On Wednesday, May 9th, SIGS celebrated its 4th Annual Celebration of Excellence in Graduate Diversity. Over 75 underrepresented graduate students who attained doctoral degree candidacy (i.e. completed all coursework but the dissertation), completed their Master’s degree, and who completed their Doctorate, were all celebrated for their academic achievements. The event attracted a crowd of over 160 participants that included, family, friends and mentors from the university community.
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
This is my favorite time of year: commencement season (which at the University of Louisville coincides with that other celebratory season—Derby!). Just as Derby season ends with a two-minute horse race on the first Saturday in May, our doctoral hooding ceremony is the culminating event of the academic year for graduating doctoral students. I love this event because I get to shake the hand of every Ph.D., Ed.D, D.Aud, and MFA student who receives a hood from a mentor, and while I’m not usually the huggy type, I sometimes have to hug those graduating students I’ve come to know through their participation in Graduate Student Council, MAGS, PLAN academies or workshops. Watching others hood their students with parental pride—and seeing the joy and relief on the faces of graduates—is one of the reasons I love my job.

And this year I will have the pleasure of hooding two students myself (one “my” student, a woman I’ve worked with for over four years, and another a student I’ve had in class whose mentor could not attend). I know I am likely to cry tears of joy as I drape them with the hood, which signifies their entry into the community of scholars. But just as I might prefer a day at the Oaks and some of the lead up events (such as the parade or fireworks spectacular) to the Derby itself, my favorite commencement event is our Diversity Celebration, which Dr. Craig established as a new tradition several years ago. I love encouraging a diverse group of masters graduates to keep learning, and I enjoy celebrating students’ completion of comprehensive exams (while reminding them that ABD—all but dissertation—is not a PhD). I am always moved—often to tears—by the narratives told by students who are completing their doctoral degrees, narratives detailing the struggles and successes they’ve encountered as underrepresented students in our doctoral programs. I am proud of my faculty colleagues chosen by these students to receive a pin acknowledging their supportive and inclusive mentorship. The Diversity Celebration makes me proud of our diverse graduate students and proud of the faculty and staff who have accompanied them on their academic journey and helped them cross the finish line. But while I am proud, I also realize that we have more work to do and that we need you to help us in the hard work of making our graduate programs as diverse as our community, our state, and our nation. I hope you will be inspired by the successes of the students honored at the Diversity Celebration and that you will keep learning, keep writing, and keep making us a better—because more diverse—university. Even if I never meet you (although I hope I do), please know that I consider you as someone who has contributed to the inclusive culture of the institution. You are the reason I love my job. While the end of the academic year sometimes feels like a frantic race to the finish, I hope you were able to celebrate this year’s academic achievements and that you will continue to inspire others through your success. The university, the city, the state needs you to succeed—and I’m betting on you.
MY INCLUSION INITIATIVE

by Andre Burrell

Serving as an Assistant Professor of Military Science (APMS) for an Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program has allowed me to pursue my aspirations of being a professor. My classroom consists of approximately 70 students, predominately first-year students born between 1998 and 1999 who have little to no memory of 9/11, cassette tapes and internet dial-up. With my students, I invite them into two worlds; that of a first-year student leaving home to embark upon their journey at a higher institution of learning and also the United States Army.

Frequently with this assignment, given my darkened hue as an African American male, I am often asked to provide insight into underrepresented groups and how I have added the atmosphere of inclusivity into my curriculum and made visual within my classroom. Within my first year in the classroom five specific principles have reigned true in how I approach inclusion; dive into diverse discussions, take interest in the students’ interest, give them leadership and legitimacy, relay and relay on resilience, and finally exhibit enthusiasm.

The first principle of diving into diverse discussions focuses on the instructor going beyond color, sexual orientation and even gender within the classroom. Providing sociohistorical context to discussions lead students to search not only themselves but others for the answers to our discussion. These discussions are enhanced tremendously by allowing students to conduct peer to peer teaching. Alongside diving into many diverse discussions, taking interest in the students’ interest is an invaluable reciprocity we as instructors should provide within the classroom. Taking interest in our students’ interest allows us to see what they as students want and do not want, enabling us to keep our curriculum fluid as we add and subtract information and methods that contribute to their academic success. Also, as instructors we must give them leadership within our classrooms and legitimize their perspective and potential. Often, I have appointed class and project leaders of all different backgrounds to empower individuals to express themselves from multiple viewpoints so that each individual understands their value within the classroom and in life. We must also relay and rely on resilience to pave the way for our students. Relying and relaying resilience reminds our students of their potential to succeed despite numerous setbacks. Finally, we as instructors should show enthusiasm and provide an enjoyable educational experience. My teaching philosophy is that affiliated humor and relevancy are the gateway to retention and persistence amongst students. There is always an element of fun in every subject that once revealed, provides the spark for student retrieval of knowledge and persistence in education.

