

GRAD IN FOCUS

NOVEMBER 2025



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

**Graduate
School**

Message from the Dean

MARY FARMER-KAISER, PH.D.

"It's a beautiful day to take care of yourself."

Those words—from one of our brilliant Ph.D. students, Ash Tippet, in one of the blogs highlighted in this month's newsletter—stopped me in my tracks. We don't always do a great job of that, do we? I know I don't. The words are simple, and they're especially important this month. November can be relentless: deadlines, projects, grading, conferences, job applications, and everything else that refuses to pause. Yet this month also calls on us to reflect on mental health awareness and on what it means to be (and, I'll add, to support) a first-generation graduate student.

I was (and still am) a first-gen student. I know what it means to navigate systems without a map, and to keep pushing even when you're not sure what comes next. And I also know the power of persistence and community. Being first-gen is about more than being first; it's about building better pathways to and through graduate school.

Grad school can be both empowering and isolating, however you arrive. The most-recent research tells us that more than 50% of graduate students experience anxiety, depression, or burnout at some point in their studies (Senthikumar, et al., 2023; Chi et al., 2023; Allen et al., 2022). Many of us juggle complex lives with competing responsibilities—work, family, and community alongside classes, research, and writing—while still showing up for others. That's why it's so important to reach out for support and to embrace the community around us. Doing so is how you show up for yourself.

And as Mariah Hopkins reminds us in her smart first-gen reflection (also highlighted in the pages ahead), no question is dumb, silly, or arbitrary. Asking questions, seeking clarity, accepting guidance, and making connections are how we learn and grow. (Her blog also reminded me how powerful faculty words and actions can be.)

So, take a breath today—maybe this very beautiful day with its crisp fall weather—to care for yourself, and perhaps also remind someone else to do the same.

Dr. MFK



"It's a beautiful
day to take care
of yourself."

ASH TIPPET

Ph.D. Student in English
and GTA member of the Graduate
School's rock-star manuscript success
team that supports advanced grad
student writers





Upcoming Events

Mondays - Wake Up and Write!

Every Monday morning when the University is open, grad students and faculty write, read, and think from 8:30-10:30 a.m. The Grad School provides coffee, breakfast treats, support from our editors, and quiet. You provide the focus and progress. Parking is easy. No registration is required. **We've relocated for the rest of the semester! Join us in Stephens Hall, room 109.**

11/6- Manuscript Workshop for Students

Join us online from 4 to 5 p.m. 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 for the Zoom link.](#)

11/7 - Writing Retreat hosted by The Writing Collaborative

Join the Writing Retreat from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and make meaningful progress on your writing goals. Whether you're working on final papers, research projects, or faculty writing initiatives, you'll find dedicated spaces for quiet focus or collaboration. [Reserve your spot!](#)

11/12 & 11/13 - 3MT® Preliminary Competition

Join the Grad School and our 3MT® competitors for the first round of competition on Tuesday 11/12 from 11-12 p.m. in F.G. Mouton 216. and Thursday 11/13 from 2-3 p.m. in F.G. Mouton 215. Cheer on the contestants and learn more about both research communication and the exciting research happening on campus! No registration required.

11/14 - Career Readiness - A2i+ Career Insights: Soft Skills for a Full Charge: Powering Your Career After Grad School

Join on Zoom from 1-2 p.m. for an A2i session from NC State about leveraging essential skills for career success. A recent Ph.D. will talk on the importance of communication, collaboration, and leadership in today's workforce. [Register now.](#)



11/19 - Money Matters: Investments

Join us for lunch and a Money Matters conversation with Dr. Brian Bolton focused on investing in your future. Lunch will be served at **11:30 am in F.G. Mouton, room 216.** The conversation will begin at noon. [Registration is required.](#)

11/20 - Inn-eaux-vate Fall 2025 Pitch Competition

Come cheer on the finalists as they pitch their innovative business ideas to alumni judges! The event runs from 3 to 5:30 p.m. at the Opportunity Machine—a great chance for graduate students to network and get inspired by UL Lafayette's brightest minds. No registration required.

11/21 - Career Readiness - A2i+ Career Insights: Navigating One's Career Path in Industry and Continued Development

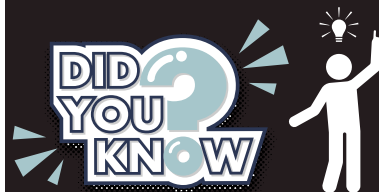
Join the Zoom from 1-2 p.m. to get an inside look at how to navigate and thrive in a dynamic corporate environment. Learn from a data scientist's perspective about building transferable skills, leveraging professional development opportunities, and setting yourself up for success in any industry. [Register now.](#)



Mental Health Week-History

College Mental Health Week emerged when campuses began recognizing the growing **mental health challenges among students.** Following the rise of the **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** campus programs in the 1980s, universities across the country began dedicating a week each fall to **mental health education, awareness, and self-care.**

UL Lafayette continues that tradition by encouraging **open conversations, community connection, and proactive well-being** among students, faculty, and staff.



