

GRAD IN FOCUS

FEBRUARY 2026



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

**Graduate
School**



Message from the Dean

MARY FARMER-KAISER, PH.D.

As I've begun this new year, I admit to feeling that life seems to be asking a lot of us.

And grad students, I know you especially are navigating a great deal right now. You are carrying concern about the world, your families and communities, what comes next, alongside the everyday demands of classes, research, writing, teaching, and work. None of these worries or responsibilities have disappeared just because the semester is underway.

In moments like this, and even as we carry worry, distraction, responsibility, and pain, it can feel complicated to celebrate, to feel joy, to make progress, or even to pause.

But life is not linear. Life demands that we hold it all and that we keep showing up. Moments of grief, anxiety, and uncertainty often arrive alongside moments of joy, hard work, momentum, and hope.

And there is so much that deserves our attention and care—friendships and community, faith and reflection, progress and milestones, pride in work completed and work that is still becoming. Living fully means navigating it all, doing so without guilt for the joy, without dismissal of the loss, and with intention toward both success and well being along the way.

"Hope is the thing with feathers—" is a poem by Emily Dickinson that I have long loved. Written in 1861 during a period of personal creativity and deep national division, the poem gives power to hope without suggesting that hope erases pain. Hope persists even amidst the storms.

In the pages ahead, you'll find reasons to celebrate, encouragement to pause, and opportunities to connect. We highlight 3MT® and GRASS successes, call for recognition of outstanding teaching and mentorship, honor cultural and spiritual traditions, and invite you to build your skills and connect with others and resources to support your continued growth.

May the month ahead remind us all that even in complex times, there is still hope and joy to be found, community to lean on, and good work unfolding around us—and by us—every single day.

Dr. MFK

Hope is the thing
with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune
without the words -
And never stops - at all -

EMILY DICKINSON

*Hope is the thing
with feathers—
(Poem 254)*



Upcoming Events in February

Mondays - Wake Up and Write!

Every Monday morning the University is open, grad students and faculty write, read, and think together from 8:30-10:30 AM. Beginning 2/9, we'll be back in the Alumni Center Board Room where parking is a bit easier. The Grad School provides the coffee, breakfast treats, and quiet. You provide the focus and progress. No registration is required.

2/6 - A2i+ Career Insights & Career Readiness: Understanding Compensation & Navigating Your First Offer Negotiation

Compensation plays a key role in any job offer. Learn how to assess your value and navigate salary conversations with confidence, with real insights from a Job Search and Negotiation Coach. This A2i+ community Zoom session is at 1-2 PM. [Register for the link.](#)

2/9 - Money Matters Lunch & Learn: Budgets, Debt, & Tax Planning

Join us for lunch for a Monday Money Matters conversation with Dr. Brian Bolton, interim Dean of the B.I. Moody III College of Business Administration. Lunch will be served at 12:30 PM; the conversation will begin at 12:45 PM. [Advance registration is required.](#)

2/11 - Safeguarding Our Research: Understanding Research Security & Export Controls

Join the Research Division for a live webinar covering what research security means, how data sharing and collaborations can create risks, and practical steps to protect yourself and your research from 2-3 PM virtually. [Register for the link.](#)

2/12 - Skill #2: How to Align Your Time with Your Priorities

In this NCFDD webinar from 1-2 PM you'll learn the secret to making a plan work day-to-day and week-to-week! [Activate your institutional membership and register for the link.](#)

2/16-3/1 - 14-Day Writing Challenge (register by Friday 2/6)

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 2/6 here.](#)

2/20 - A2i+ Career Insights & Career Readiness: The Offer Letter is Signed - Now What?

Now it's time to make your money work for you. This workshop will give you practical tools to confidently manage your first paycheck wisely and build habits that support long-term financial growth and stability. This A2i+ community Zoom is at 1-2 PM. [Register for the link.](#)

2/24 - Manuscript Workshop for Graduate Students

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

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

No excuses! Is Wake Up and Write too early for you? GSO has a great alternative! Join them for [Stay Up and Write](#) from 7 to 9 PM in the Student Union Pelican room AB. Food and space are provided. Just bring your focus, and those writing goals will be in reach!

2/26 - Lunch & Learn: Overcoming Writer's Block

Join the Grad School for a lunch and learn on "Overcoming Writer's Block" with Dr. Nichole Stanford, Director of the Writing Lab, from 11:30-12:30 PM in Griffin Hall Room 315. Whether you're working on a paper, a thesis, or dissertation, this session will provide fresh approaches for breaking through writing barriers. [Advance registration is required.](#)

Most Loved

GRAD PROGRAM

Grad students, faculty, staff, and alumni, brace yourself for the grad 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!

