

GRAD IN FOCUS



UNIVERSITY of
LOUISIANA
L A F A Y E T T E

Graduate
School

FEBRUARY 2025



Message from the Dean

DR. MARY FARMER-KAISER

Much like the rare snowstorm that blanketed south Louisiana, graduate education is a beautiful journey--unexpected, transformative, and full of moments that leave us in awe. The hundred-year blizzard that brought 10.5 inches of snow to my backyard was an extraordinary pause, a moment of joy and playfulness that cleared our heads and reminded us of the wonder in the unexpected.

Yet, as we step into this new year and new semester, we are also met with a different kind of unexpectedness. The flurry of executive orders, including the now-rescinded pause on federal funding, has added stress, uncertainty, and unpredictability to an already challenging landscape in higher education. In times like these, it can be tempting to focus only on what is immediately in front of us--on the disruptions, the obstacles, the unknowns. But as organizational psychologist Adam Grant reminds us, "The attitude that helps most with intense stress is not mindfulness. It's hope."

Hope cannot be passive. It cannot be naive wishful thinking. Hope needs to be grounded in action, in a belief that we can navigate through whatever difficulties that lay ahead and shape the future despite the many uncertainties. As we begin this semester, I encourage us all--students, faculty, staff, and administrators--to embrace this kind of hope. Just as the recent snowstorm brought a rare and joyful reprieve, let's find moments of clarity, resilience, and purpose amid whatever challenges ahead.

Here's to a new year full of wonder, perseverance, and the kind of hope that moves us forward.

Dr. MFK



Much like the rare snowstorm that blanketed south Louisiana, graduate education is a beautiful journey—unexpected, transformative, and full of moments that leave you in awe.

DR. MARY FARMER-KAISER

Dean of the Graduate School





Upcoming Events in February

Mondays - Wake Up and Write!

Every Monday morning the University is open, grad students and faculty write, read, and think at the Alumni Center Board Room from 8:30-10:30 AM. The Grad School provides coffee, breakfast treats, and quiet. You provide the focus and progress. Parking is easy. No registration is required.

2/7 - Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (CIE) Research Summit

The CIE Research Summit will feature 18 award recipients, showcasing their innovative research from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM via Zoom. [Register here.](#)

2/12 - Business, Arts, Liberal Arts, & General Career Fair

Bringing students and alumni together with local, state, and national employers and graduate schools, the Career Fair invites you to explore job, internship, co-op, and part-time opportunities. Present yourself professionally and stop by the FREE Professional Headshot Photo Booth! 9 AM to 1 PM in the Student Union Ballroom.

2/14 - The 2025 Most Loved Grad Program Competition Launches!

Between Valentine's Day and Graduate Student Appreciation Week, the Grad School challenges our grad students, faculty, staff, and alumni to some good-spirited competition showcasing what makes our grad programs great. What's at stake? Bragging rights, a cool traveling trophy, and a departmental lunch on us. Get ready for the love!

2/17 - Money Matters - Financial Planning for International Students

We'll be in Moody 103A at 11:30 AM for lunch with Dr. Brian Bolton and tips for navigating unique financial issues as an international student. [Registration Required](#)

2/18 - A2i+ Career Readiness: Preparing for your Career Journey

Join Dr. John Gottula, Director of Crop Science at SAS, on Zoom for insights on career paths in crop science, biotech, and data analytics. Learn how to innovate, overcome challenges, and stand out in the job market. [Register here](#) to get the Zoom link.

2/19 - Stay Up and Write - Hosted by GSO

Stay Up and Write, hosted by the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) from 7 to 9 PM, is a great alternative to Wake Up and Write. Food and space are provided—just bring your focus to reach your writing goals!

2/25 - Manuscript Workshop for Graduate Students

Join us online at 10 AM for an intro to what to expect and how to prepare when submitting your defended manuscript to the Grad School for review and final approval. [Register in advance](#) to get the Zoom link.

2/24-3/9 - 14-Day Writing Challenge

Sign up for the NCFDD 14-Day Writing Challenge: write for 30 minutes a day, Monday through Friday, for two weeks. Any scholarly writing counts, from brainstorming to polishing. Plus, get access to WriteNow software! [Register by 2/14 here.](#)

Most Loved

GRAD PROGRAM

Grad students, faculty, staff, and alumni, brace yourself for the academic showdown of the year!

Get ready to show us the love for your grad program! Help your department claim the "Most Loved Grad Program" title, possession of the coveted traveling trophy, and a VIP lunch for your department!

Watch for details on February 14!



Past "Most Loved" Winners!

