On October 22, 2015, an interest meeting for the reboot of the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) was held. During the meeting, a variety of topics were discussed, including identifying what is important to graduate students, what GSO should aim to do as an organization, and where the organization should go from here.

First, we identified that graduate students have different expectations of an organization than undergraduate students. Of greatest importance is more recognition of graduate research which could lead to identifying more resources. There was also a consensus drawn that GSO should become a reliable network across all disciplines for graduate students.

As of right now, the GSO hopes to have at least one social event per month which should provide graduate students the opportunity to network and support each other. Suggested events include outings to Tides and Admirals games, general networking events, weekly dinners, BBQ’s, game nights, and brown bag events. Also professional development opportunities were suggested, including hosting workshops on grant writing, CVs, interviewing, and conferences. Tentatively, the events are scheduled for late January, February, and mid-April.

To get started, we have to identify officers for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Public Relations Chair along with 10 additional members. We also have to update the by-laws. If you are interested in getting involved, please send an e-mail to: officeofgradstudies@odu.edu.
Most people know Alice Jones as the Associate Director for Student and Alumni Programs in Career Development Services, however, Ms. Jones is also a recent ODU alum. She received her master’s degree in Lifespan & Digital Communication in May 2015. Ms. Jones is the subject of our Alumni Spotlight because of her career and academic achievements.

Ms. Jones’ path to success began when she earned her bachelor’s degree in Mathematics Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Though her career began as a school teacher, she had greater aspirations. She went back to school and earned her master’s degree in Higher Education from Miami University. While working on her master’s degree, she took advantage of all of the opportunities her schedule could handle, including residence hall director, academic advisor, and career development teacher. She also pursued internships and volunteered often. Once she earned her master’s degree she held positions in higher education at the College of New Rochelle and St. John’s University.

In 2003, she began her career at Old Dominion University. About four years ago, a new program caught her attention. When the Lifespan & Digital Communication master’s program was first established, Ms. Jones wanted to learn more about it in order to be able to better advise and assist students. The more she learned about the program, the more it got her attention, and she decided to enroll. Ms. Jones’ success is further demonstrated through the positive response to a paper she submitted based on her thesis. Her thesis is titled “Work across the Generations: Communication Narratives of Stay-At-Home Fathers.” Not only was she asked to go to Las Vegas to present her paper at a conference, the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender considered her thesis to be one of the most outstanding of the year for 2015 and Ms. Jones received an award.

Ms. Jones is married and has three daughters and one son. Ms. Jones attributes her success largely to finding her passion early on and allowing it to guide her. “If you have an opportunity, test the waters. See what makes sense.” She also says prioritization and time management are important. She recommends finding the right balance, keeping the lines of communication open, and explaining what you are doing. “Sometimes,” she says, “when I am working on a paper, I’ll bounce ideas off of my daughters. They always have a valuable perspective.” Keeping her family involved not only helps to keep her on track but it allows them to share in her accomplishments. Though Ms. Jones fits the definition of a non-traditional student, non-traditional students are what most graduate students are today.

What does Ms. Jones have planned for the future? She plans to continue working at ODU and possibly pursuing a Ph.D. in the future. One thing is certain, she’ll be pursuing her passion.