The School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies (SIGS) along with the Multicultural Association of Graduate Students (M.A.G.S.) kicked off the start of the school year with the 4th Annual Diverse New Student, Faculty and Staff Meet and Greet. New diverse students and faculty/staff at the University of Louisville were given the opportunity to connect and share experiences and resources along with receiving an official welcome to the campus.
Dear Advocate Reader,

The University of Louisville’s School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies (SIGS) is committed to diversity and inclusion. Our goal is to cultivate an enriching graduate experience for all students through education and inclusive excellence. This mission reflects the institution’s shared message of “You Belong”. Therefore, SIGS strives to ensure that students of all backgrounds, identities and perspectives feel welcomed, supported, and respected.

To that end, The Advocate newsletter will serve to inform, engage, and inspire all students, but places continued emphasis on the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups. By remaining strategic and intentional about increasing diversity beyond the numbers, The Advocate will,

1) streamline graduate diversity efforts of students, staff, and faculty at the University of Louisville through research, academic programming and outreach
2) share internal and external community opportunities that promote diversity and inclusion in meaningful ways
3) centralize graduate diversity efforts to help foster a collaborative culture

We hope that all of our readers will be inspired to join the work and to remain steadfast in helping to spur change in the area of diversity with one student, one staff, and one faculty member at a time.

Latonia Craig, Ed.D.
Director
Graduate Recruitment and Diversity Retention
School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies
5 Ways to Connect During Graduate School

From Dr. Michelle Rodems, Associate Director for Graduate Student Professional Development

Regardless of all the variability that exists in how graduate students move through their programs, you will at some point encounter new people – other students, faculty, staff, administrators, and other folks in your discipline. Even for the most extroverted among us, graduate school can leave us feeling a little more vulnerable and a little more cautious in connecting with others. Below we’ve compiled just a few suggestions for how to make this process a bit easier for you.
1. TRY SOMETHING NEW.

Ok, ok. So you’re already trying something new. That’s commendable. But try something ELSE new, WITH someone ELSE new. There are so many fun or interesting or challenging hobbies, adventures, or even new professional opportunities you could take advantage of during your time in graduate school. You’ll make memories, reduce the feeling of risk, and either have a great new thing to balance out your life, or fail well together and feel better about all your OTHER successes.

2. ASK QUESTIONS

This is one of the best networking suggestions I was ever given. And while it’s easy to default to the “How about this weather?” kind of question, it can be just as easy to default to some better questions that actually lead to conversation – and not the awkward kind. The key is to ask open-ended questions that allow others to talk about themselves (most people feel comfortable with this topic), and then listen, and follow up with other questions. A couple of examples:

- “How has the program been going for you?” … “What’s been the best/hardest thing so far?”

- “What were your interests before graduate school?” … “Have you found any ways to keep doing some of those things?”

- “How have you been getting settled?” (Or, “How long did it take you to get settled?”) … “Any suggestions for the best places to visit in town?”
When I worked with undergraduate students, we often talked about how students arrive at college for the first time and look around and see all the other students looking like they know exactly what’s going on and what they should be doing, when really, no one has any idea what they’re really doing. This “game face” we wear, to try to convince others we DO know what’s going on, may or may not convince others, but it doesn’t change the vulnerability we usually feel. The same is true in graduate school. It’s a tough road, but it’s common and overwhelmingly normal to feel like you have no idea what you’re doing (see “Imposter Syndrome”, above). In actuality, every other student feels that way at some point. Even faculty, staff, and administrators go through it. Sometimes, taking the mask down and sharing with a colleague can open a whole dialogue of support.

3. ACKNOWLEDGE "IMPOSTER SYNDROME"

Imposter syndrome is that feeling that you don’t really belong here. The feeling that someone let you in on accident not knowing the faults and failings you’ve been hiding; the feeling that you sneaked past all the guards. It’s a real feeling, and particularly prevalent in a culture that values critical appraisal, but it’s important to fight against this feeling. You were accepted into your graduate program for a reason – because the faculty in your department believe you will be successful. This is when all those clichés become important mantras: fake it till you make it; if it were easy; everyone would do it; others have come through this and so will you. YOU CAN DO IT.

4. DON’T BELIEVE THE "GAME FACE"

When I worked with undergraduate students, we often talked about how students arrive at college for the first time and look around and see all the other students looking like they know exactly what’s going on and what they should be doing, when really, no one has any idea what they’re really doing.

This “game face” we wear, to try to convince others we DO know what’s going on, may or may not convince others, but it doesn’t change the vulnerability we usually feel. The same is true in graduate school. It’s a tough road, but it’s common and overwhelmingly normal to feel like you have no idea what you’re doing (see “Imposter Syndrome”, above). In actuality, every other student feels that way at some point. Even faculty, staff, and administrators go through it. Sometimes, taking the mask down and sharing with a colleague can open a whole dialogue of support.
As you’re starting to get to know your colleagues, you’ll learn more about what resources they have to call upon to be resilient through this process. Some folks power through with music and caffeine, some laugh it up with puns or snark, some bake their way through, some throw fabulous gatherings, and some stay on point with exercise. Regardless of what those resources are, if you can pool them together, they become community supports that allow you and your group of peers to rely on each other and more readily come to each other’s aid. Moreover, those who have been through graduate school, may have access to or offer resources you never even knew you needed.

