

**Attendance:**

Brianna Doucet [EDFL], Sumona Hoque Mumu [KNES], Taiwo O. Oluyinka [COMM], Bilal Ansar Khan [ENGL], Pierre-Olivier Pire [MODL], Grayson Stepanek [MBA], Benjamin Vidrine [HIST/GSO-S], Abdelrahman Garbie [MCHE], Clement Okolo [GSO-P], Katarina Brankovic [MODL] & Andrew Buderer [BIOL]

**Eleven Attendees      [9 Representatives, 2 Guests]**

**Meeting Started:      12:03 PM**

**Meeting Ended:        1:30 PM**

**Welcome & Opening Remarks**

- Abdelrahman Garbie, GSO VP, introduces members of the GSO Executive Board Present [Himself, GSO President Clement Okolo, and GSO Executive Secretary Benjamin Vidrine] alongside an introduction to the New and Old Business for the meeting.

**New Business**

**Bus Shopper Shuttle Initiative**

- Guest Speakers Katarina Brankovic and Andrew Buderer presented the findings of their survey, alongside ways they view cooperation between themselves and the GSO benefits their goal.
  - Main concerns revolved around the lack of transport for students without vehicles, especially international students, who faced dangerous conditions walking or cycling to markets.
  - Out of those polled, which equaled 1/20<sup>th</sup> of UL Lafayette's Population, most agreed with the need for an off-campus transportation service that better connected them to Lafayette's community and culture. Our guest presenters also expressed the program as an extension of a five-year sustainability plan that better integrates UL Lafayette with the city alongside the benefit of decongested traffic around the University.
  - The Bus Shopper Shuttle Initiative is looking to garner support from departments and organizations across the University with the assistance of the GSO making official connections with these departments' offices.
- Questions from Committee
  - In response to a question regarding other organizations' support for the program, the guest speakers received support from the Office of Campus Diversity.

- In response to questions regarding what day and time during a given week the shuttle would run, Fridays from 11 am to 7 pm were seen as the best time for the program based on survey data.
- Another goal presented by the guest speakers was the hope of a shuttle service to Downtown Lafayette and various city parks for the sake of cultural experiences and mental health, respectively.
- GSO Discussion on the matter
  - Support was garnered by unanimous agreement of the GSO Advocacy Committee and measures to officially support the program will be brought forward at the first GSO General Committee Meeting of the semester.

#### Student Government Association (SGA) and GSO Collaboration

- GSO VP Garbie introduced Representative Grayson Stepanek, who is also SGA President, with the goal of better cooperation between the GSO and SGA on matters related to Graduate Students. Representative Stepanek shared updates regarding initiatives in the SGA, namely a survey of Graduate Students for more parking spaces closer to the University, better access for Graduate Assistants to go to halls after University hours to fulfill their research assistantships and the creation of a Graduate Student Life Center.
  - VP Garbie, the committee, and Rep Stepanek agreed that through better cooperation, the SGA and GSO can fulfill these programs, namely through unified appeals to the University.
    - Representative Grayson also expressed a desire for GSO Representatives to share the still active survey with their department colleagues.
- Discussion
  - Discussion continued regarding the issue of a lack of closer parking spaces for Graduate Assistants, with a discussion of the Graduate Student Life Center folded into the issue. GSO VP Garbie shared concerns presented to himself from GAs simply not having space to park at already designated locations. Closer parking spaces, alongside better access to resources available at a Student Life Center, mainly for work and printing stations, would be immensely beneficial to the efficiency of assistants' research.

#### Concerns From the Geosciences Department

- In a mirror to events from Fall 2023 regarding the abandonment of a student's program mid-coursework, individuals from the Geosciences Department have notified VP Garbie of a similar event. Three graduate students have lost a professor who is key to graduation in their specialty. Official written statements are still being worked on by those graduate students. Thankfully it appears that they are receiving assistance to complete their programs. The GSO looks to continue monitoring the situation.
- GSO President Okolo recommends patience on this issue to avoid rushing to a conclusion on the matter, while representatives shared their own similar experiences with program shake-ups. This discussion was finalized with committee members sharing their desire to see the GSO Executive Board discuss this growing issue with Dean Mary Farmer-Kaiser

alongside the idea for departments to better communicate with their graduate students about department-based protocol for such situations.

## **Old Business**

### **Concern from the Special Education Department**

- The Advocacy Committee still seeks to confirm the situation from last semester involving the Special Education Department's similar issue leading to a graduate student being forced to leave UL Lafayette. Further information can be found [here](#). Unfortunately, no new details have been reported so far but contact is still being made between the GSO and the student.

### **The Floor is Opened for any further concerns to be addressed.**

- Rep Bilal continued the discussion of a Graduate Student Life Center, especially to create a comfortable zone for students to use during after-school hours in the winter that can be accessed via ULID.
- Representatives agreed that better communication about the Advocacy arm of the GSO with the graduate student body, before events like those discussed above occur, will lead to better opportunities for graduate students to coordinate on issues they see in their time at UL Lafayette.
- Andrew shared details on the creation of Graduate Associations like HGSA [History Graduate Students Association] and BGSA [Biology Graduate...] and their importance. Namely in the sharing of department policy for the betterment of graduation goal clarification and to see where improvements can be made to other departments' policies.

## **Closing Remarks**

- The GSO wishes to remind Graduate Students that all students can attend the advocacy board meeting to share their issues and concerns.