2024: English

2023: Biology

2022: Psychology

2021: Communication

2020: MBA

2019: Communication

2018: Counseling

2017: Counseling



Dr. Paul Leberg Joins the Graduate School as Associate Dean

Once defender of the coveted Most-Loved traveling trophy, Professor of Biology, and long-time grad education supporter, Dr. Paul Leberg has joined the Graduate School as its inaugural Associate Dean. Bringing years of experience as a graduate student mentor, professor, scholar, and administrator, Dr. Leberg will lead several retention-focused initiatives into the Spring semester. He has begun this work by leading an ad hoc committee for the Graduate Council aimed at recreating a Graduate Assistantship Handbook. Many thanks to the Department of Biology and the Ray P. Authement College of Sciences for sharing Dr. Leberg with us as we work to strengthen our graduate education community university wide.



NOMINATION DEADLINE EXTENDED!

The Graduate School has extended the deadline from Friday, February 7 to Monday, February 17, for nominations for the following annual awards:

Outstanding Master’s Mentor

This award recognizes five members of the Graduate Faculty with an exceptional record of fostering the academic and professional development of grad students, particularly those pursuing a master’s degree. Nominations will be accepted from grad students, graduate alumni, or other members of the Graduate Faculty. Self-nominations will not be considered. [View nomination packet requirements.](#)

Outstanding GTA

This award recognizes the best, brightest, and most industrious of our graduate students who serve in a Graduate Teaching Assistantship role for their work supporting faculty members in the classroom. Nominations will be accepted from the supervising faculty member. [View nomination packet requirements.](#)

Graduate Student Teaching Excellence

This award recognizes a graduate student who has served as an Instructor of Record for outstanding teaching and effective instruction. Nominations will be accepted from a faculty member in the nominee’s academic discipline. [View nomination packet requirements.](#)

PERFECT GIFTS FOR GRAD STUDENTS: SHOW YOUR LOVE

Struggling to find the ideal Valentine’s, Galentine’s, or birthday gift for a grad student? We’ve got you covered! Check out our curated list of practical and thoughtful gifts, from productivity tools to relaxation must-haves. Whether you’re shopping for a significant other, a friend, or sharing the list with family, you’ll find something perfect to brighten any grad student’s day.

louisiana.edu/graduateschool/blog



Grad Education in the News

[“Frustrated With Your Dissertation Chair? Three Fundamental Strategies to Help Strengthen the Relationship.”](#)
Inside Higher Education, 30 January 2024.

[“A New Career Model to Support International Ph.D.s and Postdocs.”](#)
Inside Higher Education, 22 January 2024.

[“How to Respond \(Politely\) to a Negative Peer Review.”](#)
Chronicle of Higher Education, 15 January 2025.

[“The Doctoral Dilemma.”](#)
Inside Higher Education, 3 February 2025.





Looking Ahead to March

Learn more at louisiana.edu/graduateschool

3/6 - Manuscript Workshop for Faculty Chairs

3/12 - Manuscript Workshop for Graduate Students

3/13 - University Women's Leadership Conference

3/14 - Research Showcase in the Student Union

3/25 - Money Matters: Tax Planning Strategies

Thank you!

3MT® Finals Judges:

Monique Blanco Boulet

Mayor-President

CEO of the City-Parish Government

Mandi Mitchell

President and CEO of LEDA

(Lafayette Economic Development Authority)

Samual Oliver

Executive Director

Acadiana Center of the Arts

Dr. Mary Farmer-Kaiser

Dean of the Graduate School

Professor of History

Our 10 finalists in the 3MT® competition outdid themselves! These grad students dedicated themselves to explaining their research within the tight confines of a three-minute presentation and one static slide to a non-specialist audience—no easy task. They made it look easy, but their efforts made selecting a winner a challenge for the judges. Join us in congratulating our top three presenters! In addition to monetary prizes, our 3MT® 1st place winner, **Atif Khan (Civil Engineering MSE program)**, will represent UL Lafayette at the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools Regional 3MT Competition in Dallas, TX on March 19-21, 2025.



Atif Khan
Department of Civil Engineering

Green Construction Materials from Sugar cane By-products



\$600



Rebecca Henry
Department of Psychology

Gender Differences in Anorexia Treatment



\$450



Hope Okunbor
Department of Biology

Enhancing Crops with Novel Genes



\$300

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD





Writing Tips & Tools

from Jamie Benner, Ph. D.



Academic writers are an incredibly diverse group, but there is one topic on which they are united. They agree that the writing process is, even on its best days, a difficult beast. Still, they persist. This section of our newsletter is designed to help you do the same—to cultivate your writing and your writing life.

As Academic & Manuscript Support Coordinator, I am a new addition to the Graduate School. I aim to make opaque academic and manuscript processes more accessible through resources and programming. To do so, I must acknowledge that countless materials already exist on these topics, many available through our own University. A few campus resources include Dupré Library, The Writing Lab, and The Statistical Support Center, each of which offers individual consultations.

