

SoPA students awarded for commitment to service, leadership

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From left, Senior Professor of Practice Jacquelyne Thoni Howard, SoPA student Meghan Nagia, SoPA Dean Amelia Manning, SoPA student Joshua Blount, and Senior Professor of Practice Delila Omerbasic pictured at the 2026 King Freedom Brunch held Monday, Jan. 26.

The Tulane University Office of Academic Excellence and Opportunity honored Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) students Joshua Blount and Meghan Nagia with Dr. King Student Leadership Awards on Monday, Jan. 26, 2026. The awards recognize students with outstanding commitment to service in their community.

Each spring semester, the Office of Academic Excellence and Opportunity partners with the Carolyn Barber-Pierre Center for Intercultural Life to present a campus-wide

series of “Spring is King” events that center Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s principles of nonviolence, civic engagement and community service. Blount and Nagia were two of 20 students recognized by the university.

Nagia was nominated by Senior Professor of Practice and Associate Director of Student Engagement Jacquelyne Thoni Howard. In her nomination, Thoni Howard referred to Nagia as “a role model on campus for bridging scholarship, collaboration, and welcoming community building.”

Blount, who was personally selected by Dean Amelia Manning to receive the dean’s award, was nominated by Program Director and Senior Professor of Practice Delila Omerbasic.

“Joshua demonstrates deep commitment to the local community,” wrote Omerbasic. “He consistently seeks ways to ground his scholarship in historical context while highlighting real-world impacts and applying historical and theoretical knowledge in his community-centered work.”

Joshua B. Blount | Dean's Dr. King Student Leadership Award

Joshua Blount is the Operations Manager at Tulane University's Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching (CELT), where he manages finances, logistics, and grant support for faculty professional development and is a member of the 2025-2026 cohort of Tulane's Intercultural Leadership Program. He also serves as the Lighthouse Keeper at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, part of Together New Orleans' Community Lighthouse project, a network of solar-powered resilience hubs that serve neighbors during disasters and extended power outages. Previously, he led operations at Harriet Tubman Charter School's Montessori Campus and worked as an HR data analyst at Ochsner Health System. Joshua earned dual bachelor's degrees in history and political science from Virginia Commonwealth University and is pursuing a Master of Liberal Arts at SoPA. Raised in New Jersey, he has lived in New Orleans since 2013.

Meghan Nagia | Dr. King Student Leadership Award

Meghan Nagia is a senior majoring in Exercise Science with a minor in Strategy Leadership, and Analytics. She has been involved with the CAIDS Data Lab since her freshman year and now serves as Product Developer. She is actively involved in the South Asian Association, Phi Mu Fraternity, and the Tulane Kinesiology Club and participates in research at LSU Health. Passionate about service and community engagement, Meghan plans to attend medical school in Fall 2026.