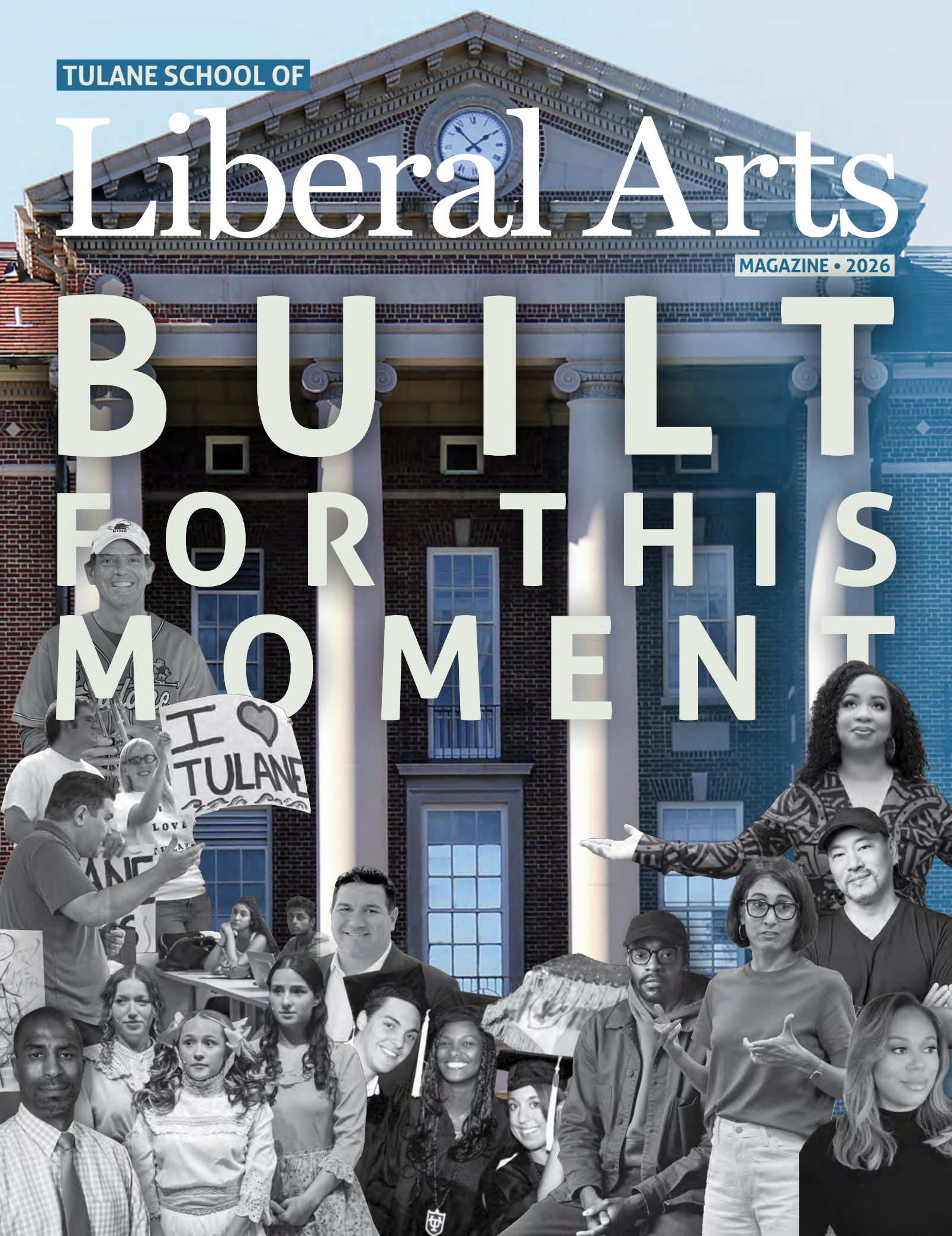
TULANE SCHOOL OF

# Liberal Arts

MAGAZINE • 2026

# BUILT FOR THIS MOMENT





2026 SLA Magazine

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**"... liberal arts are essential to navigating that complexity with curiosity, critical thinking, creativity, and judgment."**

# From the Editors

**THIS YEAR MARKS** 20 years since the School of Liberal Arts took its current form, following the reorganization of Tulane after Hurricane Katrina. Two decades later, we are living through another period of profound change, as artificial intelligence, global uncertainty, and shifting social and economic forces reshape how we work, communicate, create, and understand one another. SLA's 20th Anniversary theme, **Built for This Moment,** reflects our belief that the liberal arts are essential to navigating that complexity with curiosity, critical thinking, creativity, and judgment.

The pages ahead show how Tulane is putting that belief into practice. You will see a school investing in faculty and students, Newcomb Hall, new programs and centers. You'll learn about the SLA experiences that connect learning to New Orleans and the world, while building on the history that made those investments possible.

For 20 years, we have shared these stories through a variety of means: in print, via emailed newsletters, and, increasingly, through social media and digital channels. As communication continues to evolve, we are considering whether to move away from print and have this anniversary issue be our final physical magazine.

As we debate this in house, we want to hear from our readers! Do you read the magazine? Would you miss receiving it in print? How would you prefer to stay connected? Let us know by scanning the QR code below to share your thoughts. Your voice makes a difference!

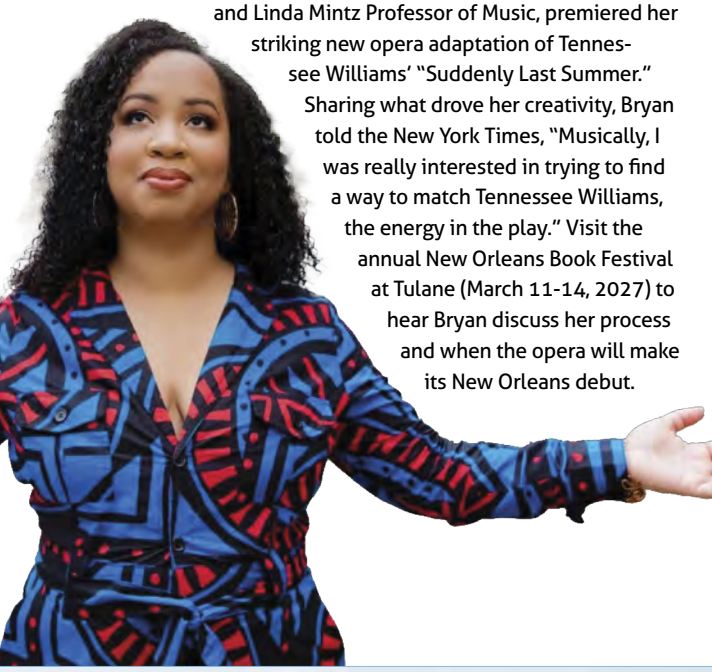
Thank you for reading the stories from the School of Liberal Arts and for being central to what comes next.

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# What's Next, Now

**The future doesn't arrive all at once. It appears in research projects, new programs, faculty recognition, student achievements, and initiatives shaping the Tulane University School of Liberal Arts right now.**

## Courtney Bryan Makes a Tennessee Williams Classic Sing



**COURTNEY BRYAN**, MacArthur Fellow, composer-in-residence at Opera Philadelphia, and the School of Liberal Arts' Albert and Linda Mintz Professor of Music, premiered her striking new opera adaptation of Tennessee Williams' "Suddenly Last Summer." Sharing what drove her creativity, Bryan told the New York Times, "Musically, I was really interested in trying to find a way to match Tennessee Williams, the energy in the play." Visit the annual New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane (March 11-14, 2027) to hear Bryan discuss her process and when the opera will make its New Orleans debut.



## Tulane's Portuguese Program receives Program of the Year Award

**TULANE'S PORTUGUESE** program, affectionately known as PORTulane, has earned the American Organization of Teachers of Portuguese's Program of the Year Award. Its community of 769 students, faculty, alumni, and friends stretches well beyond New Orleans. Students connect weekly with conversation partners in Brazil, while a free digital platform makes language learning more accessible. The program also embraces "ungrading," which prioritizes learning over scores, and offers service-learning opportunities. Together, these approaches are helping PORTulane rethink how languages are taught and how communities connect across borders.

## SLA by the Numbers

### Top 3 Majors

1. POLITICAL SCIENCE
2. COMMUNICATION
3. ECONOMICS

### Top 3 Minors

1. STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP & ANALYTICS MINOR (SLAM)
2. SPANISH
3. PHILOSOPHY

### Fastest Growing Majors

1. COGNITIVE STUDIES
2. MUSIC
3. DANCE

### Fastest Growing Minors

1. LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
2. HISTORY
3. ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

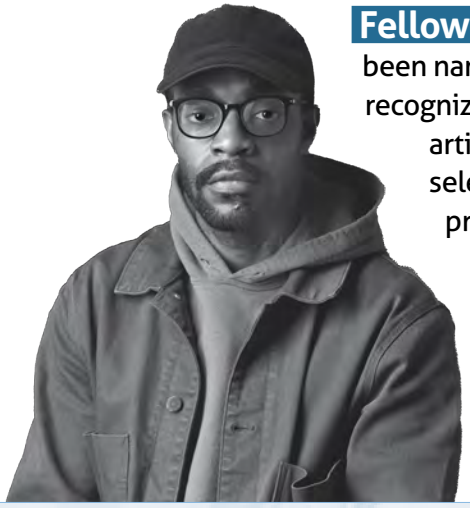
*Methodology looks at percentage growth from Spring 2020 onward, with decreasing weight the further back you go (growth from last year to this year is ranked first in the calculation)



**Great Writers, Greater Conversations** This year, the **Carole Barnette Boudreaux '65 Great Writers Series** brings two distinctive voices in contemporary literature to campus: acclaimed poet and novelist **Ocean Vuong** and celebrated short-story writer and novelist **George Saunders**. Vuong, author of "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous" and "The Emperor of Gladness," will join the series November 19, 2026. Saunders, author of "Lincoln in the Bardo" and "Vigil," will follow in April 12, 2027. Both are free and open to the public. For more information on how to attend go to liberalarts.tulane.edu/cbb. ¶




**Public Culture Journal Comes to Tulane** For nearly four decades, Public Culture has been one of the world's leading journals of interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, publishing influential work on culture, globalization, politics, and public life with a particular focus on the Global South. Now based at the Tulane Global Humanities Center, the journal is co-edited by the School of Liberal Arts Dean Brian T. Edwards and Vyjayanthi Rao, with a Senior Editorial Board comprised of Tulane faculty and prominent scholars from Columbia, Oxford, UC Berkeley, and Yale. Its arrival further establishes the Tulane and the School of Liberal Arts as key destinations for scholarship that connects ideas across disciplines and around the world. Read more on page 35. ¶



**Harlan Bozeman Receives Guggenheim Fellowship** Newcomb Art Department Professor of Practice Harlan Bozeman has been named a 2026 Guggenheim Fellow, one of the nation's most prestigious honors recognizing exceptional achievement in the arts and scholarship. A multimedia artist whose work explores the erasure of Black histories, Bozeman was selected based on his prior career achievements and exceptional promise. Just released, Bozeman's monograph called "Out the E," published by TBW Books, explores the path of injustice left behind by a horrifying massacre of black sharecroppers in Elaine, Arkansas a century ago. Combining historical photos with images he captured of those who still live there, he creates "a quiet but pointed gesture toward a lineage of bearing witness to the underside of American life."

**$2,383,837**
Total amount of research funding awarded to the School of Liberal Arts during the 25-26 cycle.
50% of all research grant applications submitted were funded for the school.

## Top Service-Learning Programs or Departments

1. PHILOSOPHY
2. LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
3. STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP AND ANALYTICS MINOR (SLAM)

## Top Languages

1. SPANISH
2. FRENCH
3. HEBREW

## Top 4+1 MA Programs*

1. ENGLISH
2. POLITICAL ECONOMY
3. ANTHROPOLOGY

*Fall 2026, the Department of Sociology launched a brand new 4+1 MA Program in Applied Sociology

## 84% of all classes attributed to the Global Perspective Core Attribute are taught in the School of Liberal Arts

# What We're Reading




**SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS FACULTY CONSTANTLY PUBLISH NOVELS, ARTICLES, MEMOIRS, AND MORE. HERE ARE A FEW FALL PUBLICATIONS WE RECOMMEND ADDING TO YOUR TBR LIST.**

## Nathaniel Rich

Professor of Practice, Environmental Studies

"Cloudthief" is a heist novel for a new era, in which the most valuable things in life are virtual, privacy is a sick joke, and security is relative. After all is lost, what remains?

*Available through MCD/Farrar, Straus and Giroux and other retailers*

## Yuri Herrera

Professor, Spanish & Portuguese

"Aztlán, DC," a satirical short story featured in the Summer 2026 issue of BOMB Magazine, deftly contemplates a changing 21st-century American landscape as "the last gringo president on the last day of his term" hands his title to the first Mexican president of the United States.

*Available at BombMagazine.org*

## Joel Dinerstein

Professor of English and Sizeler Family Professor of Judaic Studies

The sights and sounds of the Brooklyn streets in the 60s, 70s, and 80s — stickball, Yiddish, the food, Wel-Met summer camps — are all captured in "The Last of the Ellis Island Jews," a memoir of a lost place and time.

*Available through State University of New York Press and other retailers*

## Beyond the Lecture Hall

**IN NEW ORLEANS,** the city itself becomes part of the curriculum. Through service learning, School of Liberal Arts students take what they study into the community, working alongside local partners on issues that matter across New Orleans and the Gulf South. The result is an education grounded in place — one that asks students not only to understand the world around them, but to listen, participate, and contribute to the communities they call home while at Tulane.

### Question Consciousness

PHIL 2030 | Minds, Machines, & Experiences | Spring 2027

Can animals think? Can machines? Students explore questions of consciousness and artificial intelligence through direct engagement with shelter animals, connecting philosophy's oldest questions with today's newest technologies.

### Produce a Festival

SLAM 3600 | Film Festivals: History, Theory & Practice | Spring 2027

Rather than studying film festivals from afar, students become the team behind the Tulane Student Film Festival, reviewing submissions, curating screenings, and producing a public event from start to finish.

### Translate Care

SPAN 3060 | Spanish Grammar & Writing for the Medical Profession | Spring 2027

Students use Spanish where it matters most: helping patients navigate care, translating at Luke's House Vision Clinic, participating in health fairs, and creating educational materials for the community.

# Where Students Shape the Future

The **Dean's Student Advisory Board** brings together a diverse group of undergraduates from across the School of Liberal Arts to help shape the student experience at a moment of rapid change in higher education. Meeting regularly with Dean Brian T. Edwards, board members engage in constructive conversations about issues that matter to liberal arts students — from strengthening community and connecting students with alumni and career opportunities to navigating the impact of artificial intelligence and current events on their education.

Established in 2019, the Board is also taking a more active role in creating programming and shaping how it engages with students. Members help develop events and offer feedback on the Board itself, including the recent shift from a nomination-based process to an application-based model. Just as important, the Board creates space for students with different backgrounds and perspectives to learn from one another and work collaboratively toward a stronger liberal arts experience. **Keep a look out for the application period for new members to open in March 2027** and will be announced in the school newsletters and on social media.



