December 1 brings the end of the semester, along with a list of professional and personal quarterly tasks. I change the display on my computers—always a winter snow scene, even while I’m staring at the flowers outside as I type. Professional organizational tasks, personal finances, and household jobs get at least a perfunctory acknowledgement, even if some (particularly the last) get marked as not needing attention until March 1. This December 1, however, brought tasks that couldn’t be delayed as I and others across the nation read, talked, and wrote to our representatives about both the House and the Senate Tax Bills as voting deadlines loomed.

You can read President Alexander’s powerful statement about the effect of balancing tax reform “on the backs of students and the universities educating them.” As you think through these issues for yourself, you can also read analyses, learn how to contact your representatives if you don’t know already, and think about information from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and other groups at the Graduate School’s web page. And, lastly, you can check out what your own professional organization has to say. The Modern Language Association, for example, which represents my fields, offers resources and thoughtful discussion of how legislative issues affect higher education.

Some of you have written thanking us for publicizing these resources, a few have asked, with angry disappointment, “But what are you doing?”, “you” here referring to me individually, but also to all faculty and administrators, and to the collective “you” that is LSU. We are doing a lot. We cannot speak for the university; we can speak as private citizens. We cannot and should not presume to tell you what to think, any more than we can or should in a classroom, but we can refer you to research so that you can draw your own conclusions, whether on net neutrality (forthcoming Federal Communications Commission hearings), DACA, or the impact of tax revisions upon graduate students. We can join you in being a part of the decision-making process that is democracy. And we can work together to build a future whose foundation is no one’s back.

As a member of CGS’s Advocacy Ambassador Network, I had the pleasure of attending a workshop Thursday morning with Arizona legislators’ district staff members. I learned a lot, as always. (Best take-aways: be brief, be clear about whom you represent (or don’t), and be specific about what you’re asking for.) But what was most evident was how much they wanted to hear from you, how much we are the holders of what Alan Wilson calls “knowledge power,” power that must be used responsibly for “shaping the future,” the theme of this meeting.

Elsewhere in the Newsletter you can see how our students are already shaping the future, whether in talking about the weather, Parkinson’s, polymers, or soil moisture. In the 2018 Summer Institute on the Future of Doctoral Studies, we’ll again come together to talk about how to shape that future. Join us now also by participating in the roundtable on balance in graduate student life on December 11, and by continuing to be the extraordinary, globally-outreaching, scholars you are.

With all best wishes for the semester’s end,

Michelle A. Massé
Important Dates

December
• 11th - Professional/Personal Balance in Coursework: Graduate Student Roundtable, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
• 15th - Fall Commencement

January
• 3rd - International Student Orientation
• 10th - Classes begin, 7:30 a.m.

For more important dates and deadlines, please view the Graduate Calendar for Spring 2018.

Fall Commencement - December 15, 2017

All degrees — Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral— are awarded at Senior College Diploma Ceremonies. Louisiana State University does not conduct a Main Ceremony in December. Read more about when and where Commencement ceremonies will take place.
The Graduate School hosts preliminary round of Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) Competition

On Wednesday, November 29, twenty-five graduate students from across LSU took part in the preliminary round of the Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition. Students representing more than 15 departments took on the challenge of presenting their scholarly research in just three minutes or less, with one accompanying slide. Preliminary judges, Dr. Chris Barrett, Dr. Johanna Broussard, and Dr. Billy Saas provided each participant with valuable feedback, and also had the difficult task of narrowing down the talented participants to the top nine finalists.

The Graduate School congratulates the finalists, who will present at the final round of the 3MT® Competition in January:

Kobi Weaver, Geography and Anthropology – The Sunken Sediment of Site 74: Using Chemical Analysis to Reconstruct Activity Patterns for Maya Salt Manufacturing in Paynes Creek, Belize

Katie Stanko, Psychology – Successful Aging in Oldest-Old Adults: Role of Physical and Social Factors

Sogand Karbalaieali, Civil and Environmental Engineering – Connected Automated Vehicle Technology: Opportunities and Challenges

Austin Thompson, Communication Sciences and Disorders – Parkinson’s Disease: An Investigation of Speech Movement

John Patin, French Studies – In the Blood: Repressing Reproduction in the French Convent from Sanguinity to Sexuality