In 1910, Princeton University became the first college in the U.S. to **hire a full-time psychiatrist to support student mental health**—marking a pioneering step toward campus wellness programs that are now common nationwide.

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK.

— NOVEMBER 10-14, 2025 —



Blogs by Graduate Students for Graduate Students

Recognizing Mental Health Challenges By Ash Helms-Tippit

One of our Grad School Manuscript Support GTAs shares her journey with anxiety, **highlighting how recognizing mental health challenges can reshape the ways we cope and connect.**

👉 [Read the full BLOG!](#)

Finding Resources On and Off Campus

We've gone deeper to compile more info about key resources **addressing food insecurity, health and wellness, mental health, substance abuse, financial assistance, and domestic violence** on campus and in the Lafayette community.

👉 [Read the full BLOG!](#)

Looking Ahead to December

Learn more and register at
louisiana.edu/graduateschool

12/8-12/12 - Taking on Finals Week

12/19 - Celebrating Our Graduates at Commencement

12/20-1/14 - Enjoying a Well-Deserved Break!



Monday, Nov. 10

I Scream, You Scream, We All Scream for Ice Cream

🕒 5-7 p.m. | 📍 Boucher Street

Cool off with ice cream, therapy dogs from Pet Partners of Acadiana, and campus and community organizations sharing mental health resources.

Tuesday, Nov. 11

Brain Break Bingo

🕒 6-7:30 p.m. | 📍 Atchafalaya Ballroom B

Take a study break and join the Student Activities Board for bingo, prizes, and plenty of laughs designed to help you unwind and recharge.

Wednesday, Nov. 12 — Mental Health Day

🕒 Take a breather! At the instructor's discretion, some classes may wrap up after 1 p.m. Check with your professors to see if your classes will meet.

Hold Onto Hope | 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. | 📍 The Quad

A moving display of backpacks from NAMI on Campus, each symbolizing a student lost to suicide. Donations and memorial sponsorships welcome.

Mindful Moments: Massages for Mental Wellness | 2-4 p.m. | 📍 Louisiane Room - Enjoy a free massage and learn techniques for stress relief and mindfulness.

Cajuns Supporting Cajuns | 3:30-5 p.m. | 📍 Teche Room

A safe, supportive space to share stories and connect, with counselors available for guidance.

The Wellness Workshop | 6-8 p.m. | 📍 Magnolia & Pelican Rooms

Hands-on activities and group discussions led by Oceans Healthcare's Robyn to foster connection and wellness.

Thursday, Nov. 13

How to Manage Stress, Rejection & the Haters in Your Midst

🕒 2-3 p.m. | 📍 NCFDD Zoom: [Register now](#).

For Grad Students & Faculty: The academic journey is full of pressures that can leave you feeling overwhelmed, discouraged, and even physically unwell. While stress and rejection are unavoidable in the Academy, how you respond can make all the difference in your health, productivity, and fulfillment.

Bounce Back: Jump Into Mental Wellness

🕒 6-9 p.m. | 📍 Bourgeois Rec Fields

De-stress and boost your mood with fun jumps, games, and community connection — because mental health can be fun, too!

Friday, Nov. 14

Breakaway from Negative Self-Talk

🕒 11 a.m.-2 p.m. | 📍 Union Porch

Hosted by Kappa Alpha Psi, come and let go of self-criticism and embrace self-compassion. Catered event — come feed your body and your spirit.

Writing Tips & Tools

with Jamie Benner, Ph.D.



Get Back on Track with NCFDD's "Weekly Meeting"

If you read our newsletter regularly, you've probably heard of NCFDD, a professional development organization for graduate students and faculty. UL Lafayette is an Institutional Member, and we highly recommend their resources.

NCFDD offers a dissertation curriculum, writing challenges, productivity webinars, and a weekly Monday Motivator. At the heart of the Monday Motivator is the idea that building your semester around a strategic plan with weekly check-ins sets you up for success.

But by November, many of us find that our plans from August have shifted. We are deep in grading, research, or writing, but few of us are making the progress we anticipated.

NCFDD's "Weekly Meeting" can provide clarity. It's an opportunity at the beginning of each week to consider your goals in the current moment.

Step 1: Create Your Skeleton (5 minutes)

List your professional commitments for the week—meetings, classes, deadlines, anything immovable.

Step 2: Brain Dump (10 minutes)

Jot down the tasks on your mind. Get everything onto paper so you can organize what's competing for your attention.

