

Graduate Excels in Public Service

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Kirsten Hill chose to attend Tulane four years ago because she thought it would be a great place to pursue her education and fulfill her commitment to public service at the same time.



Kirsten Hill graduates on Saturday (May 15) and now plans to work toward a graduate degree in education policy. (Photo by Sally Asher)

"Community service has always been a major part of my life because I grew up in a family that values community service," Hill says. "When I was 4, I was already handing out cookies and donuts at the local nursing home."

Hill, whose hometown is Naperville, Ill., is graduating on Saturday (May 15) with a double major in political economy and philosophy. During her four years at Tulane, she has devoted more than 800 hours of service at local public schools.

In her first year at Tulane, Hill began volunteering at Benjamin Banneker Elementary School, where she served as a reading buddy for young students. Later, Hill became a [Public Service Fellow](#), and she created a volunteer reading program at Lafayette Academy Charter School.

The graduating class of 2010 is the first cohort of students to complete the university's public-service graduation requirement.

To fulfill the public-service graduation requirement, students enroll in courses with [service learning](#) components at two stages during their college career. In the service-learning courses, the coursework is aimed at developing students' critical thinking skills while they go out into the community to meet real needs.

Vincent Illustre, executive director for the [Tulane Center for Public Service](#), says, "Post-Katrina, [President Scott Cowen](#) and the Board of Administrators wanted Tulane to be part of the city's _____

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renewal. The public service graduation requirement ensured this by infusing our academic culture with that of service to our community."

And Tulane students have played a significant role in the city's recovery and rebuilding, while expanding their understanding of social issues.

"We are the only very high research activity university [according to Carnegie Foundation [classifications](#)] in the country to have this requirement," adds Ilustre.