Today, however, I'll start with a controversial suggestion. Put down the books. Put away the resources. They are usually helpful and often necessary, but if you want to cultivate your writing and your writing life right now, you must first and foremost write.

Sometimes, preparation is required. Other times, preparation is procrastination. Mark Twain said, "If you have to eat a live frog, do it first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you for the rest of the day." The takeaway? Stop procrastinating. Do the hardest, most unpleasant thing first.

You might need to free write—i.e., record your thoughts as they occur to you—before completing specific writing tasks. Free writing offers a space to clear your mind by venting your thoughts and anxieties, but afterwards, you must put these anxieties away.

It seems silly to say that the only way to write is to write, and yet, some of the most talented writers I know will never be published because they put too much pressure on their work. In doing so, they paralyze their writing lives. These people are unable to write what Anne Lamott calls "shitty first drafts." These, she explains, are drafts that will never see the light of day, drafts we must write to reach the material that will eventually see publication.

The writers we remember are those who prioritize the most difficult tasks, the ones who eat frogs and write shitty first drafts. For some, this means writing every day. For others, it means writing seasonally. All successful writers, though, treat writing as a job. They carve out space on their schedules and defend that space as needed.

Inspiration is wonderful, but it won't complete a project for you. You have to do to that yourself. And yes, writing is difficult, but the more you do it, the easier it gets. The tricky faucet starts to loosen, and water flows again. Once you have a draft, you might need to return to materials like Lamott's *Bird by Bird*: [Some Instructions on Writing and Life](#) or Jan Allen's [The Productive Graduate Student Writer](#), but first, you must allow yourself to write.

GSO Funding Deadlines Spring 2025



Friday, January 31, 2025

Friday, March 14, 2025

Friday, April 4, 2025

GSO provides funding to graduate students to help defray the cost of attending conferences and purchasing research supplies. GSO also provides one-time grants for purchasing thesis, dissertation, or project supplies.



ANNUAL CAFFERY AWARD COMPETITION

[Submit Your Research!](#)

Graduate students are invited to submit research papers that use primary source materials from the following collections: University Archives, Louisiana Room, Rare Book Collection, Cajun and Creole Music Collection, and U.S. Government Information.

Submit by Friday, Feb. 28, 2025

Prize: \$500 award.

Winner announced in May 2025.

**Competition hosted by the
Edith Garland Dupré Library and
the University's Library Committee.**



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University of Louisiana
at Lafayette Graduate School

Important Dates and Deadlines

2/7 - DEADLINE: Graduate Foreign Language Exams



2/15 - DEADLINE: Doctoral Annual Progress Reports Due

2/28 - DEADLINE: Apply for Spring/Summer Graduation

2/25 - Spring 2025 Grad Expo at the Alumni Center:
10 AM - 7 PM

3/3 - 3/5 - HOLIDAY: Mardi Gras



Key Resources for Grad Students

Campus Cupboard supplies free, nonperishable items to meet students' temporary food needs. Location: 210 E. St. Mary Blvd

Career Closet provides students with free, gently used professional clothing items for interviews, career fairs, and other professional networking events. Location: 210 E. St. Mary Blvd

Career Services provides services to students in career planning, development, and job-seeking strategies. Location: Agnes Edwards Hall, Room 104

The Counseling and Testing Center offers free counseling, crisis intervention, and short-term psychotherapy for individuals, couples, and groups. Location: Saucier Wellness Center, OK Allen Hall

The Office of Disability Services establishes eligibility and facilitates services and accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Location: Agnes Edwards Hall, Room 126

Graduate Student Organization and **Student Government Association** advocate for all graduate students and offer funding to help offset the cost of research and travel. Locations: gso.louisiana.edu and sga.louisiana.edu

The Writing Lab (formerly The Writing Center) offers a writing community for students and faculty with a comfortable space where writers work with other writers. Visit to discuss writing, receive feedback and help, and take advantage of tutoring services. Location: Dupré Library First Floor

Get Outside get Involved

Cajun Jam/Farmers Market
Every Saturday @ Moncus Park

Second Saturday ArtWalk
Feb. 8 @ 5 PM Downtown Lafayette

Carencro Mardi Gras Parade
Feb. 15 @ 11 AM

Krewe de Canailles Walking Parade
Feb. 21 @ 7 PM Downtown

Krewe of Carnivale en Rio Parade
Feb. 22 @ 6:30 PM Downtown

Courir de Mardi Gras (Traditional)
Feb. 23 @ 10 AM Vermilionville

Downtown Alive!
Feb. 28 @ Parc Sans Souci