In conclusion, these five principles of my inclusion initiative have been a beacon to establishing an engaging and effective classroom environment. Galvanizing students to work with one another and their professors to achieve individual and collective success is the most important thing we as professors must do and harness our capacities to do so will change not only our students and our classrooms, but our communities and universities as well.
5 Ways to Transition Well from Spring to Summer

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

Sometimes it can feel as if you’re barely completing one semester when the next is upon you, and suddenly you’re halfway through the next semester with no recollection of how you arrived! That’s particularly true here in Louisville in the spring with excitement around the Kentucky Derby. Below you’ll find a few tips for how you can effectively conclude your spring before rushing into summer:

1. **TAKE A BREATHER.**
Whew! You made it! Congratulations on making it through another semester! Have you celebrated? If you haven’t, you should. It’s important to mark this milestone with a moment of peace – whatever that looks like for you. Take a night off, watch some TV or read a book, spend time with family and friends, or even take a weekend trip. Reward yourself for working hard and then you will be refreshed to begin the next season with renewed energy!

2. REFLECT.

Once you’ve had a chance to decompress, take some time to reflect. How did last semester go? Were you productive? How was your attention to your health and wellness? Did you have some social time as well as focused work time? Take a couple hours to look back through your work (or calendar) and answer a few questions, both in terms of product and process: What worked well for you? What didn’t work so well? What changes could you make?

3. (BACKWARD) PLAN AND (RE) SCHEDULE YOUR TIME.

I don’t run a program called the PLAN for nothing – Planning really is important for being efficient and productive. Once you’ve had a chance to think about what worked and didn’t for you last semester, and what you’d like to accomplish this semester, now is the time for some concrete planning. Set your goals, then break them down into tasks. Block time on your calendar for your most important priorities, and then work backwards on your task list by goal. Once you’ve established these tasks and deadlines, you can create a weekly to do list and get started!
4. SPRING CLEAN.

While you’re getting organized, you might consider doing some spring cleaning. It’s a common goal this time of year, but can often seem overwhelming. One way to achieve this goal without all the pressure is to make it fun. Make spring cleaning a game! Set your top 3 priorities (junk drawer, papers, deep cleaning the bathroom) and give yourself a deadline (one a week for 3 weeks)! Don’t forget to reward yourself if you win!

5. GET OUT THERE.

The (seemingly) endless winter is over and people are out and about. Are you? Enjoy the moderate weather by getting social and/or getting to your favorite places. Activities abound this time of year, from art festivals to free concerts at the waterfront, eating out, getting some ice cream, or volunteering with your favorite organizations. Can’t handle a ton of people? Try enjoying a quiet spot in one of Louisville’s many local parks, head out to the public library, or plant some flowers or foods in a box to bring the outdoors in!

SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Alden Scholarship Fund**
  Eligibility - Resident of Kentucky; Attending a college or university in Kentucky (preference given to UK or UL); Cumulative 3.0 GPA; Studying Business Administration
  https://www.cflouisville.org/scholarships/

- **Financial Aid for Women of Color in Doctoral Programs**
  A variety of resources specifically for women of color who either plan to or are currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree

- **Graduate Student Financial Aid Guidebook**
  Expert advice for all grads returning to college including veterans, disabled students, women, LGBTQ & MBA seekers
Q: What are the big issues in your research area?
A: Cloning is always the rate limiting step in my research. Sometimes it takes six months and sometimes it works overnight. Coming to the big issues, although we have collaborators all over the world working on this type of Fungi, we are the only group working at the molecular level of this fungus. So, there are very few standard protocols that are well established particularly with respect to this fungus and its host plant. So, we have to pretty much standardize our own protocols and it takes quite a bit time.