# Five Questions Worth Asking Now

**By 2036, today's students will be making decisions that shape businesses, communities, governments, and culture. The technologies they'll use may be impossible to predict. The questions they'll face are not.**

**We asked five Tulane School of Liberal Arts professors to pose one question (and answer) they believe today's students should already be asking as they look toward the next decade.**

**What kind of leaders will we need?** "Discernment, communication, influence, adaptability, and ethical judgment are five key qualities that will define effective leadership in a world of uncertainty across communities and organizations over the next decade. Individuals who can communicate with purpose, build trust, influence others, adapt to change, and collaborate across differences will thrive in this changing environment. As technology advances, ethical judgment will become increasingly important, helping leaders determine not only what is possible but also what is responsible." — **Marcus Coleman**, ***Louise and Leonard Riggio Professor in Social Entrepreneurship, Program Director and Professor of Practice, Strategy, Leadership, Analytics Minor and Economics.***

**What will make us irreplaceably human?** "Forecasting into the future, communication skills will be more important than ever. AI will increase efficiency, but it can never replace humanity. What will differentiate job applicants is their ability to collaborate with others, listen with empathy, and be present in the moment. Which is why all students should take an acting class!" — **Jenny Mercein, *Associate Professor, Theatre & Dance***

**What kind of citizens will democracy require?** "By 2036, the most urgent liberal arts skill will be political discernment: the ability to recognize how power, propaganda, algorithms, and institutions interfere with our minds and lives. Democracies will depend on people who can resist manipulation, communicate truthfully, adapt collectively, and make ethical judgments in defense of human rights and dignity. Education can and must prepare us for a new civil rights era." — **Scott Nolan, *Senior Professor of Practice, Political Science***

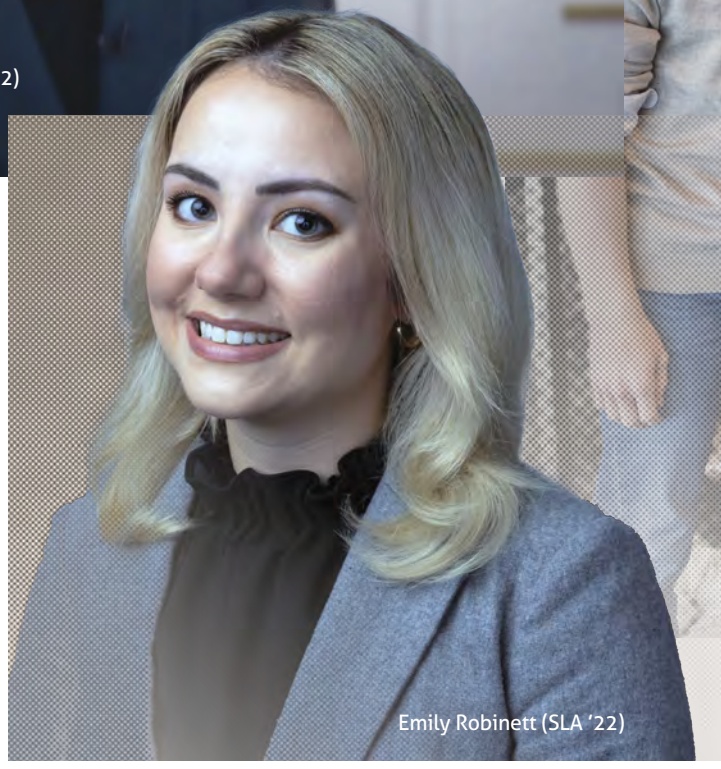
**How can gathering help us think better?** "A crucial skill for 2036 will be the ability to bring people together to think well. Meaningful gatherings cultivate attention, foster good question-asking, build friendships, and help communities generate ideas that no individual would have discovered alone. As technology increasingly mediates our lives, the art of creating meaningful, memorable, valuable gatherings is paramount." — **Georgi Gardiner, *Associate Professor, Philosophy***

**How will we know what's true?** "Generative AI is atrophying our command of language as a literacy crisis worsens. Healthy skepticism, curiosity, and inquiry matter more than ever. We are trading these skills for insatiable instantaneity. We must relentlessly parse information, articulate and revise our views, and resist misinformation. To think for ourselves is an act of dignity that also enables us to advocate for the most vulnerable." — **Ko Bragg, *Professor of Practice, Communication***




Jana Lipman, Professor of History


Ali Vitali (SLA '12)


Emily Robinett (SLA '22)

# Practicing for What's Next

## What does a liberal arts education prepare students to do? The better question may be: How does it prepare students to think?

**BY CAMERON TODD**
**Staff Writer**

**HISTORY PROFESSOR Jana Lipman** doesn't begin with answers.

She begins with context.

Her students read books, newspaper archives, and primary sources to understand not simply what happened, but how we know what we know.

"Our world is not going to get any simpler," Lipman says. "There's an impulse to make everything fit into a post or PowerPoint, but I want them to understand why that sort of synthesis is not the whole story."

In her 21st-century history course, students examine the War on Terror to understand how history continues to shape U.S. foreign policy. Along the way, they wrestle with questions about military power, decision-making, and America's role in the world.

"I don't care if they are history majors or not," Lipman says. "I need them to think critically and thoughtfully about the world around them."

For Lipman, historical thinking is also about intellectual humility.

"You have to be open to surprise, unexpected materials, contradictions, and the possibility of changing your mind," she says. "Those are all important skills."

Working with Lipman on a Tenenbaum Tutorial about Afghan refugees required **Jacy Miller (SLA '28)** to study sources dating back to the 1950s.

"History has taught me to think critically and look for nuance in my daily life," Miller says. "Everything, including immigration law, has a historical context which is essential to developing one's understanding."

Those habits continue to shape alumni like **Rohan Goswami (SLA '22)**, who now reports on finance and corporate America for Semafor.

"There is no better training for deep interrogations of CEOs, their business plans, and their decision-making than history," Goswami says. "My coursework taught me how to scrutinize documents and narratives closely and, perhaps most importantly, how to synthesize reams of data, text, and interviews into comprehensible copy."

The same habits of observation and interpretation take a different form in the performing arts.

For **Emily Robinett (SLA '22)**, now the showrunner's assistant on an upcoming Disney Channel series, Theatre & Dance became an education in storytelling.

"Taking Victor Holtcamp's History of Theater course gave me exposure to kinds of theater and storytelling that I might never have been aware of before," she says. "I've been able to draw from pretty niche things that have become really cool templates for storytelling."



Students with Professor of Voice Amy Chaffee, far right

She soon realized that storytelling was as much a professional skill as a creative one.

"The benefits of learning how to tell a great story became applicable not just in the writer's room, but in corporate settings as well," Robinett says. "By honing my own personal narrative, a strategy I developed at Tulane, I was able to connect with people and invite them in."

She also credits Theatre Professor **Amy Chaffee's** Voice and Speech course with helping her become a more authentic communicator.

"Learning how to tap into your body and find authenticity and groundedness has made me not just a better communicator," Robinett says. "I'm more self-aware and confident in who I am."

Political Science Professor **Christopher Fettweis** encourages students to rethink the question entirely.

"Thinking in terms of, 'What are you being trained to do?' is not the right way to think about liberal arts," he says. "Instead, ask, 'How are you being trained to do almost anything?' You don't seal off any paths by having this kind of education."

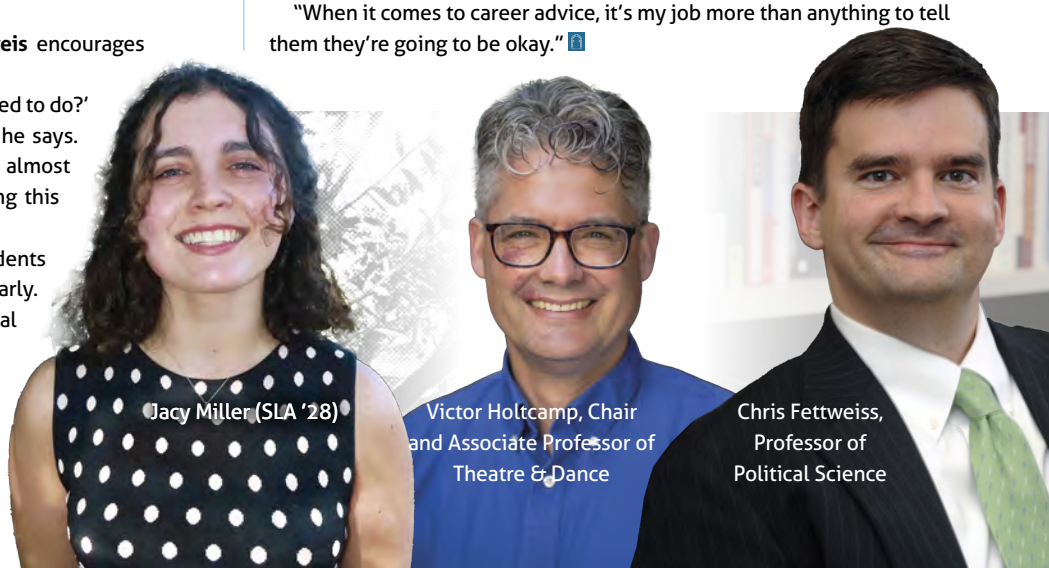
Through writing, debate, and peer review, students learn to test ideas and communicate them clearly. Those habits helped launch the career of political science major **Ali Vitali (SLA '12)**, (Host of MS Now's Way Too Early and Senior Capitol Hill correspondent.).

Still, Fettweis knows many seniors experience what he jokingly calls the "Senior Freakout," when classmates in more specialized majors begin accepting job offers first.

"You may not be training for something specific," he tells them. "That makes students think they don't have specific skills that are transferable. But that is just not true. A lot of employers are looking for smart people who can work hard and think."

After watching generations of Tulane graduates build careers in fields they never imagined as students, he's learned there's one piece of advice they most need to hear.

"When it comes to career advice, it's my job more than anything to tell them they're going to be okay."



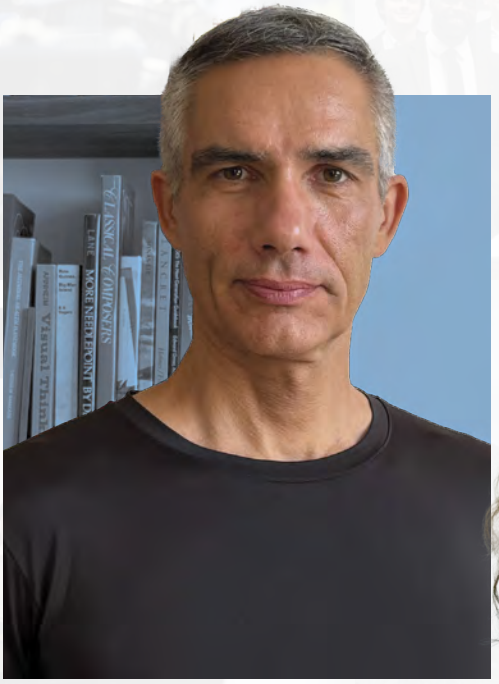
Jacy Miller (SLA '28)

Victor Holtcamp, Chair and Associate Professor of Theatre & Dance

Chris Fettweiss, Professor of Political Science

# What Does it Mean to be Educated in this Major Now?

**Whether through art, the humanities, or the social sciences, Tulane School of Liberal Arts students learn to wrestle with ambiguity, question assumptions, weigh evidence, and make sense of complexity. Read how professors from across the School advance a common purpose: preparing students to think deeply, adapt thoughtfully, and lead wisely throughout a lifetime of change.**



## João Enxuto

Assistant Professor,
Newcomb Art Department

**ANSWERING THE EPOCHAL** question — *What Does It Mean to Be Educated in This Major Now?* — presents a dilemma all students confront today: the pressure to expediently compress complexity into digestible formats. The temptation to outsource the task to generative AI is real. If Gemini has the easy answers, then what exactly are we asking students to solve, and for whom? Is it the immediate demands of a professional landscape in flux, or the long-term task of cultivating a sharp and curious mind? Through teaching new media, I witness digital tools go obsolete almost as quickly as students can learn them. The educational challenge is no longer access to technology but understanding the context of human-machine entanglements and their ethical implications.

With generative AI, creators encounter sensory worlds that are endlessly reconfigurable. The university is one among many information platforms, yet the liberal arts remain the template for developing the practices and pleasures of cultural work. The drudgery of data dissemination is best left to the bots and server farms. My task is to cultivate aesthetic and critical judgment. These are the values to outlast the next doom scroll, software update, and career crisis.



Students travel in Greece while participating in the Knossos Legacy & Sustainable Archaeology Project.



Digital Media Practices student gains hands-on experience.



Kai Ryssdal, host and senior editor of American Public Media's "Marketplace" and co-host of the podcast "Make Me Smart," delivers the Mary C. Parker Yates Lecture.



Students engage with lawmakers and state leaders during Tulane Day at the Capitol.



Students perform an on-site excavation as part of Tulane University's Pompeii I.14 Project.







## Emilia Oddo

Associate Professor, Classical Studies

**WHETHER WE STUDY** the literature, history, languages, archaeology, or material culture of the Greek and Roman worlds, Classical Studies teaches students that knowledge is constructed through careful interpretation, rigorous analysis, and the patient work of engaging with evidence. An excavated object, a fragmentary inscription, or an ancient text does not simply provide answers; each demands interpretation. A historical narrative invites us to ask whose voices are present, whose are absent, and why. Classical Studies allows students to encounter societies that are both familiar and profoundly different from their own. Across our field, students learn to distinguish observation from interpretation, recognizing that evidence rarely speaks for itself. They learn to weigh competing explanations, revise conclusions when new evidence emerges, and communicate their ideas with clarity, humility, and intellectual integrity. Learning how to distinguish evidence from assumption may be one of the most valuable forms of education we can offer.

## Dan Burnston

Director and Associate Professor, Cognitive Studies and Philosophy

**EDUCATION IN COGNITIVE** Studies is about flexible knowledge, fluidity across intellectual contexts, and the ability to relate distinct information into a coherent view. In Cognitive Studies, students learn material from psychology, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and linguistics. They use philosophy to rigorously assess big-picture questions about the nature of the mind. And they think about the societal importance of all of this material in the modern world.

Cognitive Studies prepares students for life in an information-rich world, and for careers that will demand the ability to creatively engage with information to produce knowledge. How do we take the mass of information available to us and use it productively? How should different sources of information be integrated responsibly? What are the responsibilities of individual information users in producing knowledge about the world? And how do we avoid bias in our understanding? All of these questions stem from the nature of the mind and its access to information. The skills that students learn in Cognitive Studies prepare them to excel in the environments that will characterize their adult lives and careers.

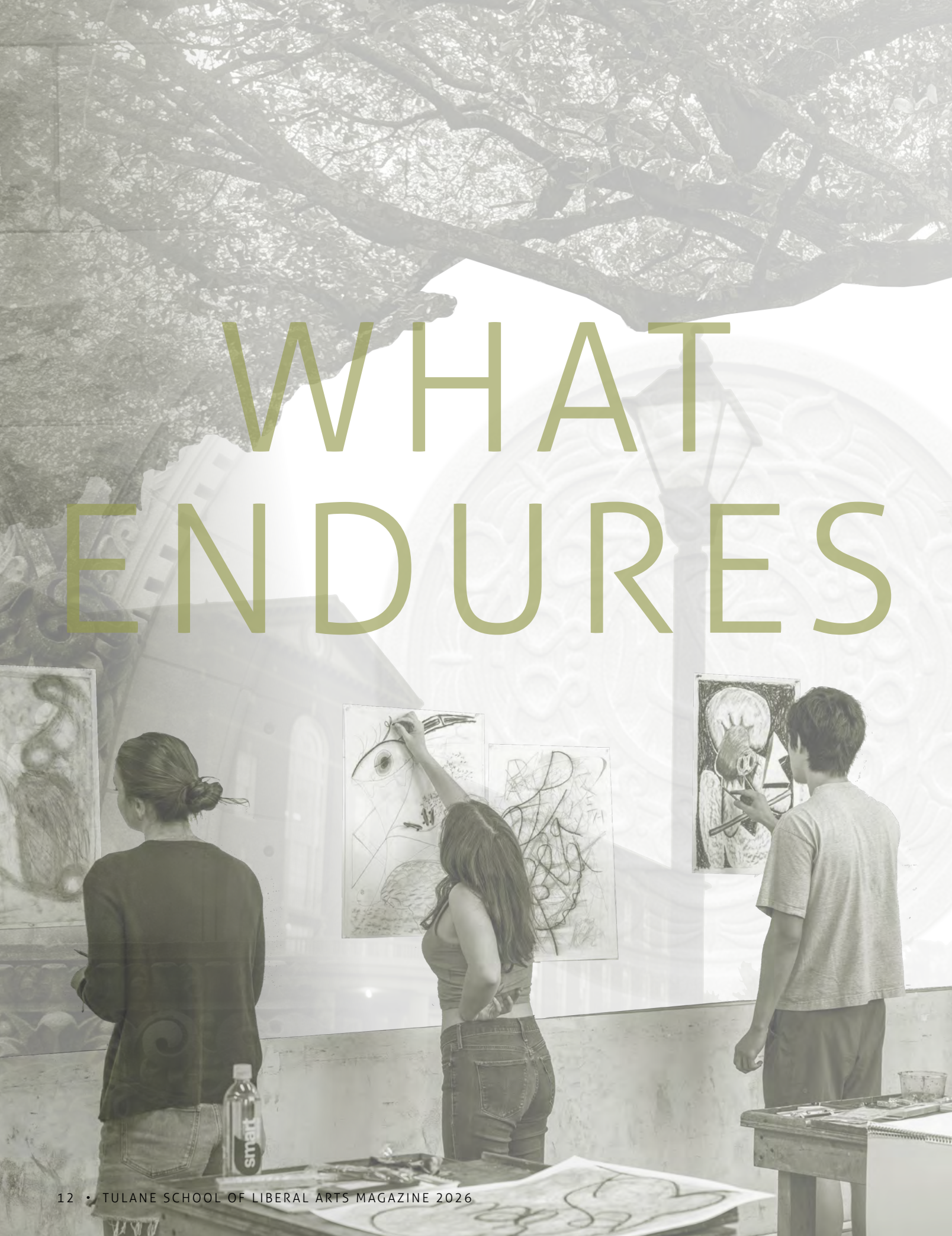
## Gary "Hoov" Hoover

Executive Director, The Murphy Institute, and Professor, Economics

**STUDYING POLITICAL ECONOMY** today means having the ability and tools to make sense of complex interactions between policy makers, our society, and markets. It is the topic most dominating our news cycles. If you think about public policy, you know that there is a policy-maker turning a knob and affecting outcomes.

