

Grad finds direction through encouragement

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Angel Watson earned a Master of Public Administration during the Tulane School of Professional Advancement's 2026 Diploma Ceremony. (Photo by Don Cooper)

Angel Watson did not take a straight path back to school, but the moment she found the Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA), everything changed.

After earning her bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2012, Watson spent years balancing family life and a growing career.

"I wanted to go back to further my education for career purposes, but I didn't know what to choose," she said. But the turning point came during a simple conversation.

"I was talking to Hope Anderson after church one day. We were just sitting, eating, and catching up," Watson said. Anderson, an admissions counselor at Tulane SoPA, shared details about the school and its programs.

“She explained the emergency management program and other degree options at SoPA, then she sent me an application.”

That moment of encouragement made all the difference. Without pressure, but with genuine support, Anderson helped Watson see a path forward. “I applied, and I now, here I am,” said Watson donning her cap and gown during SoPA’s diploma ceremony held Saturday, May 16, on the Uptown campus.

Watson earned a [Master of Public Administration](#) at Tulane more than a decade after finishing her undergraduate degree. By then, she had already built a career in disaster response, working as an insurance adjuster and later in FEMA-related roles. Those experiences shaped her goals but also showed her the importance of flexibility.

“I wanted to keep it general,” she explains. “I didn’t want to put myself in a box.” Instead of choosing a concentration, she designed a broader course path that would allow her to grow across multiple areas of public service.

Her mindset is rooted in possibility. “I’m only 35. I can see myself at 40 waking up and saying, ‘Let me advocate a different way.’”

Today, Watson works with AC Disaster Consulting, helping communities recover from crises and build resilience for the future. “We help get communities back to where they were before and help them be more resilient,” she said.

Looking back, Watson credits her decision to one meaningful conversation and the encouragement that followed. What once felt uncertain became clear through connection and guidance.

Her journey shows that sometimes the right opportunity begins with someone who takes the time to say, “You can do this.”