Zheng Jia, Mechanical Engineering – Fabrication of Polymer Based Dual-Nanopore Device for DNA Sequencing

Ashley Allen, Geography and Anthropology – Talking about the Weather: Tornadoes, Memory, and Identity

Elizabeth Hillard, Medical Physics – Verification and Evaluation of a Passive Intensity Modulation Device for Bolus Electron Conformal Therapy

Yaping Xu, Geography and Anthropology – Determine Soil Moisture through Satellite and Geoinformation Data to Predict Floods in Louisiana
Gabriela Vitela

Gabriela Vitela is a doctoral student at LSU’s Department of Political Science. Her research focuses on Latinas and other women of color as elites, campaign donors, and elected officials.

“As a first-generation American and a child of Mexican immigrants, Gabriela brings to her research a unique perspective of simultaneously belonging to two worlds at once,” said Cory Sukala, a graduate student who nominated Vitela. “Focusing primarily on the effects of identity in relation to elections, her research works to transcend traditional gender-oriented approaches, seeking to demonstrate that the experience of a woman of color running for office differs fundamentally not only from that of a man seeking office but also from that of non-minority women as well.”

Learn more about Vitela’s research, her involvement with the graduate student community, and more.

Professor Donald Chance

Professor Donald Chance is a Professor of Finance at LSU’s E. J. Ourso College of Business. His research focuses on complex financial products, investment strategies, financial risk management, corporate governance, and executive compensation.

In addition to working as a professor, Professor Chance is a member of the Graduate Council and other arenas of the MBA program. He also assists the LSU benefits staff to provide employees with information on cutting costs of retirement investments.

Read more about Professor Chance’s experience at LSU and more.
Graduate students attend “Preparing for the Job Market”

The LSU Graduate School recently hosted “Preparing for the Job Market,” a professional development workshop designed to aid students who are preparing for entry into the job market. Dozens of master’s and doctoral students gathered to hear Dr. Lu Lu and Dr. Nicholas Mitchell provide tips and strategies on navigating application processes.

Dr. Lu Lu received a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry and Macromolecular Science in 2015 from LSU’s Department of Chemistry. Dr. Lu chose to explore career paths in industry rather than academia, an option many graduate students consider. She first worked as a postdoctoral researcher in Mechanical Engineering, and she currently serves as Chief Chemist for Louisiana Multi-Functional-Material Group, LLC.

“Be good at what you do– regardless of what career path you decide to take,” she said. Dr. Lu also discussed organizations that aid students who aspire to start a business. PitchBR is amongst those, which awards $1,000 for entrepreneurs to develop an idea or concept. The event is a collaboration of business leaders, creatives, and entrepreneurs who strive to make entrepreneurship accessible to everyone.

Dr. Nicholas Mitchell, also an LSU graduate, received a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction in 2016. He is currently in his second year as an Assistant Professor and Race and Racism Fellow at the Jesuit Social Research Institute at Loyola University, New Orleans. Dr. Mitchell discussed his experience in seeking faculty positions, a process which begins in August of each year, he said. “From your curriculum vitae (CV) to the actual interview, employers are looking to get a measure of your intellect.”

Dr. Lu and Dr. Mitchell provided key tips for students who are entering the job market.

• All application packages should be tailored to the job.
• Specify what skills separate you from other candidates.
• Collaborate with an advisor or faculty member who can view application materials.
• Attend or present at conferences to develop communication and research skills.
• Collaborate with faculty and students on research projects.
• Have knowledge of the institutions or businesses that you are applying to.
• Accept opportunities to serve as a guest lecturer.
• Find an appropriate work-life balance and set boundaries during the application process.
• Seek information on trends in your field and have a plan if positions are limited or unavailable.

Learn more about available resources.
TEDxLSU announces speaker lineup for 2018 event

Vivien Chua traverses mountains and rivers to hear elusive bird songs

Clay Tucker, graduate student in the Department of Geography and Anthropology, discusses his research in dendroclimatology

Dominique Houston, student at LSU’s Flores MBA Program, lands internship with Seattle Seahawks

The LSU College of Education’s Curriculum Camp calls for proposals

Whether it’s about an interesting research project or your day-to-day experience at LSU, we would love to share your story! We invite you to nominate members of the graduate student community—students, faculty, and staff—for our spotlight. Click here for more information and nomination instructions.