What policy? We examine them all. It could be trade policy and how the president is reshaping it through tariffs. Or it could be health policy and how the Secretary of Health and Human Services influences it through vaccine decisions. There are policies on housing, taxation, and education, among many others. On the other side are markets, which see and react to those policy changes. Which markets? All of them. It could be housing markets, insurance markets, labor markets, etc.

Our students need to be trained and have skills that allow them to analyze complex market structures, the nuances of ethical decision making, and the vastness of our ever-changing political landscape. Political economy majors study core liberal arts disciplines such as economics, political science, history, and philosophy, while also drawing on fields including law, public health, and mathematics.



# WHAT ENDURES

# What We Carried Forward: From Newcomb to Now

BY STAFF WRITERS

**Twenty years after the creation of the Tulane University School of Liberal Arts, the values that defined H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College continue to shape the way Tulane educates, creates, and leads.**

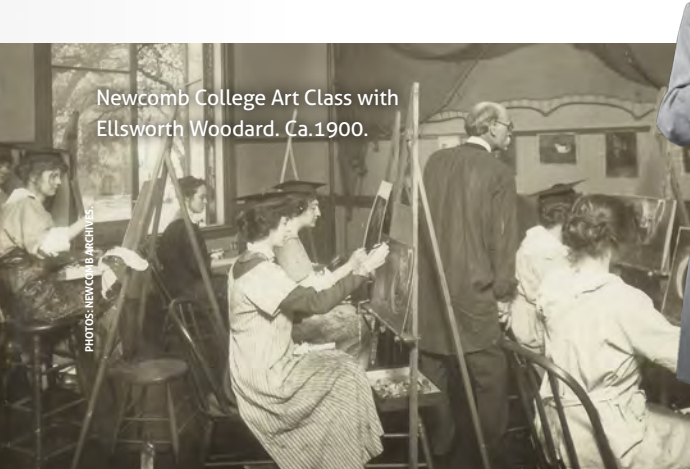
**LIKE THE PEOPLE** within them, institutions evolve. Their names change, their structures are reorganized, and their missions expand in response to new generations and new ideas.

What matters is the purpose they are entrusted to carry forward.

When Tulane reorganized in 2006, H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College entered a new chapter in its history. Its undergraduate education joined with Paul Tulane College to form Newcomb-Tulane College, while its academic departments became part of the newly created School of Liberal Arts. At the same time, the Newcomb Institute was established to advance gender equity through research, training, and community engagement.

For 120 years, Newcomb had been far more than the place generations of women earned their degrees. Founded in 1886 as the nation's first coordinate college for women, it cultivated intellectual ambition, artistic expression, leadership and public purpose at a time when those opportunities remained rare for women.

Walk across Tulane's campus today and traces of Newcomb appear in unexpected places. At the Newcomb Art Museum, exhibitions celebrate one of the nation's most influential Arts and Crafts traditions. Newcomb Pottery and decorative arts appear in academic buildings across campus, including Newcomb Hall. The Newcomb Institute continues to invest in leadership, scholarship and public engagement for a new generation. Together, they tell a story that stretches well beyond a single college.



Newcomb College Art Class with Ellsworth Woodard. Ca.1900.

PHOTOS: NEWCOMB ARCHIVES.



Scene from "She Stoops to Conquer" production, Tulane University Theatre, 1956.



Newcomb College student Mimi Campbell (NC '78) with her photographs, Broadway Campus.

# Newcomb's Legacy Today

**Today, Newcomb College's legacy is carried forward across Tulane through institutions that preserve different aspects of its history and mission.**

**The Newcomb Institute** advances gender equity through research, training, and community engagement that translates evidence into meaningful change.

**The Newcomb Art Museum** stewards one of the nation's premier collections of Newcomb Pottery and decorative arts while presenting exhibitions that connect historic collections with contemporary artists and ideas.

**The School of Liberal Arts** continues part of Newcomb's educational philosophy through interdisciplinary teaching, creative inquiry, and public engagement. Programs such as Gender & Sexuality Studies, along with faculty across the humanities and social sciences, encourage students to explore questions of culture, identity, leadership, and society from multiple perspectives. The Newcomb Art Department and Newcomb Department of Music continue the legacy of the school that created them.

**Under the Oaks** remains one of Tulane's enduring Newcomb traditions, bringing generations of Newcomb alumnae together each year to celebrate a shared history while welcoming new Newcomb Institute graduates into the community.

A hallmark of Tulane grounded in Newcomb College's excellence is in the visual arts. Under Ellsworth Woodward, Mary Given Sheerer, and other pioneering faculty, Newcomb became home to one of the country's most distinctive Arts and Crafts enterprises. Students learned by making. Pottery, embroidery, metalwork, bookbinding, jewelry, and textiles became part of an education that united creative practice with intellectual inquiry. Newcomb Pottery earned international recognition, but the lasting achievement was an educational model that encouraged women to build professional lives through art, design, and craftsmanship. No two pieces were exactly alike. Neither were the women who created them.

That same philosophy extended well beyond the studio. Education was expected to prepare students for lives of consequence. Scholarship was connected to service, artistic practice to professional opportunity, and learning to the responsibilities of citizenship. Graduates became artists, educators, scientists, writers, civic leaders, and advocates, carrying those values into communities far beyond Tulane.

As the twentieth century unfolded, students from Newcomb College and the College of Arts & Sciences increasingly shared faculty, classrooms, and ideas. Long before organizational charts reflected it, a broader coeducational liberal arts community had begun to emerge.

That educational philosophy continues to find new expression across Tulane. The Newcomb Institute carries forward Newcomb College's historic commitment in a modern context.

"Institutions endure not because they remain unchanged, but because each generation renews their purpose," said Anita Raj, executive director of the Newcomb Institute. "Newcomb's history reminds us that advancing equity requires both honoring the values that shaped us and responding to the challenges of our own time. That work continues today through our research, our students, our faculty, and the communities we serve."

Within the School of Liberal Arts, Newcomb's influence is visible in an educational model that encourages students to connect scholarship with creative practice, move comfortably across disciplines, and apply what they learn beyond the classroom. Those ideas continue to shape the School's understanding of a liberal arts education.

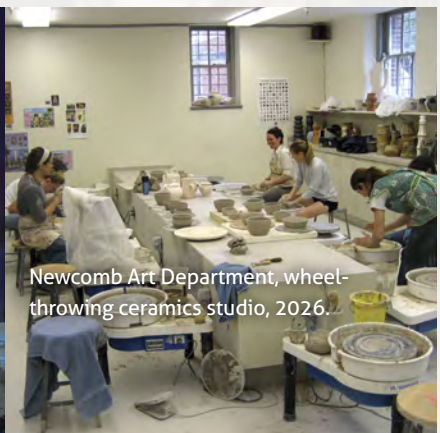
"The School of Liberal Arts benefits from a tradition that has shaped Tulane for generations," says Brian T. Edwards, dean of the School of Liberal Arts. " Our responsibility is to honor that tradition by preparing students with the same spirit of intellectual curiosity, creativity, and public engagement that has long distinguished a liberal arts education here."

That responsibility is reflected in classrooms where New Orleans becomes part of the curriculum, where scholarship reaches public audiences, and where creative practice sits comfortably alongside research. The disciplines have evolved. The expectation that education should prepare graduates to contribute meaningfully to the world remains.

Universities are remembered as much for the ideas they preserve as the institutions they create. Nearly 140 years after H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College was founded, its influence can still be found across Tulane: in museum collections, in leadership programs, in interdisciplinary classrooms, and in generations of graduates who continue to connect knowledge with purpose. That may be Newcomb College's greatest legacy: ideas that continue to find new expressions, new voices, and new generations willing to carry them forward.



Department of Theatre & Dance, scene from "Metromaniacs" production, 2018.



Newcomb Art Department, wheel-throwing ceramics studio, 2026.



# Where Scholarship Takes the Stage

BY MARY GUITERAS
Performing Arts

## How Tulane's historic women's college planted the seeds for an interdisciplinary performing arts ecosystem rooted in New Orleans.

**TODAY, TULANE STUDENTS** might spend the morning studying Shakespeare, the afternoon rehearsing with professional actors, and the evening performing alongside New Orleans musicians or internationally recognized dancers. They move comfortably between the classroom and the stage, between scholarship and creative practice, often without recognizing that those experiences once existed as separate traditions.

Over more than a century, Tulane's performing arts have evolved into one of the clearest expressions of what the School of Liberal Arts has become: interdisciplinary, rooted in New Orleans, and committed to the idea that creative practice and academic inquiry strengthen one another.

That story begins with Newcomb College, Tulane's historic women's college.

In 1909, Newcomb College established the Department of Music, creating the first music program in New Orleans affiliated with a liberal arts college. Rather than treating music solely as performance, the program combined theory, history, and artistic practice, reflecting a belief that the arts belonged at the heart of a broad education.

The Department of Theatre followed in 1937, building on decades of student-led productions while expanding opportunities in acting, directing, design, and production.

Dance took a different path. Dance was originally housed within Newcomb's physical education program and spent years fighting for recognition as an academic discipline.

Alice Pascal Escher, associate chair of Theatre & Dance, remembers that struggle.

"The biggest hurdle the Newcomb Dance Program had in my first years was to get academic credit as dance was part of



This photo and above: Students perform in "Little Women," a music, theatre, and dance co-production, 2026

Physical Education. To many academics, dance was nothing but exercise, certainly not an art form... When it was passed by the Newcomb College faculty in the spring of 1985, it was a huge step forward in being recognized as an art form on campus."

The approval of the dance minor, and later the dance major, reflected more than the growth of a department. It signaled a broader understanding that artistic practice itself generates knowledge, demands rigorous inquiry, and belongs alongside every other scholarly discipline.

When the new School of Liberal Arts was established in 2006, Newcomb College's commitment to integrating scholarship and artistic practice did not disappear. It expanded, creating new opportunities for collaboration across disciplines while building on the foundation Newcomb had established.

For much of the twentieth century, music, theatre, and dance developed along parallel paths. Then they began finding one another.

The strongest artistic work increasingly emerged where disciplines, communities, and professional practice intersected. Collaborative productions, interdisciplinary teaching, and shared creative inquiry blurred the boundaries between music, theatre, and dance, drawing students into experiences that extended well beyond the classroom.

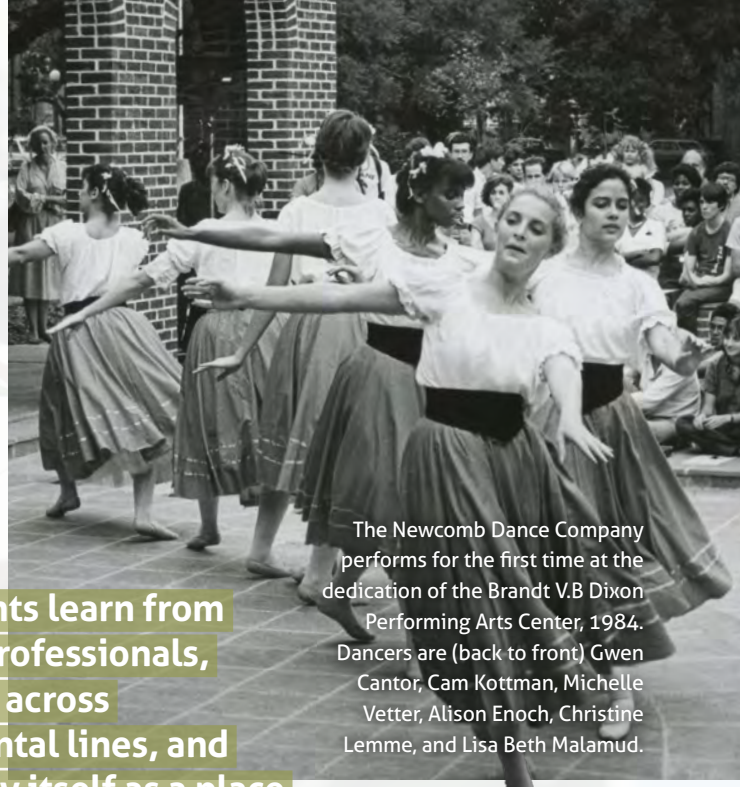
Just as importantly, the performing arts became inseparable from New Orleans itself.

The city is not simply Tulane's backdrop. It is an extension of the classroom, shaping research, performance, and education, while creating chances for faculty and students to contribute to the cultural life of New Orleans.

### Stories That Spark Dialogue

In 2025, Amy Chaffee, professor of Theatre & Dance, produced "The Turn Away Play," directed by the late faculty member R'Myni Watson, in partnership with the Newcomb Institute's New Green Wave Initiative and the School of Liberal Arts, and performed at the Ashé Cultural Arts Center. Based on the best-selling book "The Turnaway Study," a longitudinal research project involving more than 10,000 women denied abortion care, the show was led by Jenny Mercein, associate professor of Theatre & Dance, as the chief researcher. The production explored the lived experiences of people navigating unintended pregnancy, parenting, relationships, and the systems that shape those choices.

Mercein performed alongside Zoe Ocampo-Sobkoviak ('27), a double major in Theatre & Dance and Environmental Biology, before audiences that remained afterward for conversations with the playwright, researchers, and reproductive rights advocates. The sold-out performances became more than theatre. They became a catalyst for community dialogue.



The Newcomb Dance Company performs for the first time at the dedication of the Brandt V.B Dixon Performing Arts Center, 1984. Dancers are (back to front) Gwen Cantor, Cam Kottman, Michelle Vetter, Alison Enoch, Christine Lemme, and Lisa Beth Malamud.

**"... students learn from working professionals, take ideas across departmental lines, and see the city itself as a place of artistic possibility."**



A Newcomb Department of Music ensemble, Tulane University Marching Band performs in the Krewe of Rex parade, Mardi Gras 2026.

### Preserving and Performing Heritage

At the 2026 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, Matt Sakakeeny, chair of the Newcomb Department of Music, interviewed Big Chiefs of the Mardi Gras Indian Nations on the Music Heritage Stage, documenting traditions central to the city's cultural identity and lending that insight to the news magazine



Newcomb Department of Music's Brass Band ensemble performs, 2025.



Department of Theatre & Dance's Newcomb Dance Company, "Tilted Times," 2000.




Newcomb Department of Music's Black American Music ensemble performs annually at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.



Newcomb College Voice Student with vocal coach in late 1950s.

show 60 Minutes. Across the festival, Tulane faculty and students also performed in ensembles spanning jazz, Black American music, klezmer, Latin music, and big band, contributing to one of New Orleans' defining cultural celebrations while learning directly from the artists who sustain those traditions.

### Movement Across Communities

That same spirit shaped the 2026 International Dance Festival New Orleans (IDFNOLA), founded by Leslie Scott, the inaugural associate dean for the performing arts in the School of Liberal Arts. Bringing together international choreographers, filmmakers, performers, and New Orleans artists through performances, workshops, and masterclasses, the festival reflects the same philosophy guiding Tulane's performing arts: artistic exchange across cultures and disciplines. Faculty, alumni, and students participated throughout the festival, including Carina Kroff (SLA '26), a dance and international relations major who served as a co-producer.

For students, those partnerships are more than opportunities to observe professionals. They provide a pathway to becoming one.

For Sofia Severson, a theatre performance, dance, and history major with a minor in Strategy, Leadership, Analytics, and Management (SLAM), performing as Fleance in this summer's New Orleans Shakespeare Festival production of "Macbeth" marked her professional debut.

Severson credits Tulane faculty with helping shape both her artistic voice and her professional aspirations. Playing Puck in the department's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," directed by John "Ray" Proctor, associate professor in Theatre & Dance, deepened her appreciation for Shakespeare's language and performance. Combined with Shakespeare coursework taught by Jenny Mercein, the experience prepared her to step confidently into a professional company. Working alongside professional actors, directors, and designers in "Macbeth" gave her firsthand experience of the discipline, teamwork, and creative risk that define a life in the theatre.

"This process was one of the most impactful opportunities I have had during my time at Tulane," Severson said. "It allowed me to put into practice what I had already learned and gave me a clearer understanding of what professional rehearsals and performances are like. It challenged me as an actor and reinforced how much I want acting to be my career."