Q: Describe your research in layman terms in 2-3 minutes.
A: My research is focused on characterizing the roles of small unique proteins from a fungal pathogen, Microbotryum Violaceum, species complex. It infects its host plant, Silene Latifolia, and causes the sex change in the female flowers, meaning infected female flowers start producing male reproductive parts, anthers filled with pollen. The ultimate goal of fungus is to replace pollen in the anthers of both male and female infected flowers with its own fungal spores that are subsequently transferred to new host plants by pollinators. There is a selective advantage for this fungus in causing this sex change in female flowers as it can now use both male and female flowers for its own disease transmission and survival. Because, during pollination when insects/bumble bees visit the infected male and female flowers, they will collect the fungal spores instead of pollen and transmit the disease to a healthy flower thereby causing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in plants. I am intrigued by this kind of unique host modification that is carried out by this fungus in order to propagate and trying to find out how

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:
SWATHI KUPIREDDY

Swathi Kupireddy is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Biology at University of Louisville. Ms. Kupireddy earned the Bachelor’s degree in Biotechnology from India and Masters from University of Louisville. She recently represented UofL in the Regional 3MT competition as a Finalist for the year 2018.

Q: What are you research interests?
A: My general research interests broadly focus on understanding host pathogen interactions and emerging diseases. To understand the mechanism at the molecular level, I study protein-protein interactions from the host and the pathogen that play a crucial role for the progression of the disease from the pathogen or the emergence of resistance from the host.
A: Practice! Practice! Practice! This is the only way to get you in to this kind of competition. You need to bring everything down to its spirit in three minutes and you can only do that when you practice it a number of times.

Q: What has been the most challenging and rewarding part about your journey as a graduate student thus far?
A: In the duration of a 5-year Ph.D. program, it is very important to stay calm and keep our spirits up as there will be ups and downs. Sometimes, when we get stuck with some experiment we try to figure it out by trouble shooting it for so many days. But the challenging part is to accept it that it doesn’t work this way and try to move on, which often times, students have hard time to do. I had spent more time in finding a way rather than to accept that there is no way. I have several rewarding moments in my journey - when you find a way to get that little experiment finally work, presenting your research to the broad audience and making an impact on the society no matter how big it is. Because at the end, it’s all about how we are contributing and giving back to the society is what matters the most to me.

Q: What was your experience in the 3MT competition like?
A: 3MT competition gave me the most challenging and at the same time the most rewarding experience. I get to stand in front of a crowd and able to convey my work from past four years of graduate career in 3 min. It is one of the most satisfied moment in my graduate career and makes you to take a step back and focus on the core of your research. I got the opportunity to meet wonderful people, Dr. Michelle Rodems and Dr. Latonia Craig during my 3MT journey whom I can’t thank enough for all their support. Watching and networking with the fellow competitors in the regional competition is an amazing experience and I enjoyed it thoroughly. It is incredible and being awarded the first prize in my first attempt was a kick start.

Q: What advice do you have for someone who is interested in participating in 3MT?
A: these kinds of pathogens do this sex change in their hosts so we would be ready if such an event occur in future to humans, although at this moment we are sure that this fungus does not infect humans, and is only limited to plants.
Lavender Graduation

Lavender Graduation was held April 19 for LGBTQ students and their allies who are graduating this semester. More than 20 graduate and undergraduate students participated, including three students completing medical school and one finishing a doctor of dental medicine (DMD). Students who attended the event received a rainbow cord to add to their graduation gown.

“Lavender Graduation ceremonies are important opportunities for LGBTQ students to celebrate their success with a supportive community. We know that sometimes students are negotiating the balance of having family in town for graduation who might not be supportive of all their identities, and so this is a chance to be honored as an LGBTQ person,” said Lisa Gunterman, director of the LGBT Center’s Belknap office.

Graduates were also welcomed by the university’s LGBT Alumni Network and encouraged to get involved as alumni in giving back to the campus. Silver Spoon Catering sponsored dinner for the event.

Pride at the Museum

The LGBT Center has just announced its signature event for 2018, Pride at the Museum, November 9 at the Speed Art Museum. The evening will feature food by Wiltshire Pantry and a variety of entertainment options from local artists, musicians, dancers, and others. All the proceeds from the event benefit the LGBT Center and its mission to create a welcoming, inclusive campus environment for students.

For more information visit www.prideatthemuseum.org.
INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE TO THE ADVOCATE?

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 September 9, 2018 to sigsdiv@louisville.edu for our September issue

• Please note that submission DOES NOT guarantee publication