NEW FACULTY/STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Shabeer H. Amirali

**Title:** Director of Graduate Admissions and Enrollment Management

**About Shabeer:** Shabeer Amirali is the current Director of Graduate Admissions and Enrollment Management at the University of Louisville. Previously, he was the Director of Marketing, Recruitment, Student Success and Partnerships of the Graduate School at Bradley University where he received an MBA in Management and Leadership. He also holds an M.Res. (Research Degree in Science) from the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom that he received after completing his Bachelors of Science Degree in India. He has published articles, reports, and industry white papers. Shabeer is also involved in various community projects.

**Research interests:** Graduate student participation and engagement strategy; International student quality of life

**Favorite thing about UofL:** The diverse campus, diverse leadership and everyone’s passion to learn and to teach. The willingness to share experience and expertise is invaluable for UofL.

**Favorite quote:** “The only way to do great work, is to love what you do.” – Steve Jobs
Brian Buford, executive director of The LGBT Center, says these accolades are well-deserved, but the university’s work is not finished.

“There is still a lot to do to remove barriers for LGBTQ students and make sure they have all the resources they need. But I do think that honors like these tell us we are heading in the right direction and that the hard work and investment has made a difference,” Buford said. “Especially in a southern state, being recognized for LGBTQ inclusion is a big deal and also during a time when we are seeing protections rolled back at the national level.”

Buford said the university’s widespread dedication to inclusiveness and recently implemented initiatives contributed to this year’s awards. For example, the Human Resources Department implemented changes that allow employees to change their gender-marker, the Housing and Residence Life staff opened a new residence that caters to LGBTQ students, the Speed School of Engineering created “trans-friendly” restrooms and the university is adding new courses to the LGBT Studies minor each year.

“All these advances really add up to create a welcoming space,” Buford said.

UoFL recognized as top LGBT-friendly university by three national groups

By CAITLIN BROOKS

The University of Louisville recently hit the trifecta, receiving three national top rankings for its support of the LGBTQ community. The rankings include:

• “Best of the Best” Top 30 LGBTQ-friendly college ranking by Campus Pride Index. UofL has been one of the organization’s top schools for the last four years, earning five out of five stars on the index.

• A number one ranking from LGBTOutfitters on its top 10 list of best campuses for LGBTQ students.

• Ranked 24th by Affordable Colleges Online on its list of LGBTQ-friendly and affordable colleges in the U.S.

“These awards are a direct result of UofL’s commitment to building an inclusive and LGBTQ-friendly environment on campus and in our community,” said UofL President Neeli Bendapudi. “I am so proud of our efforts and look forward to seeing how we continue to grow in the future.”
In addition, Dr. Scott has taught a range of courses in writing and rhetoric focused on hip hop writing and African American rhetorical traditions. Her research lies at the intersections of cultural rhetorics, namely African American rhetoric, historiography, and digital humanities. Specifically, her work is centered on HBCU communities and the rhetorical affordances of institutional narratives for revisionist presentations of HBCU histories. Her current project challenges top-down presentations of HBCU narratives by exploring revisionist approaches to the institutional narrative genre through student newspaper publications.

While at the University of Louisville, Dr. Scott's most memorable moments were working with students within the Porter Scholars and African American Male Initiative in a First-Year Composition course centered on Hip-Hop Writing and Culture. Deciding to teach this course for the first time as a graduate student while completing comprehensive exams was ambitious, but together she and her students had a vibrant semester. At the end of the first semester, more than half of the class enrolled in the second sequence of the writing course. This experience was not only encouraging for many students who remarked that the course challenged them and refreshingly allowed them to see a professor who looked like them during their first year at U of L.

To current graduate students, she encourages them to find research and connections that moves them to inspire communities and affect change, no matter how large or small. The resulting passion will fuel their journey through graduate school and sustain their work and vision beyond completing their respective programs.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW:
KHIRSTEN SCOTT

Dr. Khirsten L. Scott is an alumna of the University of Louisville and Assistant Professor of English with a specialty in African-American rhetoric and public writing at the University of Pittsburgh. She is also co-founder of DBLAC, Digital Black Lit and Composition, a network for the support and uplifting of Black graduate students in fields related to the study of language.

Dr. Scott is a native of Memphis, TN and holds degrees in English, Literature and Language from Tougaloo College (BA), Composition, Rhetoric, and English Studies from the University of Alabama (MA), and English, Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Louisville (PhD). She actively contributed to the Routledge Reader of African American Rhetoric and has co-authored publications around the rhetoric of blackness in digital spaces and multimodality.
FALL EVENTS

Aug. 23 | Graduate Diversity Welcome Day
       25 | Family Meet-n-Greet

Sept. 22 | Monthly Writing Group Begins
         26 | General Body Meeting I
         27 | General Body Meeting II
         28 | MAGS Social

Oct. 17 | Monthly Writing Group

Nov. 16 | Thanksgiving Potluck

Shumaker, 5pm
Old Louisville, 12Noon

North Lime Coffee, 1pm
Cultural Center MPR, 12Noon
Chao Auditorium, 5:30pm
Vis-A-Vis, 5:30pm

VINT Coffee, 7pm
Houchens, TBA

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

• Article length should be approximately 500 words or fewer
• Include at least one picture (with a caption)
• Include (separately) information about the author (program, department, education, etc.)
• Please submit as either a Word (preferred) or PDF document
• Submit articles by November 5, 2018 to sigsdiv@louisville.edu for our November issue
• Please note that submission DOES NOT guarantee publication