

## How one SoPA student used experience to earn a degree faster

April 03, 2026 3:50 PM Alicia Jasmin  
ajasmin@tulane.edu



Hayley Callison's pursuit of Credit for Work and Life Experience through the Tulane School of Professional Advancement gave her a 15-credit-hour jumpstart on her degree. (Photo by Andrea Steudlein)

When Hayley Callison decided it was time to return to school, she knew she wanted a program that respected and recognized the years of experience she had already built. What she didn't expect was just how far that experience would take her.

After enrolling in the Tulane School of Professional Advancement to pursue a [bachelor's degree in Information Technology](#), Hayley discovered the [Credit for Life and Work Experience](#) process — a path that allows students to earn academic credit for learning they've gained on the job and in life.

Through this route, students can opt to complete a portfolio or take an exam to earn academic credits.

“I didn’t realize how much of my background could translate into real college credit,” she says. “The portfolio process pushed me to reflect on everything I’d done and see the value in it.”

Before submitting her portfolios, she completed the Portfolio Development for Prior Learning course, which introduces students to the structure, expectations, and academic alignment required to earn credit. The course helped her link her responsibilities—technology use, project management, communication, administrative systems—to specific learning outcomes in the IT curriculum. She found it empowering to see her experience reframed as real academic achievement.

Hayley, who is employed by Tulane as a senior administrator in the Office of Biosafety, ultimately completed multiple portfolios covering areas such as basic computer systems, project work, and administrative leadership. Each one earned credit toward her degree.

“The feedback helped me grow. Every portfolio got better because I applied what I learned from the one before it,” she explains. “It saved me time, money, and helped me feel confident about what I already knew.”

Her pursuit of portfolios resulted in a jumpstart of 15 credit hours.

Balancing school, life, and responsibilities wasn’t always easy, but the flexibility built into the portfolio process allowed her to work at her own pace each semester. The result was a faster path to her degree and a deeper understanding of her own strengths.

After completing her bachelor’s degree (and becoming a Tulane grad like her mom), Hayley immediately continued her education, enrolling in Tulane’s [Master of Education](#) program with a concentration in Learning Experience Design. It’s a direction that makes sense for her future and builds on the momentum she created through her portfolio achievements.

Her advice to other adult students considering returning to school is simple: “Don’t undervalue your experience. The years you’ve spent working and supporting others count. The portfolio process helps you see that—and it can move you forward.”