

Tulane SoPA launches new Center for Applied Research

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Graduates and faculty of the John Lewis Public Administration Program gather with family and friends during the 2023 year-end reception. (Photo by CFreedom Photography)

The Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) recently launched a new center through which public administration graduate students will serve as consultants for businesses, nonprofit organizations and government agencies as part of their studies.

The [Center for Applied Research](#) will serve as a pipeline for bringing civic-leadership talent to the local community and bolstering community engagement throughout the New Orleans area. The center, housed within Tulane SoPA's John Lewis Public Administration Program, will collaborate with organizations on research that directly supports real-world projects.

"The center serves in a capacity that benefits both our students and the community," said Suri Duitch, Dean of Tulane SoPA. "Student fellows will gain valuable experience responding to issues that affect the community, and our partners can work with our top-tier graduate students pursuing a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree from Tulane SoPA."

Businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies can choose from two forms of partnerships. For smaller projects not expected to exceed one semester, organizations may request a consultancy that includes the assistance of one research fellow at no cost. For more involved projects, organizations can choose the applied research consultancy option, which provides access to a team of research fellows and faculty experts for a fee.

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—Halima Leak Francis, Director

Halima Leak Francis, director of the [John Lewis Public Administration Program](#) and [Center for Applied Research](#), said strengthening local public service leadership is central to the mission of the public administration program.

"We achieve this aim in many ways including our practice-focused curriculum, capstone consultancies, internships, and residencies," said Leak Francis. "This center expands our capacity to carry out these goals. It offers more ways for us to be a resource for partners throughout the Greater New Orleans area while actively standing with public service professionals and other leaders who are working to address our society's most pressing issues."

The center's establishment continues the John Lewis Public Administration Program's impact, said Leak Francis, noting that the program's MPA graduates have already participated in more than 25 capstone consultancies. During the consultancies, student fellows work with community partners to find solutions to issues faced by that organization. The center is currently engaged in four community-based projects where they collaborate with the Women's Foundation of the South, the Greater New Orleans Foundation and on two separate projects with Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission. Each project spans an anticipated one to three years in duration.

Requests for consultancy can be submitted by visiting the website and selecting [Become a Community Partner](#).