

## Tulane SoPA, Operation Restoration celebrate first College-in-Prison grad

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From left, College-in-Prison Director Marko Salvaggio, Tulane SoPA Interim Dean Ilianna Kwaske, alumna Stephanie King, Operation Restoration founder and CEO Syrita Steib, and Operation Restoration Higher Ed Administrator Tracy Pratt celebrate King's success. (Photo by Andrea Sagnard | Tulane SoPA)

The Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) and Operation Restoration (OR) celebrated the first graduate of the [College-in-Prison Program](#) Thursday, Jan. 9, with a reception on the Uptown campus. Stephanie King, who continued the program after her release last year, earned the Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences degree with a summa cum laude honor designation in December 2024.

“This wasn’t just about earning a diploma,” said King. “It was about proving to myself that I could change, that I could build something better for myself and my family.”

Tulane SoPA interim dean Ilianna Kwaske called King’s success a testament to “the transformative power of second chances.”?

“Stephanie’s success is a powerful reminder of why programs like this matter,” said Kwaske. “She is proof that growth and positive change are always possible, and that education truly is a path to a better future.”

King is one of five women to have been released since beginning the program and now serves as an example of the program’s success and evidence that education is a viable path to rehabilitation for incarcerated women.

“You are a tremendous example of what can happen when given an opportunity,” said Syrita Steib, founder, president and CEO of OR, during the reception. “It is a testament to who you are and how your life has changed that you were able to come out and not only do it at an accelerated pace but work full time and become a teaching assistant for other students who are released.”

The College-in-Prison Program opened enrollment for its first cohort at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women in 2018. At its inception, the program allowed the women to take classes of interest. In 2024, Tulane SoPA earned accreditation to serve as an off-campus instructional site with a bachelor’s degree program.

With her diploma in hand, King has her sights set on using her education to inspire others. King will return to the Uptown campus in May to participate in the Spring diploma ceremony and plans to become an advocate for more opportunities like the College-in-Prison Program.

“If my story can help even one person believe in themselves,” said King, “then it’s all worth it.”

Click the image below to view more photos from the event.



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Stephanie King, Class of 2024