By the time the Performing Arts at Tulane was established in 2025, bringing together the Newcomb Department of Music, the Department of Theatre & Dance, Tulane Bands, Summer Lyric Theatre, and the New Orleans Shakespeare Festival, the philosophy behind it had already been taking shape for decades. The initiative recognized a shared ethos of collaboration that had long connected the departments.

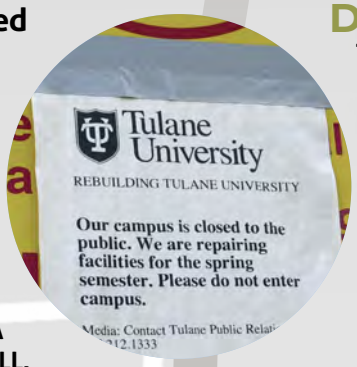
Leslie Scott believes that this collaborative spirit has become one of Tulane's defining strengths.

"Tulane has a deep history of performing arts in an incredibly rich cultural city, and our students are the ones who gain the most when that history keeps expanding," Scott comments. "When artists, scholars, and departments treat each other as collaborators rather than separate disciplines, students learn from working professionals, take ideas across departmental lines, and see the city itself as a place of artistic possibility."

More than a century after Newcomb College introduced music into the liberal arts curriculum, Tulane's performing arts have become far more than a collection of departments or performance venues. They demonstrate how the School of Liberal Arts itself has evolved into an interconnected ecosystem where scholarship and creative practice reinforce one another, where New Orleans serves as both classroom and collaborator, and where students learn not simply to perform, but to create, question, and discover.

# 2005–2006: The Year Everything Changed

**A single year reshaped Tulane's campus, academic structure, and future. The School of Liberal Arts emerged from that period of reinvention.**




## August 29, 2005

**HURRICANE KATRINA MAKES LANDFALL.**
Tulane suspends operations as floodwaters and widespread damage force the University to close for the fall semester.

## Fall 2005

**A CAMPUS DISPERSED.**
Students, faculty, and staff scatter across the country. Classes are canceled for the semester while the University assesses damage and considers its future.



## December 8, 2005

**THE RENEWAL PLAN IS ANNOUNCED.**
President Scott Cowen unveils a sweeping plan to rebuild Tulane academically as well as physically.

**Key decisions:**
- Newcomb and Tulane Colleges become **Newcomb-Tulane College** .
- Newcomb Institute established.
- Faculty reorganized into the **School of Liberal Arts** and the **School of Science & Engineering**.
- Public service graduation requirement created.

## January 17, 2006

**STUDENTS RETURN.**
Classes resume with approximately **93% of Tulane students returning** despite the disruption caused by Katrina.

## July 1, 2006

**SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS OFFICIALLY ESTABLISHED.**
The School of Liberal Arts officially launches as Tulane's home for the humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

## August 28, 2006

**FIRST DAY THE SCHOOL OFFICIALLY EXISTED WITH STUDENTS.**







## May 19, 2007

**THE FIRST GRADUATES OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS CROSS THE COMMENCEMENT STAGE AT THE NEW ORLEANS ARENA.**
NBC "Nightly News" anchor, Brian Williams, delivers the commencement address.

# 20 Years Later

**32 Departments & Programs**

**400+ Faculty**

**More than 15,000 majors prepared for their future through interdisciplinary liberal arts education.**



# HOW ONE THING BUILDS ON ANOTHER

**Three deans reflect on 20 years of Tulane University School of Liberal Arts, the decisions that shaped it, and why its future may be its most important chapter.**



Tulane School of Liberal Arts Deans Carole Haber (2008-18), George Bernstein (2006-08), and Brian T. Edwards (2018 – present).

**TWENTY YEARS AGO,** in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Tulane University brought together the humanities, social science and arts departments from the former College of Arts and Sciences and Newcomb College to create the School of Liberal Arts. To mark the School's 20th anniversary, Dean Brian T. Edwards (2018 – present) invited former Deans George Bernstein (2006-08) and Carole Haber (2008-18) to reflect on the decisions that shaped its first two decades, what endured through extraordinary change, and the choices that continue to shape its future. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

**BRIAN EDWARDS:** This fall marks the 20th anniversary of the formal founding of the School of Liberal Arts. We're taking the occasion to look backwards and look forwards. There are stories throughout the magazine about where we've been, where we're going, and what we're building.

I kept thinking: who better than the people who've led the School to reflect on what these 20 years have meant?

*(Laughter.)*

A dean at another university once told me that dean years are measured like dog years. Carole, did you ever hear this expression?

**CAROLE HABER:** No.

**BRIAN:** Between the three of us, we've probably done about a century.

**CAROLE:** We're very old.

*(Laughter.)*

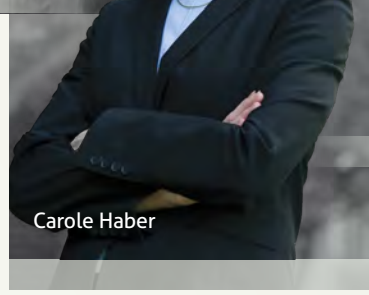
**BRIAN:** George, you've taught me so much about the history of Tulane over the years since I got here. When you look back to the founding moment of SLA in 2006, what do you remember? What did it feel like you were launching?

**GEORGE BERNSTEIN:** I don't think we thought we were building a 20-year story.

We were responding to an immediate crisis. The School of Liberal Arts grew out of one of the most difficult moments in Tulane's history. The sciences from Arts & Sciences had to merge into the Engineering School. Five doctoral programs had already been cut, and we were at risk of hemorrhaging faculty.

My role was really as a crisis manager, a problem solver in the crisis. I'd already been a dean, and there was a reasonable chance the faculty would trust me.


George Bernstein


Carole Haber

The priority wasn't imagining what the school would become 20 years later. The priority was making sure there would be a school.

**BRIAN:** So before there was a long-term vision, there had to be stability.

**GEORGE:** Exactly.

**BRIAN:** Carole, by the time you arrived, the immediate crisis had passed. What did you inherit?

**CAROLE:** I inherited a school that was beginning to find its footing, but there was still tremendous emotion.

People were still very angry about the loss of Newcomb [College]. There were still strong feelings about the restructuring. You couldn't simply tell people to move on. You had to help them imagine something worth moving toward.

Over time, we stopped talking about the merger and started talking about the school. That's when I think it really began developing its own identity.

**GEORGE:** I think that's exactly right. The early years were about stabilization. Once people believed the school was going to succeed, there was room to think about what made it distinctive.

**BRIAN:** George, what made it distinctive?

**GEORGE:** Tulane's comparative advantage always has been, and I think still is, faculty contact. The availability of real faculty members to interact with students, both inside and outside the classroom. That's always been our strength.

**CAROLE:** I want to disagree with you a little, George. Sorry.

There are a number of universities where faculty contact in undergraduate education is central to the experience. Northwestern. Washington University. Tulane.

Faculty engagement matters tremendously. But what I thought separated us was our place.

We intentionally developed what we called a mission–place approach. New Orleans wasn't simply where we happened to be. The Gulf South mattered. Latin America mattered. Community engagement mattered.

Place shaped the questions we asked, the scholarship we encouraged, and the education our students received.

**BRIAN:** One of the things that struck me since coming to Tulane is that both of those ideas have continued to grow.

Maybe we've changed the vocabulary a little, but we're still asking the same question: What can Tulane do exceptionally well because we're Tulane?

That's why we've invested in Native American and Indigenous Studies. Jewish Studies. Africana Studies. Haitian Creole. I don't think they should necessarily be teaching Haitian Creole up at Northwestern, where I came from. There they taught Polish, and it makes sense because there's a large Polish population in Chicago. Here, we have begun to teach Vietnamese for heritage speakers, which reflects New Orleans' large Vietnamese population.

Those aren't random additions. They're expressions of who we are.

And I think that's also the trajectory that leads to the Tulane Global Humanities Center. The New Orleans Center for the Gulf South, which of course you started Carole, hasn't disappeared. It's expanded. The Global Humanities Center still has a deep commitment to the Gulf South, but now it's asking those questions in conversation with the wider world.

To me, that's not a departure from what you built. It's a continuation of it.

**CAROLE:** That's exactly right.

**BRIAN:** George, you've taught me that people used to called Tulane the "Harvard of the South." I've come across that in histories I've read too.

**GEORGE:** Constantly. That phrase was everywhere. But eventually people stopped saying it.

Not because Tulane became less ambitious. Because Tulane became more confident in its own strengths.

There came a point where we didn't need to define ourselves by comparison to another institution anymore. Tulane had become something distinctive.

**BRIAN:** I think that's a really important lesson. If our ambition is to become another university, we're asking the wrong question.

The better question is: What can Tulane become that no other university can?

That leads to something I've been thinking about a lot.

What do we see as the future of liberal arts?

Personally, I think there are two conversations happening at once.

One is the traditional argument for liberal arts that goes all the way back to the founding of the country. It's about educating citizens. It's about communication, creative problem-solving, understanding cultures different from your own. You can trace that tradition all the way back to Cicero, who gave us the term "liberal arts."


Dean Brian T. Edwards

But what I keep coming back to is this: A liberal arts undergraduate education is the best preparation for the challenges and the careers of the future.

Not because we know what those careers are going to be. Because we don't.

What we do know is that wherever the digital revolution takes us, and however the jobs of the future change, there will still be people making decisions. There will still be people leading organizations, interpreting information, solving problems, and working across cultures. Those are exactly the capacities a liberal arts education develops. The future may change the jobs people do, but it won't eliminate the need for judgment.

**"...if we've done our jobs well, the next dean ... will inherit something even stronger than we did."**

**CAROLE:** I used to cite a study in which they measured students' critical thinking when they entered college and then again when they graduated. The only students who showed statistically significant improvement were liberal arts students. I've quoted that study for years because it captured something we've always known.

**GEORGE:** We sometimes spend too much time defending ourselves instead of explaining ourselves. The point isn't that students memorize more information. The point is that they learn how to think.

Knowledge changes. Judgment doesn't.

**BRIAN:** Exactly. And then AI arrives. Everybody immediately asks whether liberal arts are suddenly obsolete.

The opposite happened. If you're in the liberal arts, I honestly think you're in a good position right now. Because no matter the impact of the technology, 10 or 20 years from now, there are still going to be humans around.

**GEORGE:** Otherwise, we're all screwed.

*(Laughter.)*

**BRIAN:** Right. If there are still humans, there are still going to be people making decisions. Leading organizations. Trying to understand complicated problems. Helping communities make sense of change. Those are human responsibilities.

When AI became publicly available, people immediately started asking me whether we were going to create a major in prompt engineering. I'm not making this up. For a brief period of time, prompt engineering was considered one of the hottest jobs in technology.

Today? AI writes most prompts better than people do. That entire profession appeared and almost disappeared in the span of a couple of years.

If that's what the future of work looks like, then the most valuable education isn't preparing students for one particular job. It's preparing them for ten jobs. Or fifteen. Or careers that don't even exist yet.

That's why I have so much confidence that we must continue teaching philosophy. History. Anthropology. Languages. The things people sometimes dismiss as impractical are becoming more practical. Not less.

**GEORGE:** The more uncertain the future becomes, the more important those capacities become.

**CAROLE:** I agree. Universities have always had to prepare students for a world they couldn't fully predict. That's never been different. What's different now is simply the speed of change.

**BRIAN:** Let me ask one final question. Twenty years from now, another dean will be sitting here celebrating 40 years of the School of Liberal Arts. What do you hope they say about the choices we're making today?

**GEORGE:** I hope they say we never lost sight of what mattered most. Students. Faculty. The relationship between them. That's always been Tulane's greatest strength.

**CAROLE:** I hope they say we continued to evolve. Institutions don't become stronger because every generation starts over. They become stronger because each generation builds on what came before.

**BRIAN:** That's probably the biggest lesson I've taken from both of you. How one thing builds on another.

After we're gone, somebody else is going to inherit the decisions we're making today. The faculty we hire. The academic programs we create. The investments we make. The culture we build.

We're trying to get this right. Because if we've done our jobs well, the next dean won't have to start over.

They'll inherit something even stronger than we did.



# WHAT WE'RE BUILDING

# What It Means To Invest in Liberal Arts

**BY BRIAN T. EDWARDS**
**Dean, School of Liberal Arts**
**Herb Weil, PhD Professor of the Humanities**

## What is it about a liberal arts education that makes it so resilient to historical change?

**YOU MIGHT BE** surprised by my premise. The news has been filled with accounts of crises in the liberal arts, with special attention given to the contraction of the humanities. Headlines have drawn eyes to the consolidation or elimination of core liberal arts departments at major research universities.

Meanwhile, graduate education has been the subject of tremendous angst as stalwarts such as the University of Chicago, Yale, Havard, and Penn paused or shrunk PhD admissions in the humanities and social sciences.

And yet at Tulane, we have been bucking many such trends. At a time when many institutions are retrenching, Tulane University School of Liberal Arts is investing in faculty, facilities, research, graduate education, and new career pathways for students. Enrollments in the School of Liberal Arts have remained strong. Enrollments in philosophy, environmental studies, and economics, to pick three examples, were higher in 2025-26 than they were in 2022-23.

We have hired brilliant new tenure-track faculty in fields such as history, Native American studies, philosophy, classics, economics, and political science, and across the fine and performing arts. They join more than 100 new colleagues who we have hired to the permanent faculty since 2018.

Are we an outlier?

### Doubling down

Let's go back to my initial claim: that the liberal arts are resilient to historical challenges.

Back in 2018, when I was offered the opportunity to serve as dean of the school, some of my academic colleagues asked



Students hone their musical production skills in using computer applications.

me what I was thinking. Why would I leave a secure faculty position at a top-10 university for a leadership role at the school when the liberal arts were in crisis?

The way the crisis was articulated then was an antagonism between the humanities, social sciences, and arts and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Computer science was one of the fastest growing majors at the time, increasing 145% from 2010 to 2020, fueled in part by press stories about new computer science grads jumping right into six-figure salaries. How could English, history, or anthropology compete?

We were then several decades into a digital revolution that was already upending numerous professions and career paths. As I wrote in these pages in our Winter 2021-22 issue, which was dedicated to "Futures," referring to the dizzying pace of change that technology and the Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated: "[I]f you're preparing for a world you can't predict, narrow training is risky business."



Part of International Educational Week, Tulane Language Day celebrates and exposes students to linguistic and cultural diversity.

And this was even before the first release of ChatGPT to the public in November 2022.

Was the traditional defense of a liberal arts education — that at its core, it taught students to develop critical thinking, creative problem solving, and communication skills — no longer applicable? Had the idea that liberal arts graduates were particularly well suited to an uncertain world, precisely *because of* their deep experience in complex problems, a broad range of topics, and an insistence on writing and oral communication as primary skills, somehow expired?

The answer, we wagered, was no. We didn't ignore the data science revolution or the arrival of AI. Rather we leaned into it — from a variety of angles. We expanded our successful Strategy, Leadership & Analytics Minor (SLAM) program, created in its first incarnation as the School of Liberal Arts Management Minor (SLAMM) by Dean Carole Haber in 2017. After a yearlong study, we further imagined the role that pairing liberal arts majors with a program that would focus on the key attributes necessary for



**"Uncertainty demands more from liberal arts education, not less. In so many places in the school, we have acted on that conviction."**

Figure drawing and medical anatomy combine artistic structure with scientific accuracy to help students understand the human form.



Professor Bouchaib Gadir instructs students on Arabic, offering a major strategic and cultural advantage for international business.




"Refuse to be one thing." SLA promotes exploring diverse academic interests and rejects the idea that a person must fit into a single, narrow career or identity.

our graduates to lead in a changing job market. Its new name, SLAM, identified those skills. We made a deep investment in new faculty hires and developed curricula to meet the future head-on.

Our strategy would be put to the test. And we repeated it everywhere: A liberal arts education is the best preparation for the challenges and careers of the future.

Turns out, four years into the AI revolution, the rest of the world might just be catching up to us.

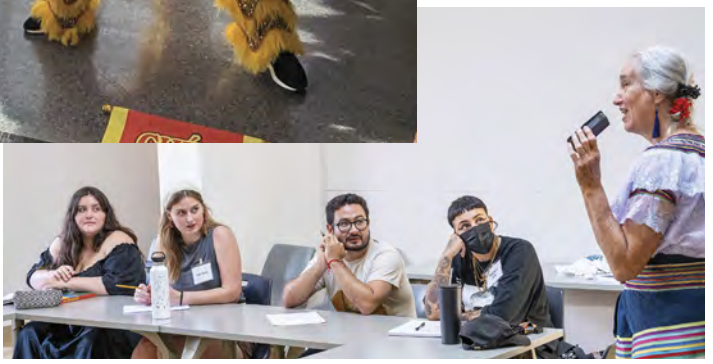
### A new generation of faculty for a new time

One of the qualities of Tulane that has long stood out is its profoundly interdisciplinary nature. Our historic strengths in Latin American studies were built around a truly remarkable institute called the Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies, or more simply the Stone Center. There, literature professors and historians rubbed shoulders with political scientists and economists researching and teaching about the large and diverse region south of the U.S. borders. The world looked to Tulane. Scholars and students from Latin American itself came here to use our archives and engage with our superlative faculty.

