Dean’s Column

Our new year is steaming in from 2017, as you can see from this issue’s article about our award-winning “All Aboard!” holiday display, with cars on our train celebrating December Solstice, Christmas, Diwali, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. The Twelve Days of Christmas, as well as Kwanzaa, extend into 2018, and so too does the inclusive goal of our train, which carries a freight of education’s freedom and peace as we travel into the new calendar year.

There’s a lot of valuable cargo in this month’s car, so please come on board, and bring friends. I’d like to call particular attention to three upcoming events.

Throughout fall, we had preliminary meetings of what we’ve called “Grad Gen 1,” which have brought together students from across the campus to talk about the issues that can affect students who are the first in their families to enroll in graduate studies. I’d like to call particular attention to three upcoming events.

Our next major event, the Three Minute Thesis, is a dazzling, engaging display of scholarship that exemplifies the best of what graduate research means. Zora Neale Hurston, folklorist and novelist, says: “Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.” Come and satisfy your own curiosity, and learn about cutting-edge work in topics ranging from eighteenth-century French studies through the monitoring of soil moisture. Come for pleasure, come to support friends, come to plan on your candidacy next year – but come! (Tuesday, 1/23, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Digital Media Arts Theater).

One of my favorite sayings, which I first heard from Sara Weddington, litigator extraordinaire, when she spoke on this campus many moons ago, was an exegesis based upon the airline exhortation to “Give yourself oxygen before you try to help anyone else.” This next event, the Associate Professors’ Network, draws in part upon that philosophy. In order to give oxygen to our first-generation graduate students, our 3MT researcher/scholars, and many others, our graduate faculty need oxygen themselves. We want a graduate faculty that is as inclusive and as wide-ranging as our students. The Associate Professors’ Network will meet to talk about strategies for negotiating what we might appropriately call the journeyman’s stage of graduate faculty life (with assistant professor being the apprentice’s stage, and full professor the master’s). Full professors still thinking about that stage and its juggling of demands, as well as associate professors pondering the next stop are warmly welcome to David Boyd 123 (Monday, 1/29, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.).

With best wishes for an eventful month and an eventful year,
Important Dates

January

• 19th - First Gen and Friends, 3:30 p.m. at 225 Peabody Hall
• 19th - Final date for dropping courses without receiving a grade of “W,” 4:30 p.m. deadline
• 22nd - Final date for Degree Only** approval and registration, 4:30 p.m. deadline. All degree requirements must be met, including final exam reports, document submission to the Graduate School, and the completion of all follow-up editing requested by the document editor. Note: Document must be approved and registration completed
• 22nd - Final date for adding courses for credit and making section changes, 4:30 p.m. deadline
• 23rd - Three Minute Thesis Competition at the LSU Digital Media Center Auditorium, 6:00 p.m.
• 23rd - Final date for submitting to The Graduate School the Application for Degree for spring commencement, 4:30 p.m. deadline
• 23rd - Final date for submitting to the Graduate School Request for Final Defense (comprehensive exam, thesis/dissertation defense) for degrees to be awarded at spring commencement, 4:30 p.m., deadline. Note: All final defense requests must be submitted 3 weeks prior to the date of the defense, but no later than January 23
• 29th - Associate Professors’ Network Meeting, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. at 123 David Boyd

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

FIRST GEN AND FRIENDS

JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-GENERATION GRADUATE STUDENTS AT LSU. REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2018
225 PEABODY HALL
3:30 P.M.
The LSU Graduate School will host the 2017-18 Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) Finals Competition, a research competition that challenges master’s and doctoral students to present a compelling oration on their thesis topic and its significance in just three minutes. This exciting competition increases scholars’ capacity to effectively explain research in a language appropriate to a non-specialist audience. While an 80,000-word thesis would take nine hours to present, their time limit is three minutes with the use of one accompanying slide.

Nine finalists from various LSU units will compete for 1st Place to receive a $1,000 research travel award and a trip to compete in the Southern Regional Competition in February 2018. The 2nd Place winner will receive a $750 research travel award.

Faculty, staff, students, and Baton Rouge community members are encouraged to come out to learn about the outstanding scholarship being conducted on campus and to show support for the presenters. Audience members will also select a recipient for “People’s Choice,” a prize that grants a $500 research travel award.

The competition will take place on Tuesday, January 23, 2018 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. at the LSU Digital Media Arts Theater. Refreshments will be served for you to enjoy prior to the presentations. Click here to RSVP!
In the Spotlight

Onyinye Ihedoro

Onyinye Ihedoro recently received a master’s degree in Computer Science, and will complete a Master of Science in Analytics in May 2018. She is primarily interested in data science and programming, and has gained much experience and knowledge from both degree programs.

In addition to pursuing master’s degrees simultaneously, Ihedoro is a graduate school Senator for LSU’s Student Government Association, a member of Omicron Delta Kappa National Honor Society, and a graduate assistant for the LSU Graduate School.