Step 3: Introduce Tasks to Your Calendar (10 minutes)

What absolutely must be done this week? Be realistic about your energy and time. Assign priority tasks blocks on your calendar, estimating how long they will take from experience rather than ideals.

Step 4: Decide What to Do with Everything That Doesn't Fit (5 minutes)

Not every task deserves a place in your plan. You can delegate, defer, or delete tasks. You can also keep a "later" list to revisit next week.

Step 5: Commit to Executing the Plan

Protect the time you've blocked out for your priorities.



This week, hold your own weekly meeting. Try using a timer to avoid getting bogged down or overwhelmed on each step. Once you've developed a plan, remember that Step 5 is the hardest, but protecting dedicated time for focused work will allow you to make true progress.



✨ First Generation College Day



November 8 is National First-Generation College Celebration Day, recognizing students, faculty, and staff who are the first in their families to pursue higher education. At the UL Lafayette Graduate School, we recognize that being “first gen” goes beyond the undergraduate experience and want to honor those who are the first in their families to pursue a graduate degree—trailblazers who continue to break barriers, redefine possibility, and inspire others to follow.

Being first-gen in graduate school often means navigating complex systems, balancing responsibilities, and learning without a family roadmap. Yet, it also means demonstrating resilience, leadership, and the power of education to transform lives—not only your own, but those who come after you.

As someone who's walked this path, I can tell you that your voice and perspective matter deeply—trust your journey and the impact you're already making. - Dr. Christopher Giroir

Find or build yourself a tribe. Connecting with people who share the experience will provide you with the emotional support you need to keep going. - Dr. Tiffany Brigola

As a first-generation graduate student, your achievements go beyond personal success. You inspire younger family members to seek graduate education and opportunities. - Dr. Mehmet Tozal

You are not just earning a degree; you are shaping the future with your insight, resilience, and leadership, and your courage and commitment inspire those who will follow. - Dr. Tarrah Davis

As a first-generation student and first-generation graduate student myself, my top three pieces of advice—ask questions, be persistent, and develop support network. - Dr. Jeanne Cartier

The perseverance required in being a first-generation student is your secret weapon: use that resilience to keep pushing forward and to fuel your future. - Dr. John McNally

Asking the “Dumb” Questions: Advice from a First-Generation College Student

by Mariah Hopkins, Ph.D. student in English



Blogs by Graduate Students for Graduate Students

For first-generation students, college can feel like learning a new language—filled with acronyms, deadlines, and expectations that aren't always clear. In her heartfelt blog, Ph.D. student Mariah Hopkins shares how one professor's reassurance—“there's no such thing as a dumb question”—transformed the way she approached learning and built her confidence to ask, explore, and grow.

[Read Mariah's full blog!](#)



Grad Education in the News

“7 Tips to Fine-Tune Your Work Habits in Grad School.” Chronicle of Higher Education, 17 October 2025.

“8 Tips for Balancing Grad School and Full-Time Work.” Inside Higher Ed, 2 June 2021

“As an immigrant scientist in the U.S., travel bans and visa uncertainty are taking a toll.” Science, 16 October 2025.

“I didn't think I needed mentorship training—but it reshaped my approach.” Science, 2 October 2025.

“Future-Proofing Talent in an AI-Powered World: A Sharp Competitive Advantage.” Business-Higher Education Forum, 23 September 2025



Your stories inspire us, so don't hold back.

Hey awesome grad students! From new knowledge and creative projects to exciting opportunities, we want to hear your good news. Tell Us Something Good!

Share the good, and let's celebrate together!

Use <https://bit.ly/ULGradGoodNews> to tell us something good!



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University of Louisiana
at Lafayette Graduate School

Get Outside get Involved

Downtown Alive!

November 7 @ Downtown Lafayette

Festival of Words

Nov. 7 & 8 @ Grand Coteau

Southern Screen Festival

Nov.13-16 @ Acadiana Center for Arts

Yoga in the Park

November 19 @ Moncus Park

Language Cafe

November 20 @ Moncus Park

Christmas at Couret Holiday Market

November 29 @ Couret Farms

Noel Acadien au Village

All December @ Acadian Village

Important Dates and Deadlines

12/1: Last Day to Submit Final Copies of Theses or Dissertations

12/1: Last Day to Complete Graduate Written and/or Oral Comprehensive Exams

12/5: Last Day of Classes

12/8-12: Final Exams

12/19: Commencement Ceremonies



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

Uwill Student Mental Health & Wellness offers free immediate access to teletherapy. Help is available 24/7/365. Scan the QR code to get started using your UL email.



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 Shopper Shuttle runs on Friday afternoons on the hour from 2-7pm from campus to Walmart. Location: Catch the shuttle at the Union or Cajun Village

The Writing Lab 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