

**Attendance:**

Faryal Atif, Abdelrahman Garbie, Benjamin Vidrine, Morgan Burroughs, Grayson Stepanek, Bilal Khan, Jennah Detraz

(6 Representatives, 1 Guest)

Meeting Started: 4:00 PM

Meeting Ended: 5:10 PM

Total Duration: 1 Hour, 10 Minutes

**Welcome**

- Opening remarks from Faryal Atif, Vice President of the GSO and Advocacy Committee Chair
  - Last meeting of the Semester for the Committee as well as for VP Faryal Atif
  - Mention of our special guest Jenna
  - General Wellbeing Check

**Announcements**

- Last meeting as VP for Faryal Atif at both the Advocacy Committee and General Committee Meetings
  - At the General Committee Meeting the Position of Vice President of the GSO will be open for GSO Representatives to submit nominations
- Mention of Requirements as VP
  - Nominees must be a GSO representative for a whole year, although there are exceptions based on General Committee Vote
    1. Including the opening of the position to the general Graduate Student body barring those from the English Department and/or members of the SGA Senate.
  - Must run the advocacy committee and attend the general committee.
    1. You can select the time to have the advocacy meeting based upon your schedule.
  - VP Atif encourages in-person but Zoom is available for anyone who cannot come due to an emergency.

## **Advocacy Concerns Brought to the Committee's Attention**

- Anonymous
  - Desire for Official Parental Leave (Maternity Leave)
    1. While examples of a General UL Lafayette Leave of Absence Form exist, the concern regarding the retention of assistantships/place in a graduate student department are major concerns and will be discussed further over the coming month.
  
- Anonymous
  - Lack of Affordable Childcare on-site
    1. A graduate student reached out about concerns over the costs of the UL Lafayette Child Development Center on graduate students with children. The issue has caused some confusion as the anonymous report stated a fee of \$35.00 per day but further research has led to multiple different costs and/or fees
  
    2. This then bled into a general discussion on various fees paid by the general Graduate student body [Excluding those with Assistantship Positions]. This included representative Bilal Khan's statement that going rates for other child care facilities within Lafayette are roughly the same cost.

The discussion ended with the ever-present concern of why have these on-site locations for students when they do not benefit them.
  
- Guest Jennah Detraz
  - Gives a brief introduction of herself and then begins to share her concerns
    1. Former UL Lafayette Graduate Student in Elementary Education with a focus on Special Education.

Former due to transfer to another university, not due to completion at UL Lafayette.

## **Guest Jennah Detraz Speaks on Behalf of Her Advocacy Concern**

- Jennah began her classes at UL Lafayette in Speech Pathology but quickly found that Special Education fits her career goals far better.
  - In her Senior Year of Undergraduate Schooling, she began to submit her application for the Masters Program.
  - Her desired program does not exist, but she is told to apply for another program that she can focus on Special Education with. She receives this information via conversation with advisors but soon requests written confirmation.
  
- From the submission period well into August, her applications still remained pending.
  - No one is answering back repeat communications
  - In those last weeks before the Fall 2023 Semester begins, received notice that the focus is not being offered and is pushed into an Elementary Education M.A.T. program with the required Special Education classes for all graduates in there. Is still told it is possible to get a Major in Special Education.

- At a group advising for Spring 2023 the week before this meeting.
  - Is told that the current Special Education Professor has quit and that any program related to special education is canceled.
  - The only course of action possible for Ms. Detraz is to leave the program and wait until the Fall 2024 semester to see if there is a new Special Education Professor
    1. Where even then, the likelihood is that it will be one class per semester to complete the program, if it is one professor.
- Further issues arose in her discovery that other students (2) were advised against a focus in Special Education during advising.
  - Requirements for a cohort are Three Students
- While raising concern and self-advocating, Ms. Detraz received no assistance was given to attempt to resolve the issue besides the options of leaving as mentioned above.
  - At the time, no dates were set for a meeting to discuss between herself and faculty, no planning was made for the possibility that the focus on Special Education is not viable [During the Spring Application/Summer Wait Period], and no promises for completion of this major through transfers to other universities that the UL Lafayette staff knew of.
- To reiterate, Ms. Detraz received explicit written confirmation that the program would be offered for her completion, and the resulting situation has been seen by nearly all faculty and staff.
- Ms. Detraz then shared the events online via social media, in which others expressed support and confirmation of similar events.
- Ms. Detraz eventually found an online course that requires her hold a teaching position
  - Loss of access to GA Tuition Fee Waivers

**Conversation Between Guest Detraz and Members of the Advocacy Committee about this issue**

- The conversation revolved around how to respond to the situation, which will be refined at the next General Committee Meeting of the GSO.
  - This will be alongside the full GSO Executive Board.