Dean’s Column

In Louisiana, it’s easy to forget that it’s fall. We live in a climate that lets us believe, like the busy bees of John Keats’s “Ode to Autumn,” that “warm days will never cease.”

Colder breezes start to blow around mid-semester, however. Some are brisk, energizing us as we get ready to turn towards the semester’s second half in mid-month. Some are chilling. The natural disasters that have affected Houston, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, the human disasters of Las Vegas and too many other places, and individual disasters in our lives can leave us feeling cold and isolated as we wonder about the winnowing that spares some, leaving us to mourn others. (I will spare you the quotation marks that indicate which words are Keats’s, though.) For graduate students, learning a new balancing act of the personal and professional, these winds can be particularly piercing.

One way to warm ourselves is to come together. The rejuvenated Hispanic Student Cultural Society is talking about ways we can help those in Mexico and Puerto Rico. And our governor, John Bel Edwards, has organized a donation drive for Puerto Rico about which you can learn more here.

As we work to take care of others, we also need to take care of ourselves, as you wisely noted in responding to my inquiry last month about workshops for this fall. The strongest response was for another workshop on psychological well-being. Because of this month’s events and visits from a number of you, we’re going to focus this version of the workshop on “grief.” For some of you, “grief” means something immediate and visceral—the loss of a loved one, for example. For others, grief may be the more distanced anxiety of what’s happening elsewhere or to those not personally known to you. And for some, grief can be past losses or anticipated future losses, mournings for lost selves and possibilities rather than tangible leave-takings. Whatever your own may be, please come to comfort and take comfort at our “Psychological Well-Being” workshop on Tuesday, October 24, at 2:30 in Himes 129.

Please also join us at another nexus of community, the newly formed “Grad Gen 1” group that will be meeting throughout this year. As a first-generation college and graduate school person myself, I’m looking forward to coordinating the group, which will meet for the first time on Thursday, October 12, at 3:00 p.m. in David Boyd 123. Let’s come together to avoid isolation, seek support and advice, and assure that the semester ends, not with the invocations of Keats’s “On Melancholy,” but with strengthened resolve, commitment, and success as scholars and as teachers. Bring your strategies for success as well as your ideas for future meetings.

Cordially,

Graduate Dean, Michelle Massé
Important Dates

October
• 6th - Thesis and Dissertation Workshop, 1:30 p.m. at 102 Allen Hall
• 12th - Grad Gen 1, 3:00 p.m. at 123 David Boyd Hall
• 19th - Fall holiday begins
• 22nd - Course scheduling for spring semester, spring intersession, and summer term begins, 5:00 p.m.
• 23rd - Classes resume, 7:30 a.m.
• 24th - Psychological Well-Being Workshop, 2:30 p.m. at 129 Himes Hall
• 27th - Thesis and Dissertation Workshop, 1:30 p.m. at 102 Allen Hall

November
• 1st - Dissertation title deadline: Any changes to dissertation titles turned in after this date will NOT be reflected in the commencement guide at graduation
• 3rd - Final date for dropping courses, 4:30 p.m., deadline
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Abah Omale

Abah Omale is a second-year doctoral student at the Department of Geology and Geophysics. His work primarily explores the interaction between tectonics and sedimentation, specifically studying areas in the Gulf of Mexico. The Nigeria native aspires to be an exploration geologists and to teach geology at the higher education level.

Omale recently received a grant from the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies, which will fund research on fault reactivations to indicate changes in the strength of the lithosphere.

Visit our website to read more about what brought Omale to LSU, his extensive involvement with the graduate student community, and more.

Professor Shannon Walsh

Professor Shannon Walsh is a professor at LSU’s School of Theatre. Her research interests include topics in women’s and gender studies, critical race theory, performance studies, and physical fitness. Professor Walsh recently served as co-head of the PhD program at the School of Theatre, and will soon become director of the new resident’s college.

Last fall, she helped initiate the Baton Rouge Theatre Coalition, which is a group of teachers and art leaders who are invested in thinking strategically about how to ensure continued growth of theatre for social change in all communities. “We share the same talent— actors and designers— so it is important to communicate to ensure we are taking the best care of them by creating spaces of acceptance and inclusivity,” she says.

Read more about Professor Walsh’s current book projects and her involvement at LSU and in the community.
Elahe Russell

Elahe Russell is the director of Financial Accounting & Reporting for LSU’s Office of Accounting Services. Russell oversees financial statements for LSU and related entities, investment and cash management, debt issuance, student billing and receivables, and more. Although she was recently appointed to serve in this role, Russell is no stranger to the LSU community, expressing that the university has always been a significant part of her life. She recalls playing on the Indian mounds as a child, along with her experience as an undergraduate student. Having joined Accounting Services more than 18 years ago, she has been hands-on through multiple facets of student needs.

“Higher education is a constantly evolving, energetic arena with a sole aim of supporting the academic goals of our students and future community leaders,” she says. “There is no greater feeling than having a hand in the future of our city, state, and country.”

Learn more about Russell's involvement with the graduate student community, her role in Accounting Services, and what she enjoys most in being a part of LSU.

Ligo Gravitational Wave Detection Wins Nobel Prize

READ MORE
Coastal Connections at LSU cultivates science communicators

Louisiana Sea Grant (LSG) held its annual Coastal Connections Competition at Louisiana State University on Friday, September 22 at the Dalton J. Woods Auditorium. The competition is adapted from the Three Minute Thesis (3MT™) competition approach to research communication, developing academic and presentation skills while supporting the development of students’ capacities to effectively explain their research. Coastal Connections appeals to the general public, encouraging students to modify their discussion and remove jargon to present to a group of non-specialists.

Twelve graduate students who conduct coastal research were selected as finalists, representing Biological Sciences, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Entomology, Geography and Anthropology, and Oceanography and Coastal Sciences. Each student had three minutes to present a compelling oration on their research topic and its significance with the use of two slides.

Congratulations to the finalists, who each received a research travel award of $500.

- Julie Butler, Department of Biological Sciences - A Little Fish in a Big, Noisy World
- Hollis Jones, Department of Biological Sciences - Effect of Temperature and Salinity on Crassostrea virginica Feeding Physiology and Oxygen Consumption
- Yaping Xu, Department of Geography and Anthropology - Determine Soil Moisture through Satellite and Geoinformation Data to Predict Flood in Louisiana

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.