

Tulane's ByWater Institute gets new leadership

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Mark Davis, founding director of the Tulane Institute on Water Resources and Law Policy, is the new director of Tulane University's ByWater Institute. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

Mark Davis, founding director of the Tulane Institute on Water Resources and Law Policy, has been appointed director of Tulane University's ByWater Institute.

Opened in August 2016, the ByWater Institute brings scholars from across disciplines together to find innovative solutions to one of the biggest challenges facing Louisiana and vulnerable communities worldwide — how to manage threats of rising water from coastal erosion, natural disasters and a changing environment.

Davis is a widely consulted authority on water management and a senior research fellow at Tulane Law School. He previously spent 14 years as executive director of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, where he helped shape programs and policies to improve the stewardship of the wetlands and waters of coastal Louisiana.

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A core asset of the ByWater Institute is the new Tulane River and Coastal Center, a 5,800-square-foot facility located at the Robin Street Wharf on the Mississippi River in downtown New Orleans. The center houses conference and research facilities, classrooms, a riverfront observatory and staging areas for field operations. It serves as a hub for research and outreach relating to coastal preservation and restoration, water resources, ecology and energy.

Appointed to his new role by Provost Robin Forman, Davis will continue to direct the Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy. His dual leadership roles will ensure that "the law school's strengths in maritime, environmental and energy law are appropriately represented in emerging university initiatives," said Tulane Law School Dean David Meyer.

"There is a lot of commonality between the two," Davis said. "It's really a question of expanding the reach and collaborative power of the university. We've always relied on the support and partnership of people from engineering, science, the arts and architecture, and this is an opportunity to take that collaboration to the next level."

Forman said Davis is the ideal fit for the position. "In his work on water policy, Mark has collaborated with scientists and engineers across the campus and across the state. He has the breadth of vision and the ability to work in intensely interdisciplinary environments that are crucial for the success of the institute. And his passion for the work of the Bywater Institute is infectious."

Davis replaces associate professor of river and coastal studies Michael Blum, who with his wife, Tulane assistant professor Elizabeth Derryberry, is joining the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.