Over the past eight years, we have invested deeply in expanding interdisciplinary programs, creating the new Native American & Indigenous Studies Program and anoth-




Annual Lunar New Year Gala celebrates Chinese and Asian cultures on Tulane's campus.



Professor Judith Maxwell established the Kaqchikel language and cultural program in 1987, helping to revitalize the major Indigenous Mayan language and ethnic group native to Guatemala.

er in Middle East & North African Studies. We also invested deeply in Jewish Studies, Africana Studies, Asian Studies, and Environmental Studies, which feature faculty jointly appointed in a discipline and the interdisciplinary program.

This was a fortuitous time to build on this strategy. As we looked at the next generation of scholars and teachers, we found that newly minted PhDs were breaking the old rules and combining fields of inquiry that had previously been kept separate. We took advantage of that, and have recruited many of the best generation of new faculty to New Orleans.

For example, we noticed that many of our students in the Classical Studies department were also pursuing pre-medical studies. Rather than retrench from the sciences, we again "leaned in." We launched a search for a historian of ancient medicine and science. The happy result was the recruitment of Sara Panteri, whose own research (and two PhDs) pursues ancient Greek geometry, harmonic theory, and mechanics, some of the original liberal arts. This semester, she's teaching a course on Ancient Science, which is filled with curious students.

Another key moment was the creation of the Department of Comparative Literature, launched in 2024. Comparative literature is a key humanities field — the meeting place of global languages, literatures and cultures — but we had no such department. A profoundly global economy and interconnected world requires students capable of engaging across world contexts and cultures.

At the same time, we took up the old antagonism that had been levied against me when I took the job as dean in 2018, and crafted an exciting new partnership with the STEM fields. In 2024, we launched a program called STEM$^2$ Studies — the two Ms are for medicine and mathematics, out of which the field of computer science grew. These are a series of team-taught courses that pairs professors from the School of Liberal Arts and faculty from either the School of Science and Engineering or the School of Medicine. They broach big topics, such as Reproductive Health taught by historian Karissa Haugeberg and a professor of obstetrics; Climate Science, with sociologist, Laura McKinney, and ecologist, John Sabo; The Brain in Human Life with cognitive philosopher, Daniel Burnston, and neuroscientist, Beth Wee; and the History of Technology with historian, Walter Isaacson, and computer scientist, Nick Mattei.

This is a template that students have responded well to, whether they are liberal arts students who are introduced to the science behind the issue, or science and engineering students who learn the history, politics, or sociology of their areas of study. Most importantly, faculty pairs take turns teaching in front of each other, listening to each other, and modeling dialogue *across* disciplines. The so-called antagonism between STEM and liberal arts is in fact a constructed fiction. Interdisciplinary thinking and dialogue are the future.

### How to respond to uncertainty

Uncertainty demands more from liberal arts education, not less. In so many places in the school, we have acted on that conviction.

If indeed the world and the job market are changing at a rapid pace, there are certain truisms that bear remembering. We live in the world. We live with each other. Leaders will continue to make decisions.

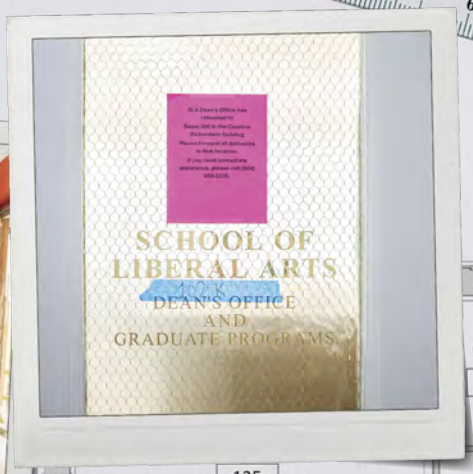
The rise of artificial intelligence seems to be the new antagonism to liberal arts education – and to STEM and undergraduate business education as well.

We are investing in the key attributes of what will make the leaders of the future. The strategies I've outlined above, built around the faculty who make Tulane a world class institution, demonstrate our commitment to this principle. Our dual nature as an R1 research university that takes a liberal arts college approach, which is one of the school's four strategic pillars, underlies this mission.

We are built for this moment.

In 2027, Dean Brian Edwards will step down from the Tulane University School of Liberal Arts to become the president of Haverford College.






"The new Tulane Global Humanities space will play a crucial role in facilitating the kind of collaborative critical inquiry that is the hallmark of the humanities."

Edwige Tamalet Talbayev
Tulane Global Humanities Center Faculty Advisory Board Member and Associate Professor, French & Italian

# WHERE DO YOU BELONG?

"I remember the bustling energy of students throughout Newcomb Hall, and my international relations classes in Newcomb's majestic classical spaces."

The Argenti Family Office
John Argenti (A&S '85)





## Nobody arrives at college knowing where they'll belong.

You choose a dorm. You choose classes. Sometimes you even choose a major before you've learned enough to know whether it's the right one.

Belonging usually comes later. It happens in places you never expected to matter.

For generations of Tulane students, one of those places has been Newcomb Hall.

Some first found it because of a language class. Others because a professor suggested office hours. Some wandered in for philosophy or sociology and kept coming back for reasons that had little to do with the syllabus. Years later, many would remember the hallway more clearly than the assignment. The conversation more vividly than the lecture.

The places we remember are rarely the ones we planned to remember.

When Newcomb Hall opened in 1918, it was the academic and administrative heart of H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College, one of the nation's pioneering colleges for women. Across campus, students in Tulane's College of Arts & Sciences built traditions of their own. They belonged to different schools, but increasingly shared the same classes, the same questions, and the same belief that a liberal arts education begins with curiosity.

Long before anyone gave it a new name, a community had already begun to form.

Newcomb Hall witnessed that change.

It remained rooted in the history of Newcomb College while gradually becoming one of the places where Tulane's broader liberal arts community came together. By the time Tulane University School of Liberal Arts was created in 2006, the intellectual community it represented had already been taking shape for decades.

For the past several years, Newcomb Hall has stood quietly behind fencing and scaffolding while its next chapter was written from the inside out.

Some of the changes are easy to see. New technology. Modern infrastructure. Spaces designed to serve another century.

In selecting New Orleans architects from the New Orleans firm Waggonner & Ball to renovate James Gamble Rogers' original design, Dean Brian T. Edwards sought



to bring back the light to a building marked by large windows. “Over the decades, as the building was carved up to make space for more offices and departments, the light that was central to Rogers’ design had been blocked out,” says Edwards.

David Waggoner, whose firm had let the renovation of Dinwiddie Hall across campus in 2010, saw the possibility. New light monitors emerging from the building’s roof constructed of carefully treated glass draw daylight deep into the fourth floor, restoring openness to spaces that had gradually turned inward over decades of renovation. Reopened sightlines and welcoming common areas invite people to pause instead of simply passing through.

The first floor once again welcomes the wider university, bringing together the Dean’s Office, the Tulane Global Humanities Center, the office of the Strategy, Leadership and Analytics Minor (SLAM), classrooms and gathering spaces designed for lectures, talks, events, and conversations that refuse to stay inside a single discipline. Upstairs in the Alison Brod Media and Communication Wing, students will learn about the history and analysis of a range of media and have dynamic spaces to produce and edit films, podcasts, and digital stories in editing suites, recording studios, sound isolation booths and collaborative production labs built for the way people communicate today. Two screening rooms, one with fixed seating, light lock doors, and Dolby sound, and another designed for showing work in progress, will be places where the community will gather.

The renewal extends beyond the spaces students will see every day. More sustainable materials, energy-efficient systems, and modern infrastructure will reduce the building’s environmental footprint while preserving one of Tulane’s architectural landmarks for generations to come. Rather than replacing Newcomb Hall, the university has chosen to renew it, extending the life of a historic building while preparing it for the future.

Throughout the building, named spaces recognize alumni and friends whose generosity made this renewal possible. Their gifts do more than restore a building. They invest in the people who will fill it.

Buildings like Newcomb Hall have never been remarkable because of the limestone or the architecture. They matter because generation after generation leaves something behind for the people who arrive next.



## SLAM Center

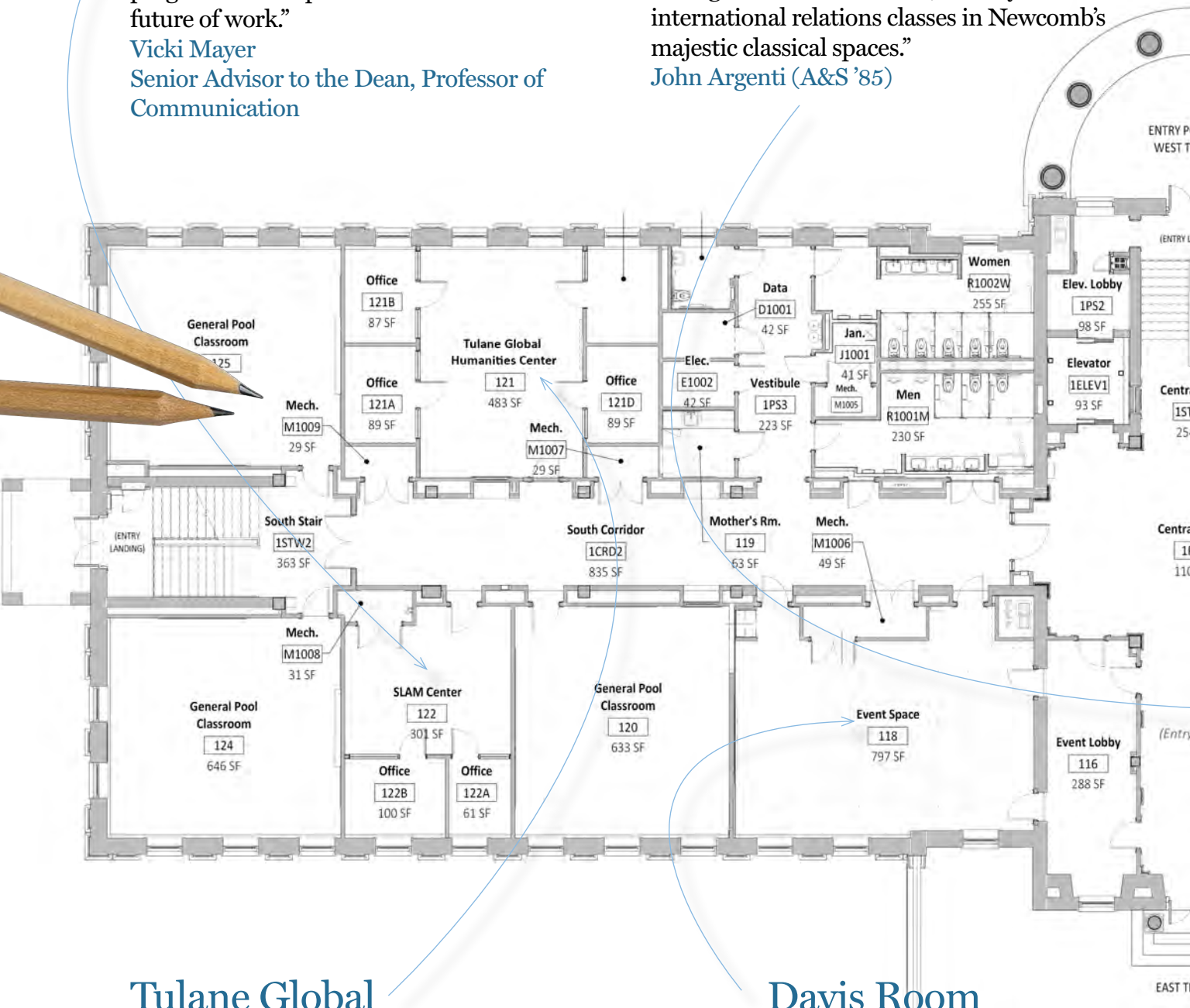
"The space combines our dynamic SLAM program with a space for research into the future of work."

Vicki Mayer
Senior Advisor to the Dean, Professor of Communication

## The Argenti Family Office

"I remember the bustling energy of students throughout Newcomb Hall, and my international relations classes in Newcomb's majestic classical spaces."

John Argenti (A&S '85)




## Tulane Global Humanities Center

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Edwige Tamalet Talbayev,
Tulane Global Humanities Center Faculty Advisory Board Member and Associate Professor, French & Italian

## Davis Room

"This will be the premier location to hold lectures, symposia, and gatherings. This event space is for the entire School of Liberal Arts community."

Brian T. Edwards
Dean of the School of Liberal Arts

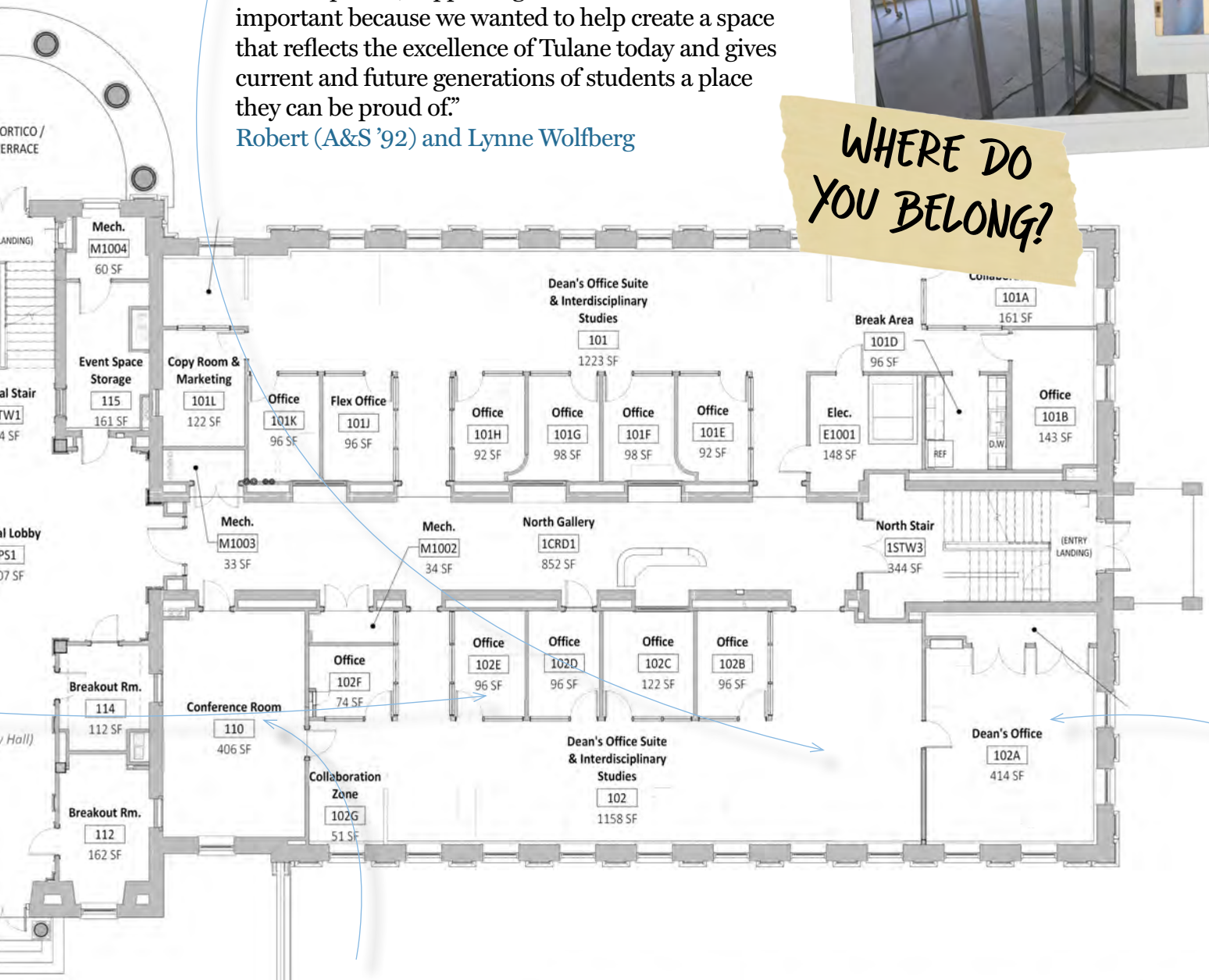


## Wolfberg Welcome Lounge

"Having experienced Tulane as an alumnus and as a Tulane parent, supporting this renovation was important because we wanted to help create a space that reflects the excellence of Tulane today and gives current and future generations of students a place they can be proud of."

