

Designs Merge Traditional and Contemporary

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Last year, upon request of Rabbi Yonah Schiller, executive director of Hillel, Tulane architecture students designed and erected a sukkah, a structure used in the fall Jewish holiday of Sukkot. This year, Schiller expanded the scope of the project by approaching architecture faculty members Scott Ruff and Judi Shade Monk, hoping to involve the Tulane architecture community more broadly.



Teams of architecture students worked with Hillel to design and build sukkahs such as this one on the uptown campus for the fall Jewish holiday of Sukkot. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The sukkah, a shelter where observers eat, drink and sometimes sleep during the weeklong holiday, is a temporary, open-air structure meant to commemorate the exodus of the Israelites from ancient Egypt. It also symbolizes a transition from the introspection of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to a period of, as Schiller described it, “going outside your home, into the public sphere, and looking into the world.”

“I came to them with the basic belief that this is a Jewish ritual object that has real time and relevant application to basic principles of architecture,” explained Schiller. “They were very interested architecturally, and I was very interested in seeing the

synthesis between tradition and contemporary design.”

Ruff, an associate professor, and Monk, an adjunct lecturer, both said they were delighted by the opportunity for students to work with a client and a budget, building at full-scale as opposed to the scale models that are typically the focus of their student projects.

Twenty students were organized into three teams, with each team collaborating on designs that were then built in Pocket Park, in front of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library and at Bruff Commons in time for Sukkot beginning at sundown on Sept. 22. The student leaders for each team were Nels Erickson, Michael Greene and Garrett Jacobs.

Greene, who worked on last year's [sukkah](#), described his design process as balancing “the architecture side, which wants to push boundaries” and the Jewish portion of me wants to make sure it's acceptable in the laws of the holiday.”

All involved expressed hope that this year's expansion would form a foundation for the project's future.

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