

Unplugged: Tulane introduces new outdoor classroom

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The outdoor classroom was fully funded by the Undergraduate Student Government at \$99,000 and is situated on the Pierson Patio between Gibson and Tilton halls. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

When the weather is nice, it's a common sight to see students with their professor engaged in discussion beneath one of the many oak trees that grace the uptown campus of Tulane University.

New this fall, students are enjoying the university's first outdoor classroom, equipped with a chalkboard and bench-style seating — a departure from existing classroom technologies such as smart boards, screens and other means of electronic

presentation.

Located between Gibson and Tilton halls, the classroom offers a welcoming space for the Tulane community to take in a lesson among nature.

“This was a project created by students for students,” said John Alexander, Undergraduate Student Government (USG) director of sustainability and lead on the project. “It was an opportunity for students to get involved in the planning process and an opportunity for Tulane administrators to engage with students.”

Alexander said the planning began in fall 2016 when ideas were jotted down on paper with input for Tulane’s chapter of Design for America. By fall 2017, the Office of the University Architect and the University Planning Office came in to help estimate a project budget.

The outdoor classroom was fully funded by USG at \$99,000. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held last spring.

“We saw the space and knew it would be a good fit for the outdoor classroom,” Alexander said of the Pierson Patio, named in honor of alumna and past Board of Tulane chair Catherine Deming Pierson. “We learned that our idea met the same values of the family and the Outdoor Classroom at the Pierson Patio was born.”

Faculty, staff and students can reserve the space for classes or meetings through the [University Registrar’s website](#).