

Classroom to City Hall: Addressing municipal issues

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Tulane students present their research findings from the Innovation in Urban Policy course to New Orleans city officials at City Hall this spring. (Photo by Gigsy)

Students enrolled in the Innovation in Urban Policy course in the [Tulane School of Liberal Arts](#) are applying their research skills to policy issues faced by the city of New Orleans.

Neil Kleiman, adjunct professor in the Tulane [Department of Political Science](#), developed and taught the course for the first time this spring to provide students the opportunity to go beyond the classroom study of urban policy and work directly with city officials to present possible solutions.

Teams of students worked directly with members in New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu's administration. Groups were assigned to address one of three issues: developing a lead abatement strategy, improving the [Claiborne Corridor](#) and helping the city streamline its requests for public records.

"The way I teach class is through real-time learning," said [Kleiman](#), who is visiting Tulane from the New York University Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. "As an alternative to working on park cleanups or tutoring in schools, students were engaged in high-level policy projects working with senior-level members in the Landrieu administration."

At the end of the semester, students presented their findings to the mayor's administrators, who were thrilled with the students' suggestions.

In response to the presentation on improving public requests procedures, Whitney Soenksen, open data manager in the New Orleans Information Technology and Innovation Office, said: "I'm excited to show our law department. We have looked at this issue and we now have some research to back it up."

As part of the course's credit, students received 20 hours of [service learning](#) credit, which count toward the [public service graduation requirement](#).

"I've worked with mayors and city managers all around the country," said Kleiman. "For students, real-time engagement with policy makers greatly enhances the learning experience."

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