Robert (A&S '92) and Lynne Wolfberg

WHERE DO YOU BELONG?




## Senator John Hardy "Johnny" Isakson Conference Room

"I really liked the idea of sponsoring the conference room because I wanted to dedicate the space to my father who was great at bringing people together to solve problems, discuss ideas, or just get together for a good conversation. Seeing the renovation begin to bring the space to life is very exciting and I can't wait to see the final product.

One of my most distinct memories of Newcomb Hall was the odd elevator configuration which I am so happy to see being addressed. I walked up a lot of stairs in my day just to avoid the hassle…."

John Isakson (A&S '92)



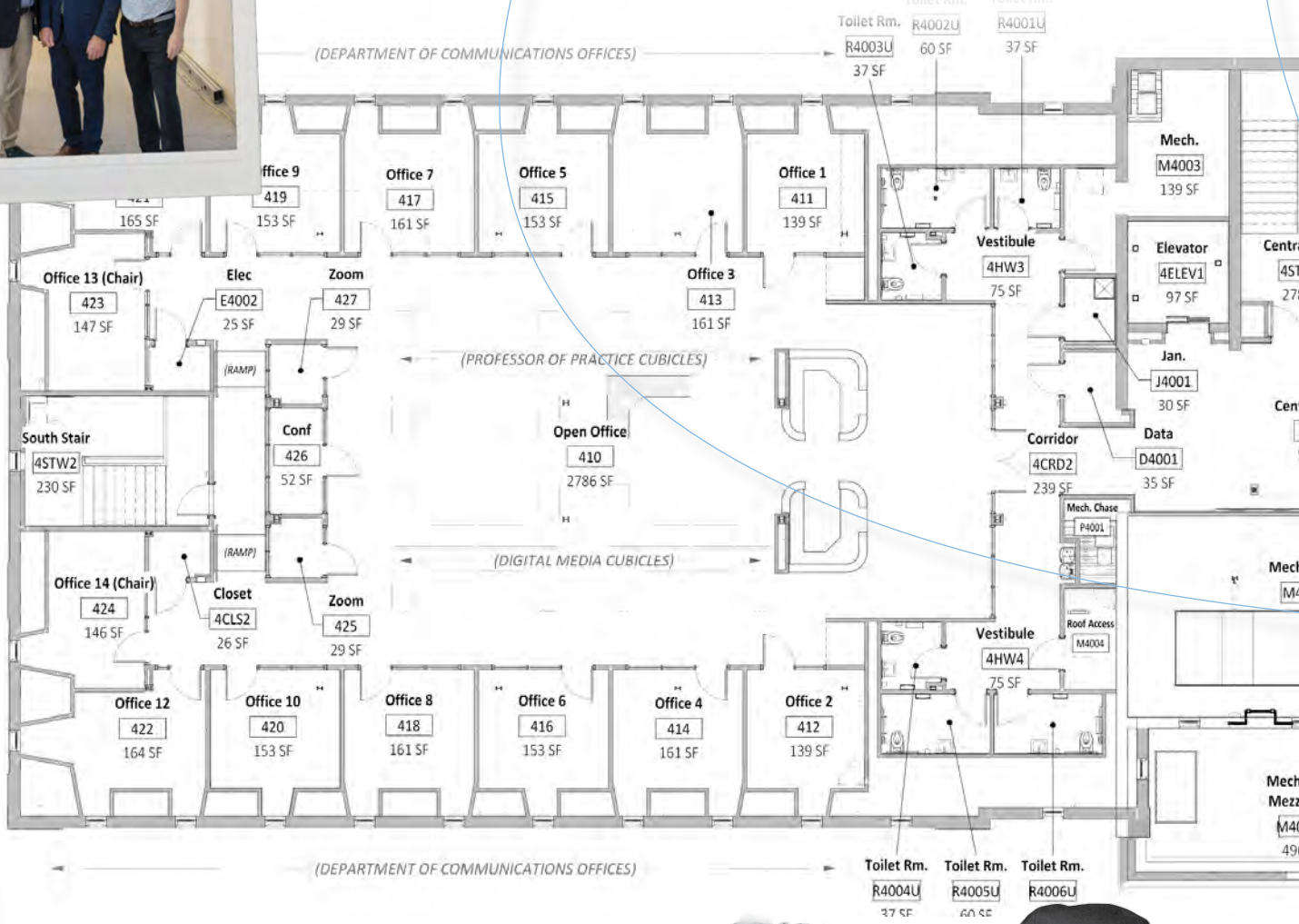



## Digital Media Practices Lab & Finishing Room

"I'm excited about the fourth-floor studios. In the music and creative industries, you're expected to create and publish your own content, and letting students record interviews and produce real projects in professionally equipped rooms is exactly the kind of hands-on learning these courses are built for."

Taku Hirano

Professor of Practice, Newcomb Department of Music and SLAM




## Miller Family Dean's Office

"Tulane is where my journey began, and giving back is a meaningful way to honor that experience. Supporting the renovation of Newcomb Hall allows me to celebrate what Tulane has meant to me while helping ensure this special place continues to serve and inspire generations of students to come."

Barry (A&S '91) and Tomm Miller

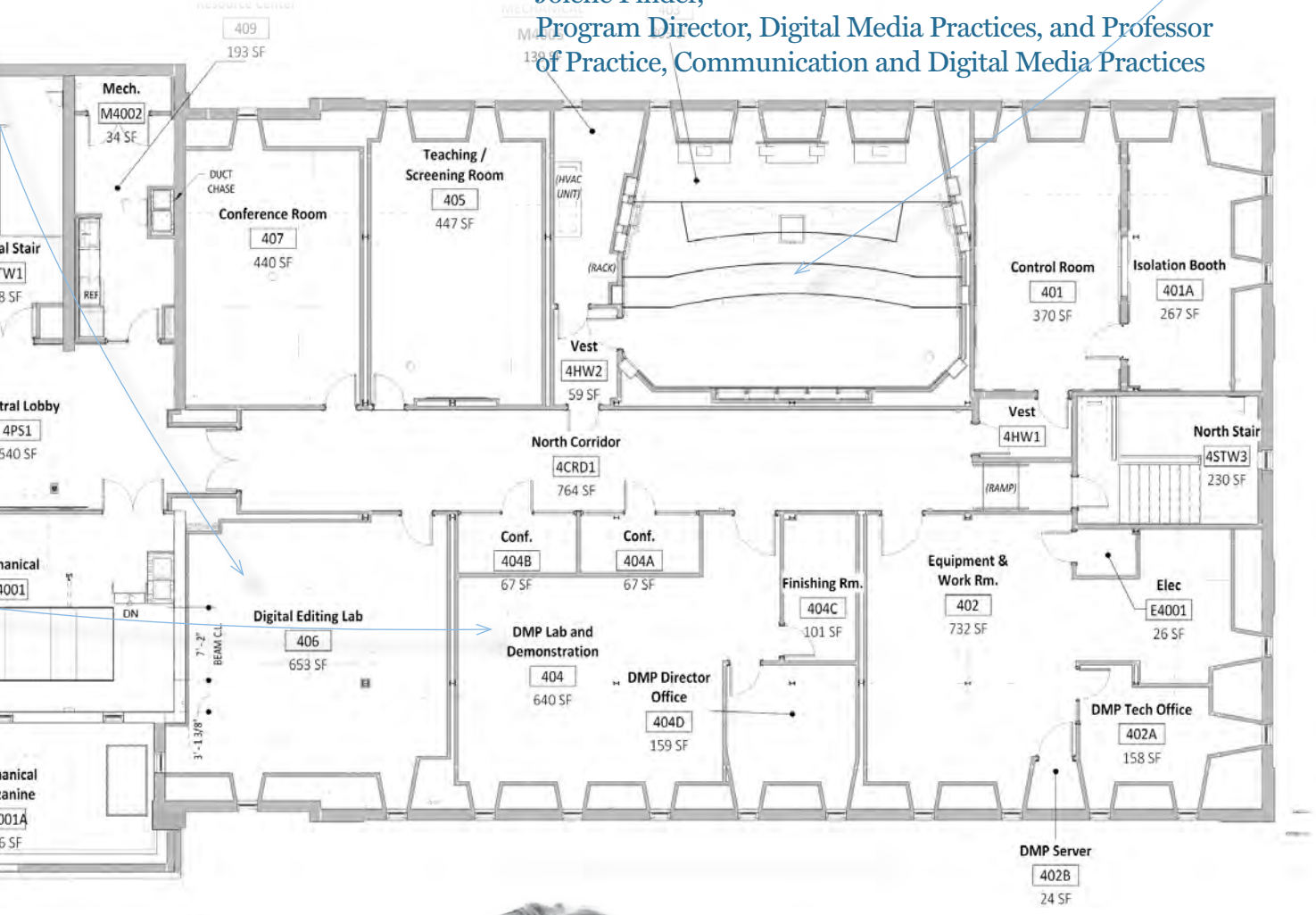


## Digital Editing Lab

"After spending hundreds of hours on post-production, I am excited for the new energy the digital editing lab brings, with more space for creation and collaboration."
Keira Ruibal, (SLA '27)

## Screening Room

" From providing students and visiting artists with a professional screening environment to share their work to opening up a new resource for local filmmakers to host work-in-progress screenings, these spaces hold immense potential to spark collaboration and prepare students for working in a real-world media environment."
Jolene Pinder,
Program Director, Digital Media Practices, and Professor of Practice, Communication and Digital Media Practices






WHERE DO YOU BELONG?

# Newcomb's Next Chapter





**Alumni investments are helping transform Newcomb Hall into a renewed home for the School of Liberal Arts.**

BY STAFF WRITERS

**FOR TULANE ALUMNA,** parent, and marketing executive **Alison Friedman Brod** (**NC '91**), Newcomb Hall represents more than a building. It represents the place where her career began.

As founder and CEO of Alison Brod Marketing + Communications, one of the country's most influential public relations and brand marketing firms, Brod has built a career at the forefront of communications and storytelling. Now, with a $1 million gift to the School of Liberal Arts, she is helping ensure today's students have access to the same spirit of inspiration and innovation that shaped her own Tulane experience.

Her gift establishes the **Alison Brod Media and Communication Wing** on the newly renovated fourth floor of Newcomb Hall, which brings together the Department of Communication and the Digital Media Practices Program in a collaborative environment designed to mirror today's professional media landscape. This wing, on the north side of the floor, features media production studios, a digital editing lab, flexible collaboration spaces, a recording studio and technology that supports emerging forms of storytelling and scholarship. From film editing to podcast creation, from digital journalism to multimedia research, the wing's resources will mirror professional standards and prepare students to engage meaningfully with the rapidly evolving landscape of communication and media.

"This gift is my way of honoring that experience and ensuring future generations have access to the most forward-thinking spaces for creativity, communication, and collaboration," Brod said. "I'm thrilled to support the renovation of Newcomb Hall and to help create a wing that will inspire students for decades to come."

Brod's gift is one of several major investments preparing Newcomb Hall for its next chapter as the home of the school.



Alison Friedman Brod

## Reimagining the First Floor

Support from **Doris Seelig Davis (NC '48)**, **Robert (A&S '92) and Lynne Wolfberg**, **Barry (A&S '91) and Tomm Miller and family**, **John Isakson (A&S '92)**, and **the Argenti family** helps us transform the first floor of Newcomb Hall around a vision for the future of Liberal Arts education. The first floor features state of the art gathering spaces, collaborative rooms and meeting spaces, and a fully reimagined Dean's Office with flexible spaces for the School's many interdisciplinary programs. Together, these gifts will restore the building's role as a flagship of the school, welcoming students, faculty, alumni, and visitors into a shared space for conversation, scholarship, and community.

## Creating the Media Hub of the Fourth Floor

Additional support from **Wayne Teetsel (A&S '87)** and **Louis Jung (A&S '68)** complements Brod's vision for the fourth floor. New production studios, editing suites, and flexible teaching spaces will bring together communication, journalism, film, and digital media in an environment designed for collaboration and creative practice.

"Newcomb Hall has always been at the center of liberal arts education at Tulane," said **Dean Brian T. Edwards**. "Thanks to the generosity of these alumni and families, it will once again be a place where students and faculty come together to learn, create, and discover."

Together, these gifts are updating one of Tulane's most iconic buildings while realizing a renewed vision for Newcomb Hall — one that brings back the openness of James Gamble Rogers' original design, breaks down barriers between disciplines, and creates state-of-the-art spaces where students and faculty can learn, discover, and connect for decades to come.

# The World Comes to New Orleans



**How the Tulane Global Humanities Center is making New Orleans a crossroads for the world's most important conversations.**

**BY ALLISON BEONDÉ**
**Assistant Director, Tulane Global Humanities Center**



Vyjayanthi Rao, Co-editor of Public Culture journal













**NEW ORLEANS** has always been **a city** in conversation with the world. Situated at the mouth of the Mississippi River, it has long been a vital crossroads for goods, people, and ideas, shaped by cultural exchange, environmental vulnerability, and constant adaptation. Few places better illustrate the complexities of our interconnected world.

In its second year, the Tulane Global Humanities Center (TGHC) has expanded its reach even further. Public Culture, the internationally recognized journal published by Duke University Press, officially moved to the TGHC. This transition establishes Tulane's School of Liberal Arts as the new home for one of the humanities' leading forums for interdisciplinary scholarship. Co-edited by Brian T. Edwards, dean of the School of Liberal Arts, and Vyjayanthi Rao, visiting professor at Yale School of Architecture, the journal joins a center founded on the belief that today's most pressing questions demand organic conversations across disciplines, cultures, and borders.

Located here in New Orleans, TGHC offers a distinctive vantage point. Rather than organizing our work around traditional academic boundaries, we view the center as a sandbox for ideas. We build unexpected exchanges between scholars, artists, architects, writers, and practitioners whose work reveals new ways of understanding global challenges.

Our philosophy comes to life through this collaborative programming. One recent event brought together Shennette Garrett-Scott, professor of History and Africana Studies, and Michael Cohen, founding director of the Grant Center for the American Jewish Experience. They explored the intersecting histories of Black financial institutions and Jewish commercial networks to see how they shaped belonging and economic opportunity. Rather than presenting parallel research, the two scholars directly responded to one another's work, uncovering new ideas in the spaces between their disciplines.

Another event paired New Orleans artist, Hannah Chalew, with ethnomusicologist, Ana María Ochoa Gautier. Together, they highlighted unexpected intersections between ecological art and underwater government sonar infrastructure. By exploring the sonic qualities of water and aqueous terrain as a site of conquest, they demonstrated how conversations across fields can illuminate questions neither discipline could answer alone.

We extend this spirit of exchange beyond public programs. Through research funding, fellowships, collaborative working groups, and international partnerships, we actively support scholarship spanning the Gulf South and countries around the world. In 2026 alone, we funded research across more than seven countries, alongside vital projects within and pertaining to the Gulf South region.

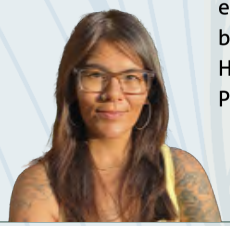
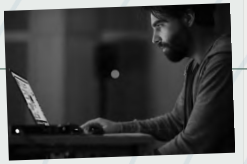
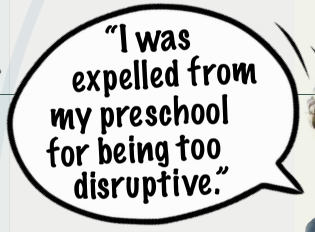
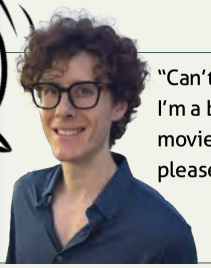
As we take our place in Newcomb Hall, we're eager to continue working alongside our community, both locally and globally. With the arrival of Public Culture to the center, an incredible lineup of programming in place for this year, and growing international partnerships, we're entering our most ambitious year yet.