“I am passionate about STEM awareness, especially in underrepresented groups. For the longest time, I was the only African female in my department, and this shows that there needs to be more awareness about the possibilities of a long term fulfilling career in any STEM field.”

Read more about Ihedoro’s experience as a student, an advocate for both graduate students and STEM career paths, and more.

Graduate student presents at Florida Atlantic University’s Hurricane Irma Conference

The 2017 hurricane season, described as one of the most destructive and hyperactive seasons, impacted millions of lives across the globe. This is one reason why graduate students here at LSU are conducting research to aid urban planners and transportation engineers in protecting Louisiana as a coastal state. Aubry Kyle, a doctoral student at LSU’s Department of Geography & Anthropology, recently presented at “Lessons from Hurricane Irma for Increasing Resilience: From Practice to Revising Plans and Policy.”

Kyle joined other panelists to present on evacuation, sharing her knowledge about the process of creating and maintaining a City-Assisted Evacuation Program in New Orleans.

“I shared some of the best practices we are trying to adopt, and some of the set-backs and growing pains that we’ve had along the way as the first city to undertake such a program and incorporate a government/NGO partnership in the mix,” she said.

Kyle noted how the the Florida Keys region and the Hawaii islands are looking at instituting City-Assisted Evacuation programs. As a result, she was invited to speak on the same topic for a resiliency panel in Key West, Florida, and the upcoming Pacific Risk Management ‘Ohana (PRiMO) conference.
Meet “Grad Gen 1” Students

Sabrina Cervantez completed a master’s degree at LSU and is currently a second-year doctoral student in the History department. Although her family has been incredibly supportive of her career choices throughout her undergraduate and graduate years, she expressed how she might have benefited from Grad Gen 1 at the start of graduate school.

“I was excited to attend LSU, but it took some time to adjust to living so far from my family,” she said. “Similarly, I needed to learn how to manage the workload of graduate school. It was not an easy adjustment phase, but I persevered.”

Cervantez, like other graduate students, considers graduate school a demanding yet inspiring experience. She mentioned how graduate students in particular deal with the challenges and pressures of contributing new research to the academic, scientific, and medical fields. Through Grad Gen 1, she plans to seek encouragement by hearing how other graduate students have thrived while facing their challenges.

“As first-generation graduate students, we are setting a precedent in our families for higher education and graduate school programs,” said Cervantez. “I believe it is important for us to have a support network with fellow graduate students who understand the demands of graduate school. Grad Gen 1 will be a great way for graduate students to share personal experiences as the first members of their families to attend graduate school.”

Brooke Duncan, a native of Louisville, Kentucky, is a first-year master’s student in the Higher Education Administration program. Before attending LSU for graduate school, Duncan completed two years of service with City Year— an AmeriCorps organization that seeks to improve educational outcomes for students. The program provided a full scholarship toward her graduate studies.

So far as a first-generation graduate student, Duncan has learned a lot about herself, specifically by gaining an understanding of her strengths as an individual.

Being that most graduate students are often surrounded by students in their program of study, Duncan appreciates how the group brings together students from different departments who may have similar backgrounds. She believes that Gran Gen 1 gives a sense of community, and the campus is desperately in need of similar groups.

“The main thing I hope to gain from this group are ways to help students in the future,” she said. “I hope to pursue an educational career, and being a part of this group allows me to better understand the stories, backgrounds, and perspectives of students.”
Austin Dixon is a first-year master’s student in the Higher Education Administration program. During his graduate school search, he read about how LSU’s Higher Education Administration program graduates five times the national average of African-American male doctoral students. He also learned about the Summit on African-American Male Educational Success, a biannual summit led by Dr. Roland Mitchell. Having developed interest in the program based on those factors, he also realized how men of color who were graduates of LSU’s Higher Education program continuously make significant impacts on college campuses.

“At that point, I knew that LSU would be a challenging and supportive environment that would prepare me to become a successful leader and higher education professional,” he said.

Coming from a small, rural town in the coastal region of North Carolina, Dixon’s experience as a first-generation graduate student has been full of learning, adaptation, and adjustment. He hopes that participating in Grad Gen 1 will provide insight into the experiences and perspectives of individuals who can identify.

“It seems that often you cross the first hurdle of attending and graduating from a four-year institution, you have it all down pack, but in reality it is almost as if we are starting from square one all over again,” he said. “It gives a lot of confidence and sense of place to interact with someone who has crossed the finish line and can share their bits of wisdom.”

LSU Graduate School awarded 2nd place for Holiday Decorating Contest

“Grad Gen 1” Logo Contest

Utilize your design skills and creativity!

“Grad Gen 1,” the newly formed group for first-generation graduate students needs a logo, and we want YOU to design it!

Send all submissions to gradcom@lsu.edu by January 31, 2018.

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.