIVE)
 - Communications (COMM)
 - Communication Disorders (CODI)
 - Computing and Informatics (CMIX)
 - Education Foundations and Leadership (EDFL)
 - Electrical Engineering (EECE)
 - English (ENGL)
 - Geosciences (GEOS)
 - Kinesiology (KINE)
 - Mathematics (MATH)
 - Modern Languages (MODL)
 - Psychology (PSYCH)
- We were not able to fund...
 - Mechanical Engineering (MECH)
 - Excluding the 4 ineligible applications, student requests exceeded our current funding budgets per category by \$1,663.

GSO SPRING 2023 FUNDING TABLE

DEPTS.	TRAVEL			RESEARCH (RES.)		PROF. DEV.		P R O G	TOTAL FUNDED		TOTAL REQ.	
	W/ Duties	W/O Duties	Res.	Supplies	Printing	Fees	Exams		(#)	(\$)	(#)	(\$)
ACCN												
ARCH				1			1		2	229.05		
BIOL	5	2		4		3			12	2451.50	2	444.00
BA												
CHEE	1				1	1			2	200.00	1	500.00
CHEM												
CIVE	2					1			3	900.00		
COMM	1								1	300.00		
CODI	3	2				1			5	1260.00	1	500.00
CMIX	4	2			1				7	1995.00		
COED												
CJUS												
EDCI												
EDFL					1				1	100.00		
EECE	1								1	400.00		
ENGL	11	1						2	12.5	5450.00	1.5	225.00
GEOS	1								1	500.00		
HIST												
ITEC												
KINE						1			1	100.00		
MATH	1				2				3	300.00		
MECH	1										1	400.00
MODL	2			2		2			5	307.83	1	500.00
MUSC												
NURS												
PETE												
PHYS												
PSYC	16					1			15	5432.5	2	588.00
TOTAL	45	7		6	5	9	1	2	71.5	19925.88	9.5	3157.00

Total apps: 81 Total requested funds: \$23,082.88 Total eligible requested funds: \$21,419.88

Even after supplementing our initial budget of \$15,000 curated with student fees, with surplus funds of \$7,500, totaling \$22,500, we did not fund 9 applications some of which were ineligible. **The eligible applications that were not funded totaled \$1494.00.** Surplus funds of \$2338.09 were left in the research funds category and \$770.58 in the professional development category, totaling **\$3108.67 in unused funds.** After funding all the legitimate applications, we would be left with **\$1,080.12** to go back into the GSO bank account.

We need to update our GSO bylaws to reroute all the surplus funds from the semester to be used in the travel category first, then every other category after that on a first come first serve basis. This is advised because we were not able to fund all the English department's programming application despite them being eligible for the funding they requested. This would be the last category considered for excess funds.