2025: Computer Science
2024: English
2023: Biology
2022: Psychology
2021: Communication
2020: MBA
2019: Communication
2018: Counseling
2017: Counseling

Call for Nominations: Graduate Teaching & Mentor Awards

Deadline: February 27

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 are accepted from grad students, grad alumni, and/or all members of the Graduate Faculty. Self-nominations are not 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 are accepted from supervising faculty members. Self-nominations are not considered. [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 are accepted from faculty members in the nominee's academic discipline. Self-nominations are not considered. [View nomination packet requirements.](#)

Mardi Gras



Mardi Gras is one of the most cherished traditions in south Louisiana—rooted in community, celebration, and shared culture. For generations, students at UL Lafayette have taken part in this tradition. This great photo from the University archives shows students in the 1970s dressed in their finest Mardi Gras court attire.

For many of our graduate students, Mardi Gras is a new experience. Whether you're learning the traditions for the first time or celebrating like a local, this is your chance to take part in a true south Louisiana tradition.

Celebrate and learn local traditions with our GRAD Mardi Gras BINGO card!

How it works:

- Download the BINGO card
- Complete activities through Mardi Gras
- Turn in your BINGO card to the Grad School on Wednesday 2/18
- BINGO cards with 2 completed lines will be entered in a drawing to win a yummy prize!

🎉 One winner gets a **King Cake**!

[Download the GRAD Mardi Gras BINGO card](#)

[View the Parade Schedule](#)



LEARN MARDI GRAS. LIVE MARDI GRAS. WIN KING CAKE.



Grad Education in the News

"Why People Are Freaking Out About Graduate Loan Caps?
Graduate Students will soon face strict caps on federal loans."

Chronicle of Higher Education, 5 January 2026.

"Seizing the Lessons From 'Carpe Careers': Adaptability is key."

Inside Higher Education, 12 January 2026.



*Three minutes.
One slide.
Big impact.*

Our graduate students wowed community judges in December during the finals of our campus 3MT® competition. Along with seven other graduate students who advanced to this final round of competition, they presented complex research clearly and creatively to a non-specialist audience--and they did it with only one static slide and in only three minutes!

Asif Istiak and Mahek Pathak went on to represent UL Lafayette in Louisiana's first statewide 3MT® competition. Held on January 8, 2026 as part of the inaugural LA-NEXT Symposium, the competition showcased their professionalism, clarity, and storytelling skills.

Asif will again represent UL Lafayette again when he competes later this month in the regional 3MT® competition on February 19 at the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools annual meeting. Want the full 3MT® story? [Check it out here!](#)



Asif Istiak

Systems Engineering PhD Program
College of Engineering
Nano Medicine for Cureless Disease



Mahek Chirag Pathak

English PhD Program
College of Liberal Arts
A Fairy Tale Experiment



Hope Okunbor

Biology PhD Program
Ray P. Authement College of Sciences
The Hidden Key to Food Security

Looking Ahead to March

Learn more at louisiana.edu/graduateschool

3/3 - Afternoon Analytics with the Statistical Consulting Center

3/4 - Business, Arts, Liberal Arts, & General Career Fair

3/5 - Money Matters: Entrepreneurship & Side Hustles

3/10 - Overcoming Writer's Block (Virtual Session)

3/9 & 3/17 - Manuscript Workshop for Faculty Chairs

3/12 - Manuscript Workshop for Graduate Students

3/17 - Graduate Research Brown Bag @ Dupre Library

3/22-3/28 Grad School Appreciation Week

3/25 - Money Matters: Investing in Your Future

3/31 - Afternoon Analytics with the Statistical Consulting Center (Virtual Session)

You can never have too much
GRASS

Not that kind of grass! Join us in congratulating our LA-NEXT graduate student supplement (GRASS) recipients.

The Louisiana Networks of Excellence for Tomorrow (LA-NEXT), one of the state's newest [NSF EPSCoR projects](#), is transforming our state's R&D ecosystem through coordination, facilitation, and capacity building in strategic areas—and one of its key initiatives will fund some of our grad researchers in a big way in 2026. In the first-ever GRASS funding competition, UL Lafayette grad students and their faculty PIs represented us well. We submitted 17 of the 39 proposals received! Twenty-one proposals were funded this year, and the recipients included 8 projects from UL Lafayette—more than any other institution in the state. #ULGradLife competes!