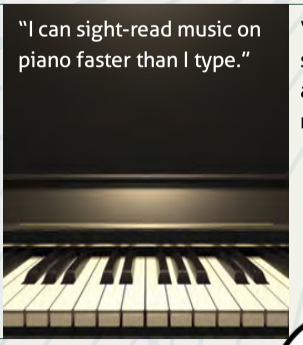
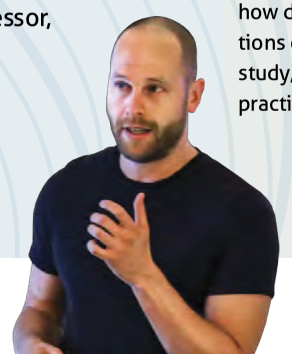
# New Faculty, in Their Own Words

**What do a bioarchaeologist, a glass artist, a body percussionist and a philosopher expelled from preschool have in common? They are among 15 new School of Liberal Arts faculty bringing fresh questions, creative practices, and unexpected perspectives to Tulane. In these three quick-read introductions, they share what animates their work, what they value in students, a few surprising personal stories — and what draws them to New Orleans.**

| | What are you exploring? | What might surprise people about you? | What student question stays with you? | Where does New Orleans enter the picture? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sebastian Galiani**<br>Professor, Economics and the Weatherhead Presidential Chair in Economics | "I am excited to join an ambitious department at an important moment in its development, and to contribute to its work in development economics and Latin America." | "I once served as Argentina's vice minister of economy." | "What happens if we change the assumptions?"  | "I am looking forward to discovering New Orleans." Away from campus, he'll be "reading at home or going for a long walk." |
| **Anne Dymek**<br>Assistant Professor, Comparative Literature  | "I hope to develop two interdisciplinary research initiatives alongside my book projects: an investigation of literary immersion and perspective-taking, and the 'Poetic Brain Project,' exploring whether noninvasive brain technologies can support imagination and creativity." | "I've fallen in love because of a footnote."  | "One of my favorites came during a seminar on Hegel: 'So…Hegel is God?'" | "It's as though imagination is everywhere here: in the magnificent trees, the music, the voodoo, the banana plants growing outside my window. To me, New Orleans is one of those rare places that dream with you." |
| **Ryan Johnson**<br>Assistant Professor, Theatre & Dance | Johnson brings African diasporic percussive traditions, theater, technology, scholarship, and community practice into conversation through what he calls Gumbo Theory. The framework treats identity and artistic practice as "layered, seasoned, inherited, transformed, and continually evolving." | "I performed with Gregory Hines. I'm the first African American body percussionist to receive a Guggenheim in choreography." |   | "I am excited to deepen my understanding of New Orleans' cultural identity" and learn from the communities and artists who have shaped its cultural ecosystem. |
| **Alli Hoag**<br>Assistant Professor, Newcomb Department of Art  | "I am fascinated by microscopic forms. When one looks so closely at something, the familiar becomes fantastic." She is also developing Light Forms, a modular structural glass building system.  | "I developed an oyster allergy after I moved away from New Orleans years ago, so as happy as I am to be back, I will have to live without some of my favorite tasty New Orleans treats!" | "If I inhale while blowing on a blowpipe, will my insides get burned?" Hoag adds reassuringly: "Luckily, the answer is no!"  | "I am really inspired by the fact that the whole city has a cultural heartbeat that centers creativity and community." Find her "biking around, exploring New Orleans." |
| **Jason Byas**<br>Assistant Professor, Philosophy  | His research focuses on criminal punishment and its alternatives, including "retributive failure," the conditions under which systems for responding to wrongdoing become counterproductive. | "Prior to moving here, New Orleans was the city I'd visited the most without ever living in the associated state." | "When a student openly says that they didn't understand something from the reading and asks for clarification. If one student didn't understand it, it's probably unclear to others — they're just the one brave enough to say it." | "I love places that feel like you're in a particular place with its own character, and not just a randomly selected city. Obviously, New Orleans fits that bill — probably more so than anywhere else in the United States." |



| | What's at the center of your work? | What's an unexpected piece of your story? | What are you reading, watching or awaiting? | Where might we find you away from campus? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Andrew Ridgeway**<br>Assistant Professor, English<br> | "I like it when students ask why we're doing something. It forces me to ask myself the same question. If I don't have a good answer, it's probably not a very good assignment." | "My wife and I own a bookstore in Fayetteville, North Carolina. It's called Chapter House Books and sells new and used books." | "I've been enjoying Octavia Butler's 'Patternmaster' series," which examines "how power and rigid hierarchies shape relationships and our understanding of community." | "I spend a lot of my free time running online events for my wife's bookstore, including our A–Z Philosophy Club. We're starting with Agamben and ending with Žižek." |
| **Jordi Rivera Prince**<br>Assistant Professor, Anthropology<br> | Rivera Prince is a bioarchaeologist and mortuary archaeologist whose research encompasses human skeletal analysis, burial contexts, beliefs about death, and social inequality. Her cemetery projects extend from Peru to Providence, Rhode Island. | "I participated in Dutch Dance during a festival called Tulip Time at a high school in Holland, Michigan." | "Cinematically, I'm getting ready for the new season of The Real Housewives of New York, and book-wise, I'm always thinking about Victor Villaseñor's 'Rain of Gold.'" | "I'll most likely be at the Crescent City Farmers Market in City Park enjoying a mango-ginger smoothie with my family, eating a Vietnamese po'boy from Singleton's, growing different kinds of chili peppers in my backyard, or trying to see how many alligators I can spot down in the Barataria Preserve." |
| **Robert Seaback**<br>Assistant Professor, Newcomb Department of Music<br> | Seaback's compositions integrate voices, instruments, soundscapes, and synthetic sources through digital techniques, spanning spatial audio, mixed ensemble music, improvisation, and sound installation.<br> | "I took a cold plunge in Oslo." | "Dune: Part Three."<br> | He is looking forward to "digging into the rich history and uniqueness of New Orleans and finding a sense of place." Look for him "running around the park, working at a coffee shop or my home studio, at a bar, or a metal concert." |
| **Alexander Schaefer**<br>Assistant Professor, Philosophy | Schaefer's current research uses formal methods to study "the evolution and stability of social and moral institutions." |  | "Can't wait to see Titanic. I'm a bit behind on movies — no spoilers, please."<br> | "I've heard great things about Tulane students. Nothing is better than teaching students who actually do the assigned reading." Away from campus, he'll be "somewhere that serves gumbo." |
| **Melissa Pavlik**<br>Assistant Professor, Political Science<br> | Pavlik's research examines informality, repression, the effects of political violence, and the political economy of climate change, with a focus on West Africa. | "I was on Reading Rainbow once as a kid."<br> | "I've been making my way through Alan Furst's 'Night Soldiers' novels—historically detailed stories about resistance networks across Europe during World War II." | "What doesn't excite me about NOLA and Tulane? I'm thrilled about the music, culture, people, complicated history — and beignets." Off campus, she'll be DIYing, befriending neighborhood cats, kayaking, or exploring on foot "when I figure out how to go outside in this humidity without collapsing." |

| | What question or idea animates your work? | What's your strongest truth for "two truths and a lie?" | What do you enjoy hearing from students? | How are you connecting with New Orleans? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Rebecca De Souza**<br>Assistant Professor, Spanish & Portuguese, and Middle East & North African Studies | "How can studying distant, premodern societies today help us shape our communities' futures for the better?" | "I'm not actually Portuguese or Brazilian, contrary to popular belief." | Her teaching invites students to connect the study of distant, premodern societies with questions facing communities today.  | She is excited about "the food in New Orleans and collaborating with new colleagues across Spanish & Portuguese and the MENA program at Tulane." Off campus, she'll be "hanging out in City Park with her hairless Chinese Crested, Roland." |
| **Dylan Parrilla-Koester**<br>Professor of Practice, Newcomb Department of Music and the Director of Bands | His interests include "higher music education policy, the philosophical intersection of sport and art, [and] the politics of school curricula."  | "I played trumpet in a second-line funeral in Stratford-upon-Avon to celebrate the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death." | "I love when prospective band students ask anything along the lines of, 'What makes Tulane special?' — I could write a dissertation on it!" | "Marching band culture, of course!" Away from campus, he'll be "jogging on the St. Charles Avenue streetcar tracks." |
| **Aigerim Magavina**<br>Professor of Practice, Newcomb Department of Music  | Magavina's work as a collaborative pianist, vocal coach, and educator spans opera, choir, orchestra, musical theatre, and recital performance. | "I can sight-read music on piano faster than I type."  | "My favorite questions are the ones that show how passionate students can be about music. Their excitement reminds me why I love teaching." | "New Orleans has been my home for the past 24 years, and I have come to love this city because of its people, who have continually amazed me with their resilience, kindness, and welcoming spirit. These qualities remind me so much of the people in my native country Kazakhstan, making New Orleans feel like a true second home." |
| **Dustin Gray**<br>Assistant Professor, English & Native American & Indigenous Studies | Gray's current book project, 'Novel Silence: The Limits of Articulation in Native American Fiction,' examines inarticulate protagonists and their role in shaping readers' expectations. | "Salman Rushdie once made fun of my nickname."   | | What excites him about New Orleans? "The food." Away from campus you can find him at a "record store." |
| **David Landes**<br>Assistant Professor, English  | "I study contemporary attention," including how disciplines, communities, and traditions conceive of attention "as an object of study, a method of inquiry, and technique of practice." | "I had prior posts at NYU Shanghai, American University of Beirut, and American University in Dubai." | "How come this wasn't taught to everyone sooner?"  | "I'm a jazz drummer, and this is ground zero." Away from campus, he'll be exploring "art scenes" and "improvising noisy cosmos-trash." |

# A Day in the Life

**Three Tulane University School of Liberal Arts students from the Dean's Student Advisory Board take us through their personal journeys, where they balance their interdisciplinary interests, classes, and clubs to create a full School of Liberal Arts experience.**



## Brandon Nguyen

Environmental Studies
Class of 2029

**11 AM:**
I headed out to my first class of the day: Approaches to Environmental Studies. Today, we did a waste audit with the sustainability office! We got to sort through trash and recycling and learn about how recycling at Tulane really works.



**12 PM:**
Next, I went to Music at Midday, which is a super chill class where we learn about music history and attend an on-campus concert every Wednesday at noon. Today, I got to listen to James Oakes performing his program "Piano Music by Black American Composers."



**4 PM:**
This afternoon I went to my weekly meeting for my Posse Scholars group. Today, one of my Posse-mates led a workshop on leadership. As part of it, we did an activity where we competed to build the tallest free-standing structure with tape and noodles (my team won).

**7 PM:**
I got some studying done in the evening with my suitemates, Andrew and Gileomar. It's helpful for me to study with friends so we can hold each other accountable. It also helps to explain topics to one another.



**10 PM:**
I ended the night by playing FIFA with my friends, Essaid and Matthews. This is how I like to wind down, but we usually get super competitive and stay up playing way longer than we plan.





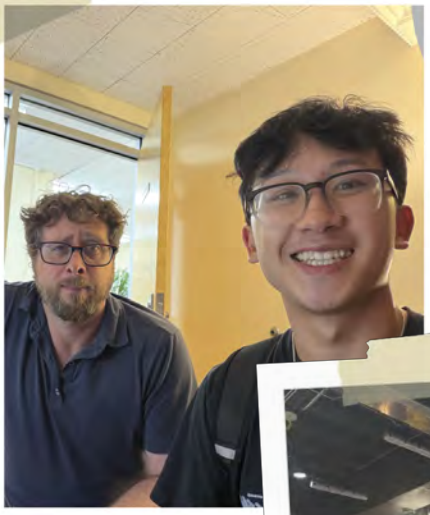
# Austin Vu

Philosophy with concentration in Language, Mind, and Knowledge on the Pre-Med Track
Class of 2029

9 AM: I am a peer mentor for Chara Kokkiou's TIDES class: Love and Compassion in Action. This week we went to the Newcomb Museum, and students were asked to write about pieces that evoked feelings for them. I loved seeing the pottery pieces on display and learning what they were used for before they were preserved in the museum.

12 PM: This is a cryostat machine in my research lab. It's used to slice mice brains so we can stain them to see specific indicators/ expressions. My lab, The Liz Lab, is studying B cells and its impact on resilience and its susceptibility to stress.



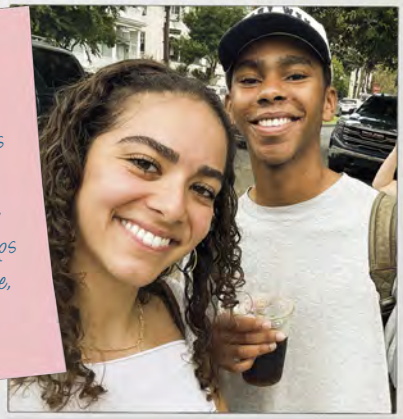


3 PM: I started off by going to my weekly meeting with Professor Daniel Burnston for my Tenenbaum Tutorials project. I am currently doing research on how we can evaluate artificial consciousness through functionalist and other consciousness theories.

5 PM: I stopped by my favorite hangout spot on campus, the Rat. It always has a super cozy vibe, and the consoles are always open to use. I also love coming here for movie and karaoke nights!

# Zoraya Rodriguez-Mowzoun

Sociology and Gender & Sexuality Studies, Social Work, and Gender-Based Violence Certificate
Class of 2027



I went to the Labyrinth for coffee and breakfast with my friend Wesley before my Social Statistics class. I like making plans before class because it gives me something to look forward to, helps me start my day on a good note, and fuels my body.




After class, I walked to Rimon, where I took my online class. Rimon not only has a delicious menu where I can use my wavebucks, but it is also a great study spot with both inside and outside options, which I like depending on the New Orleans heat.




I facilitated a Community Table Talks session on the Red Zone, representing the Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline & Education (SAPHE). We brought students together to discuss what the Red Zone means to them, why conversations about consent can feel uncomfortable, and how we can help keep one another safer.



I went to the LBC to study with some friends. Even though I have friends from different schools, we like to study together and motivate one another. I also really enjoy learning about what they're studying in their class and sharing what I've learned in mine.



I went to the Peer Health Educator and SAPHE Student Space in Campus Health to go talk to members about our ongoing projects and goals for this year. As president of SAPHE, I've loved making new friends and collaborating with other students to build resources that support survivors in our community.



I went to my Intro to Social Policy and Practice class, which I have with one of my roommates, Lyla. We are both Sociology majors and Social Work minors, which makes it really fun to take classes together and study after class as well.


WHAT
COMES
NEXT



# America 250: To Sustain Democracy, We Need the Liberal Arts

**BY WALTER ISAACSON**
**Leonard Lauder Professor of American History and Values**

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,** who never got to go to college, was a deep believer in the importance of a broad-based liberal arts education to create good citizens and promote the health of democracy. For that reason, while working as a young tradesman in Philadelphia in the 1740s, he decided to create an academy for the education of youth, which eventually became the University of Pennsylvania. "The good education of youth," he wrote in his proposal, "has been esteemed by wise men in all ages as the surest foundation of the happiness both of private families and of commonwealths and nations." Widespread liberal education would supply each new generation with individuals "qualified to serve the public with honor to themselves, and to their country." The focus of such an education, he wrote, should be on history, writing, oratory, arithmetic, and business skills. He particularly stressed the importance of teaching history:

"Reading good history must be to fix in the minds of youth deep impressions of the beauty and usefulness of virtue of all kinds, public spirit, fortitude, etc. History will also give occasion to expatiate on the advantage of civil orders and Constitutions, how men and their properties are protected by joining in societies and establishing government."

Thomas Jefferson likewise believed in the link between education and liberty. By studying the history of fallen republics such as Rome, citizens would learn to identify the "germs" of corruption in their own leaders. A people cannot remain both "ignorant and free," he

argued. "Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day." This is one reason why, following the lead of Franklin, he founded — and took great pride in — the University of Virginia. He proposed a "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" in Virginia, arguing that the state should pay to educate all children to make them capable guardians of their own liberty. "I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people," he wrote to a colleague. "No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness." Jefferson and Franklin differed in one regard. Jefferson favored creating what he called a "natural aristocracy" to replace the hereditary aristocracy that existed in England. In his "Notes on the State of Virginia," he advocated a school system in which "the best geniuses [would be] selected, and continued six years, and the residue dismissed. By this means 20 of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually and be instructed at the public expense."

Franklin correctly saw the danger of creating a meritocratic aristocracy. His proposals for what became the University of Pennsylvania were designed not to filter a new elite but to provide opportunities and enrichment for all young people to succeed as best they could, whatever their level of talent. He aimed at what he called "true merit," which he defined as "an inclination joined with an ability to serve mankind, one's country, friends and family, which . . . should indeed be the great aim and end of all learning."

Franklin's vision was, of course, more democratic, and it became the model for education in the United States. To preserve democracy and have a healthy society, all people, whatever their natural talents, should have the opportunity to get an education. The narrative of the past two centuries includes efforts to make grammar school, then high school, and then college more available.

