

Tulane University *Institutional Initiatives*

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Hurricane Katrina prompted Tulane University to make community engagement a cornerstone of its mission. The most noticeable effect of this change was the creation of the first public service graduation requirement in a high research activity institution, which furthered departmental efforts to create innovative community projects. In 2011, Tulane University united these efforts and further reinforced and supported the university's work in the community by creating the Tulane Empowers initiative.

Tulane Empowers is a marketing and fundraising campaign to showcase the collective public service efforts created at Tulane. Through providing resources to support innovative projects identified by individual departments, it further reinforces Tulane's mission shift toward community engagement, and sets a standard for the entire university to keep social innovation at the forefront of its work.

Tulane Empowers began by focusing on five priority areas where community need is greatest, and expertise and innovation have already been developed within the university: public education, public service, community health, disaster response, and urban revitalization. The Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives spearheads the campaign for engagement in public education, and most recently has worked to guarantee 10 Tulane scholarships for Knowledge is Power Program high school graduates.

The Center for Public Service implements the public service requirement for undergraduate students, but also supports Tulane Empowers initiatives from various departments, like the Tulane Accelerated Physician Training Program through the Medical School. Three students are currently piloting the program, taking a year of service with the Center for Public Service's Tulane Volunteers in Service to America program before returning to medical school in a 6+1 accelerated course of study. The Medical School's Office of Community Affairs and Health Policy also focuses on community health by providing better access to care through expansion of its Community Health Centers.

To further the area of disaster response, Tulane Empowers facilitated a \$5 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support the Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy.

This grant will be used to help African and Asian universities organize a network of programs in disaster resilience and leadership, empowering universities and leaders to reduce risk and increase preparedness in their countries.

In Tulane's local community, the School of Architecture's City Center has been working since spring 2010 to design and implement the Grow Dat Youth Farm, an urban farm operated by high school students. Grow Dat is directed by the recipient of Tulane's 2011-2012 Urban Innovation Fellowship, an opportunity that has facilitated further support by seven other Tulane departments. Tulane Empowers has also generated interdisciplinary opportunities through the establishment of five 2011 social entrepreneurship professors at Tulane. Beyond their teaching and research agendas, these professors are stewards for continuing initiatives in social innovation and civic engagement across various departments.

By uniting the multitude of community engagement projects being created at Tulane through the Tulane Empowers campaign, the university is stimulating more socially innovative ideas, attracting more resources to its projects, and further supporting the local, national, and international community.

For more information, contact

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