- Gabriel Dimonde (SYSE PhD) - Dr. Boyang Zhang (MCHE)
- Kenneth Gordon (SYSE PhD) - Dr. Ling Fei (CHEE)
- Godwin Edor (EES PhD) - Dr. Hui Yan (CHEM)
- M Matsive Ali (SYSE PhD) - Dr. Sen Liu (MCHE)

- Sina Javanmardi (BIOL PhD) - Dr. Kelly Robinson (BIOL)
- Mohammad Farhad (CMPS PhD) - Dr. Shuvalaxmi Dass (CMIX)
- Afeez Jimoh (EES PhD) - Dr. Erez Aghion (PHYS)
- Md Mustakin Alam (CMPS PhD) - Dr. Aminul Islam (CMIX)



Supporting our grad community during Ramadan

Learn what Ramadan is, why it matters to those who observe, and how small acts of understanding can make a big difference. [Read the blog](#) written by one of our graduate students, Educational Leadership Ed.D. student Sania Sanjida, as a guide for grad students and faculty.



Writing Tips & Tools

with Jamie Benner, Ph.D.



The Writing Collaborative

The act of developing a productive writing routine can be the most persistent challenge of one's academic career. From the Graduate School's weekly Wake Up & Write session and manuscript support team to the Writing Lab's one-on-one revision support, the UL Lafayette community has created many resources to facilitate this process. Among them is the Writing Collaborative.

The Writing Collaborative is a project dedicated to supporting students and faculty with research and writing endeavors. The initiative, funded by a Louisiana Board of Regents Support Fund Departmental Enhancement grant, offers a library of writing resources, a collaborative space for reservation, and technology for onsite use. Smart TVs and MacBooks are available. The space, located in Girard Hall 108F, can be reserved in its entirety for events like dissertation defenses or by table for group projects and individual study. Further details can be found on the Writing Collaborative [official booking form](#).

We strongly encourage faculty and students to take advantage of this space and the resources it contains. As the Writing Collaborative grows, so will its offerings. In addition to the physical space, the group has already hosted its first of three writing retreats scheduled for the Spring 2026 semester. Additional retreats will take place in March and April, and registration details will be available in our newsletters for those months. Be on the lookout for these events and more as partnerships and programming progress.

Making use of the Writing Collaborative and other on-campus opportunities can make all the difference in cultivating your writing repertoire.

SGA Funding Applications

Test Registration Reimbursement Vouchers

SGA offers limited vouchers (up to \$200) to help students cover the cost of graduate school entrance or professional certification exams. Funding is limited and students may apply once per semester. [See the application form for details.](#)

Conference Funding

SGA offers limited funding (up to \$200 per student) to support conference registration for individuals and registered campus organizations. Requests must be submitted at least four weeks in advance, and all recipients must meet SGA requirements. [See the application form for full guidelines and limits.](#)



Student Government
Association

GSO Rep Vacancies

- Accounting
- Chemistry
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Physics



Vote for the new GSO T-Shirt Design!

Help choose the next Graduate Student Organization t-shirt by [casting your vote](#) in the design competition. Voting is open now through Thursday, February 5 at midnight, and the winning design will be announced the following week.



GSO Funding Deadlines Spring 2026

Friday, January 30, 2026

Friday, March 20, 2026

Friday, April 17, 2026

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.



Graduate Student
Organization



@ULLafayetteGraduateSchool

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@ULGradSchool



University of Louisiana
at Lafayette Graduate School



Get Outside get Involved

Cajun Jam/Farmers Market
Every Saturday @ Moncus Park

Krewe de Canailles Walking Parade
Feb. 6 @ 7 PM Downtown

Krewe of Carnivale en Rio Parade
Feb. 7 @ 6:30 PM Downtown

Courir de Mardi Gras (Traditional)
Feb. 8 @ 10 AM Vermilionville

Downtown Alive!
Feb. 13 @ 6 PM Downtown Lafayette

Krewe of Bonaparte Parade
Feb. 14 @ 6:30 PM Downtown

Mardi Gras Day Parades
Feb. 17 @ Downtown-Cajun Field

Important Dates and Deadlines

2/6 - DEADLINE: Graduate Foreign Language Exams

2/15 - DEADLINE: Annual Doctoral Progress
Reports Due

2/16 - 2/18 - HOLIDAY: Mardi Gras   

2/24 - Spring 2026 Grad Expo at the Alumni Center:
10 AM - 5 PM

2/27 - DEADLINE: Apply for Spring/Summer Graduation



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 and even 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 Statistical Consulting Center offers consulting to grad students for any research involving statistical methods. Location: 204F Maxim Doucet Hall

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