Democracy depends on citizens who can think clearly, argue honestly, judge evidence, imagine lives unlike their own, and resist the seductions of propaganda, tribalism, and fear. That is why the liberal arts matter so deeply to democratic life. At their best, the liberal arts prepare people to be citizens. They cultivate curiosity, skepticism, interpretation, and moral reflection. History is especially important because it gives citizens memory. A democracy without memory is easily manipulated. History teaches that rights can be lost; free institutions survive only when citizens defend them. It also teaches humility. As Franklin said, in arguing in favor of compromise at the Constitutional Convention, "The older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment and pay more respect to the judgment of others."

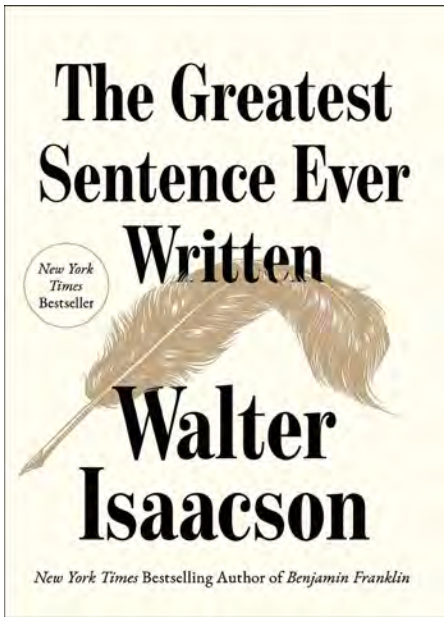
**"... the liberal arts are crucial. They train people to pause, compare, interpret, and doubt."**

Literature strengthens democracy by nurturing empathy. A novel, a play, or a poem draws us into consciousnesses other than our own. It teaches us that other people are human beings with motives, wounds, loyalties, and hopes. Democracy requires this moral imagination. In a pluralistic society, we must live among people whose beliefs, backgrounds, and values differ from ours.

The arts, too, have a democratic role. Music, painting, theater, and film deepen a culture's sense of itself. They preserve memory, while also challenging orthodoxies. A healthy society depends on shared stories, symbols, aspirations, and forms of beauty. In an era of new technologies, most notably artificial intelligence, the societies that flourish will be the ones that know how to connect the humanities to technology, that expand rather than narrow the roles that human ideals and creativity can play.

At his final product launch before he died, Steve Jobs ended his presentation, like he had done on many previous occasions, with a slide of a street sign showing the intersection of Liberal Arts Street and Technology Street. "It's in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough," he said. "We believe that it's technology married with the humanities that yields us the result that makes our heart sing."

As we enter the era of AI, with all the information and misinformation it will serve up to us every hour, we must understand that the crisis facing democracy today is one of interpretation, trust, judgment, and meaning. For this, the liberal arts are crucial. They train people to pause, compare, interpret, and doubt.




SIMON & SCHUSTER, 2025.

**WALTER ISAACSON explores the Declaration of Independence's defining sentence in his 2025 book, "The Greatest Sentence Ever Written."**

# Preparing for Work That May Not Yet Exist

**How Tulane University School of Liberal Arts is helping students navigate a future no one can fully predict.**

**ASK A ROOM** full of first-year students what career they'll have 15 years from now. It's a trick question. Some of those careers don't exist yet.

That's reshaping how the Tulane School of Liberal Arts prepares students for their careers.

Rather than trying to predict the future of work, the school is preparing students to navigate it. The goal isn't simply to master today's knowledge, but to develop the qualities that remain valuable as industries, technologies, and careers evolve: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, adaptability, and the ability to connect ideas across disciplines.

That philosophy is already reshaping classrooms across the school.

One example is **Fast 15**, a series of one-credit, 15-hour intensive courses designed to connect liberal arts learning with emerging industries through hands-on projects, alumni mentors, and working professionals. Rather than waiting until junior or senior year to think about careers, students begin exploring them from their first semester on campus.

Whether exploring careers in entertainment, public policy, entrepreneurship, or digital media, students begin connecting liberal arts learning to professional opportunities from their first semester on campus. This fall, one Fast 15 course partnered with an investigative journalist to explore one of journalism's newest frontiers: identifying AI-generated fakes and authenticating digital content.

Departments are rethinking their curricula in equally practical ways. **Allison Truitt, professor of anthropology and Asian studies,** is developing courses that apply ethnographic research methods to fields such as user experience design, telemedicine, and financial intelligence. Archaeologists are connecting geographic information systems with urban planning. Language and culture courses increasingly teach the negotiation and cross-cultural communication demanded by a global workforce, including business negotiation in French and medical translation in Spanish.

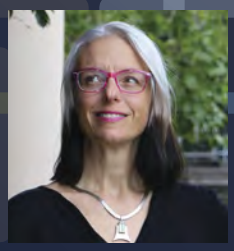
Students can also prepare for a potential medical career by taking the theatre course **Act Like a Doctor**, where they practice one of the oldest forms of professional education. They act the part before they play the part, developing the presence, empathy, and communication skills they'll carry into their careers.

Students interested in building something of their own can take those ideas even further through the **Start-Up Strategy Lab**, where interdisciplinary teams develop ventures and pitch them for funding and mentorship through the Tulane Innovation Institute. One student venture, the eco-swimwear company **Chark**, drew lines around the block at its first public pop-up, demonstrating how ideas born in the classroom can quickly become real-world enterprises.

These innovations demonstrate how the liberal arts' enduring ways of thinking can be applied to emerging challenges. They show that a liberal arts education is defined not by a single career path, but by the ability to recognize opportunity, adapt to change, and connect ideas wherever work may lead.

**"Many of today's students will spend their careers doing work that hasn't been invented yet."**

Many of today's students will spend their careers doing work that hasn't been invented yet. The school isn't trying to predict those careers. It's preparing students to shape them.



**VICKI MAYER**
**Professor of Communication and Senior Advisor to the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts**

# Where Liberal Arts Works Next


Travis A. Torrence

**There's much debate about liberal arts degrees. Yet, over and over again, we find liberal arts majors at the top of companies, in government, and as non-profit leaders. We caught up with four distinguished Tulane alumni whose careers have taken them through exciting leadership challenges and opportunities. They shared how their liberal arts education prepared them with the adaptability to establish meaningful careers. Years later, that foundation continues to shape their professional and personal lives.**

**BY MARY SPARACELLO**
**Assistant Director, Advancement Communications & Marketing**

## Kimberly Rengel Furnish (NC '98)

Studio Art major
Career diplomat, currently Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy, The Bahamas

**WHEN I WAS** competing for the job here to help run the U.S. Embassy in the Bahamas, a very high official asked me, "Why should we hire you?"

I said, "I didn't have your average path to the Foreign Service. I didn't go to Georgetown; I was a studio art major at Tulane. That gives you an officer who knows how to think broadly, how to think about the world in many dimensions, how to approach people in a creative way, and that really is the heart of diplomacy."

He gave me the job.

I think creativity and the ability to approach problems from different directions are incredibly important in today's world. Many of the communication and creative skills I learned at Tulane, I apply every day here.

Kimberly Rengel Furnish (left), and Hank Perlman



When I first joined the Foreign Service, I had a mentor who talked about gumbo diplomacy, this idea that when you get to your post, you're not just conducting formal meetings in a boardroom, but you're bringing people into your kitchen. It's about people-to-people ties.

I still have foreign contacts that come into my kitchen. I cook them gumbo, and we talk about things that matter.

**"You're not just conducting formal meetings in a boardroom, but you're bringing people into your kitchen."**

## Hank Perlman (A&S '88, P SLA '30)

English and Philosophy major
Co-founder, Hungry Man Productions

**I DIDN'T KNOW** who I was or what I wanted to study when I arrived at Tulane. I gravitated toward the subjects that had fewer right and wrong answers.

English and philosophy taught me how great ideas work: how to express them and break them apart. Learning how to write is learning how to think. And thinking, generating ideas, and communicating are pretty much everything I do.

After Tulane, I took an entry-level job at an advertising agency. In addition to movies, music, and TV, I always loved sports, and I was able to combine everything I enjoyed when I started writing TV commercials for Nike and ESPN. That led to working at MTV and moving from writing to directing and starting a film production company


Maria Sebastian

with a fellow director that's been going strong for 30 years. Our company has produced more Super Bowl commercials than any other.

Liberal arts specifically teaches you how to think in a way artificial intelligence can't. You're exposed to original ideas, perspectives, and concepts that encourage critical thinking and help you develop and communicate your own ideas. AI can't write a good joke or devise a meaningful world view.

I truly believe the liberal arts are the best preparation for a career, and that a fulfilling career is essential to a full life. But a liberal arts education offers something more: it makes you a more thoughtful, well-rounded, and wiser person. And it certainly makes you more interesting to talk to at a cocktail party.

## Maria Sebastian (NC '92, P SLA '27)

Economics and Spanish major, Dance minor
Chief Marketing Officer

**ECONOMICS, SPANISH AND** dance may seem an unlikely combination for a future chief marketing officer, but in many ways they have defined how I approach my career. I was drawn to a liberal arts education at Tulane because it gave me the freedom to pursue different interests and connect them in meaningful ways. Economics taught me to understand systems, analyze evidence and bring structure to complex problems. Dance further developed my creativity, discipline, and confidence, while Spanish added another perspective on culture, communication, and the world beyond my own experience.

Since Tulane, I've built a global career across industries, including chief marketing roles at Virgin Atlantic, Starbucks EMEA, and Greene King. Today, I live and work in London, where I've spent the past 20 years leading marketing, branding, and commercial functions at Taylor Wimpey.

My liberal arts education shaped how I approach problems: looking at issues from multiple perspectives, questioning assumptions, and making connections across disciplines. Marketing and customer leadership sit at that intersection, combining analytical and commercial rigor with creativity, empathy, and an understanding of people.

Working across different countries and cultures, including London, where I have lived and worked for the past 20 years, has reinforced that perspective. An idea that works in one market can't simply be translated into another; you need to understand the underlying context. History, politics, cultural orientation, and social norms shape how people think and behave. That interdisciplinary foundation taught me to look beneath the surface and ask not just *what*, but *why*.

The further you progress in your career, the fewer problems have a single correct answer. That's the enduring value of a liberal arts education: it prepares you not just for your first job, but for the opportunities and challenges you cannot yet anticipate.

**"Whether you become a lawyer, engineer, physician, entrepreneur, journalist, or business executive, your long-term success will depend less on what you know today and more on your ability to learn, adapt, and lead tomorrow. My own career is a good example."**

## Travis A. Torrence (TC '02)

Communication and Political Science major
U.S. Head of Legal, Shell

**I'VE ALWAYS BEEN** fascinated by people, institutions, and the ways ideas shape our world. Communication and political science felt like the perfect combination because one taught me how messages influence people, while the other helped me understand how decisions are made and power is exercised.

More than anything, Tulane taught me how to think.

In legal practice and business leadership, people often assume the most valuable skill is having the right answer. In reality, the more important skill is asking the right questions. My liberal arts education taught me to examine issues from multiple perspectives, challenge assumptions, evaluate evidence, and communicate ideas clearly.

Whether you become a lawyer, engineer, physician, entrepreneur, journalist, or business executive, your long-term success will depend less on what you know today and more on your ability to learn, adapt, and lead tomorrow. My own career is a good example. I went from radio to law, from litigation to corporate leadership, and from legal practice to significant nonprofit and community leadership roles. The constant was the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and adapt to new challenges. That's the enduring value of a liberal arts education. It doesn't just prepare you for your first job. It prepares you for a lifetime of change.

# An Indirect Path to Capitol Hill, Hollywood, and Everything In Between



**Five young alumni show that meaningful careers are often built one opportunity at a time.**

**THERE IS NO single roadmap from a liberal arts education to a career.**

**There are Tulanians who head to Washington. Others find themselves in Hollywood, renewable energy, or nonprofit leadership. Few of the folks we spoke to could have predicted exactly where they would land when they first arrived at Tulane, but each discovered that curiosity, initiative, and a willingness to embrace unexpected opportunities mattered as much as any carefully crafted plan.**

**Here are five recent Tulane University School of Liberal Arts alumni whose careers have taken them in remarkably different directions.**

## Meredith Galanti (SLA '20)

Associate for Strategic Engagements, Gates Ventures

**GALANTI WORKED ON** the 2020 presidential campaign cycle after graduating with a degree in Political Science. She served on the White House Transition Team and held appointments at the U.S. Department of Education and the White House in the Biden-Harris administration before joining Gates Ventures.

"Courses like Women in Politics and Comparative Politics sparked my interest in political science and helped shape my career in public service. Beyond the classroom, my experiences as an Orientation Counselor, Green Wave Ambassador, and at the Taylor Center taught me the value of building community and connecting with leaders for collective impact, lessons I have carried with me from New Orleans to Washington, D.C., New York City, and beyond."

## Akira Shelton (SLA '24)

Production Coordinator, Sony Pictures Entertainment

**GRADUATING WITH A** degree in Political Science and Africana Studies, Shelton started in the mailroom at United Talent Agency and worked her way up to the agency side. She is now a production coordinator for Sony Pictures Entertainment, working in their Game Show Group on shows like "Wheel of Fortune" and "Jeopardy!".

"My sophomore year I took a political science class called 'Sustainable Tourism,' where I learned that in order for change to be sustainable it requires small steps, must be reversible, needs to anticipate surprises, and makes way for human inventiveness. It was true in the academic context of talking about change, but also serves as fantastic career advice — whether that's navigating career changes or tackling large endeavors. It's a perfect example of how easily applicable a political science degree can be."



### Kendall Pierce (SLA '23)
First-Year Law Student, Tulane Law School

**AFTER GRADUATING WITH** a degree in Communications and Sociology, Pierce took a role as a community partnership coordinator at BEAR (Be A Resource). She is currently following her childhood dream of becoming a lawyer and has returned to Tulane as a first-year law student at Tulane Law School.

"The class that stands out to me most from my time as a liberal arts student, relating to my decision to eventually go to law school, was Associate Professor of Sociology Camilo Arturo Leslie's course 'Sociology of Law.' The class, for lack of a better description, blew my mind, and reignited the desire I had to go to law school when I was a little girl first seeing Legally Blonde. Hearing the connections and history of law in sociological terms and theories was incredibly fascinating to me and impactful in my future career decisions."

### Amanda Krantz (SLA '22)
Policy Analyst on the Energy Team, National Governors Association

**KRANTZ GRADUATED A** semester early with a double major in Environmental Studies and Political Science and began working as an analyst for the Energy Division of the California Public Utilities Commission. She recently completed a Master's degree in Environmental and Sustainability Policy from George Washington University and currently works as an energy policy analyst at the National Governors Association.

"During my last few years at Tulane, I worked on a project trying to get solar on campus. My first boss told me that she hired me because of the project management skills I gained from this self-directed project and the drive I had to work toward the future of clean energy. What began as just a passion project became the foundation of my career in energy policy."

### Suhas Subramanyam (SLA '08)
U.S. Representative, Virginia's 10th Congressional District

**A PHILOSOPHY MAJOR,** Subramanyam found his calling in public service after living through Hurricane Katrina as a Tulane student. He became the first South Asian American elected to the Virginia General Assembly in 2019 and won a seat in the Virginia Senate four years later in 2023. In November 2024, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

"I wanted to be part of the rebuilding of New Orleans. Before Katrina, I was just kind of going through the motions, unsure of what I would do with my life. But afterward, I saw a purpose — serving the community."



Jordan, 9 years old, and Selah Phillips (SLA, '26) warm up for their production of "Animal Crackers" at New Orleans non-profit Cultivating Youth.

# In New Orleans, For New Orleans

**Tulane University School of Liberal Arts students learn through serving the community.**

As part of their service-learning requirement, students from the School of Liberal Arts' Theatre and Dance Department worked with local nonprofit Cultivating Youth to stage an environment-themed production called "Animal Crackers," where they practiced the skills of putting on, producing, writing, and directing a play. The nonprofit's directors Mack and Mia Terrance tackle childhood obesity, bullying, low self-esteem, violence, and the school-to-prison pipeline in underserved communities in the area. Tulane's academic service-learning program has been front and center in the Tulane curriculum since fall 2006, when Tulane's leadership launched the Center for Public Service as part of the university's post-Hurricane Katrina Renewal Plan.

# Help us decide the future of the Tulane School of Liberal Arts Magazine

Tulane University School of Liberal Arts has published the **"Tulane School of Liberal Arts Magazine"** since 2019. Each issue addresses larger questions and issues of the world and explores the school's global and interdisciplinary approach to the study of the humanities, social sciences, and the fine and performing arts. We've showcased exciting faculty research, highlighted innovative teaching methodologies, and featured student and alumni community engagement and creative endeavors, celebrating the broader definition of a liberal arts education.

As we consider the future of the magazine, and the most effective means to communicate with you, our valued audience, we are requesting your feedback.

How would you like to receive the kinds of stories found in the magazine you just read?

Use this QR code for a one-question survey.

