

Tulane Hillel shares model for success

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Tulane Hillel shares its model with other Hillel institutions. (Photo by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)

On Broadway, adjacent to the Tulane University uptown campus, Jewish — and some non-Jewish — students have found a haven for cultivating leadership skills and implementing their own strategic initiatives.

Tulane Hillel, based at the Goldie and Morris Mintz Center for Jewish Life, is a nonprofit community center that engages students in entrepreneurial programming that focuses on community issues in building broad based community. Participants design and implement their own programming; ranging from partnering with local charities, hosting large community markets or running a series on mind body awareness events throughout the year. Tulane Hillel's vast success with students

and its impact on the community at Tulane and in New Orleans helped the organization acquire a two-year grant to teach its model to other Hillel institutions.

Six years ago Rabbi Yonah Schiller, executive director of Tulane Hillel, and his team created a radically inclusive, action-oriented community that places leadership programs in the hands of student leaders. “We committed ourselves to redesigning the operation by putting student leaders at the center: their diverse interests, passion and identities,” said Schiller.

The results were dramatic. Tulane Hillel increased its participation by 230 percent and more than doubled its annual budget as of February 2013; the organization started gaining national attention. Schiller and his staff developed relationships with large foundations asking the same question: How to reimagine an institution so it can achieve broad relevance for an increasingly diverse and elusive user base?

Tulane Hillel is currently working with nine other institutions: Boston, Stanford, Towson and Princeton universities; and the universities of Vermont, Toronto, California–San Diego, San Francisco and Southern California. In August, Schiller led a three-day intensive for those schools so they could launch two-year programs analyzing and assessing programmatic approaches, outputs and priorities.

“Tulane — and New Orleans — is galvanizing its reputation as a hub for innovation and forward-thinking progress,” said Schiller. “Tulane Hillel is honored to play a role in that narrative.”

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Rabbi Yonah Schiller