

First-year students get to know NOLA

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mcross3@tulane.edu



First-year students visit the Parkway Bakery and Tavern as part of the 2017 NOLA Experience. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

This summer, 108 first-year Tulane students got a head start on life in New Orleans through participation in the [NOLA Experience](#) program. The immersive introductory program serves as a crash course on local culture, featuring a behind-the-scenes look at the Hollywood South film industry, tours of the city's vibrant neighborhoods and plenty of opportunities for students to dig into the city's signature cuisine.

The 2017 program took place Aug. 20-24.

A starting point for first-year students to learn about their new home, the NOLA Experience offers six tracks of varying themes. Each track is led by university staff

members and student volunteers designated as orientation coordinators.

The 2017 tracks included [New Orleans Through a Lens](#), [Fuel Up and Sweat It Out](#), [Hollywood South](#), [InternatioNOLA](#), [Lagniappe](#), and [Take a Bite](#).

The New Orleans Through a Lens track was guided by university photographer Sally Asher. Asher introduced her group to other local photographers and assisted students in illustrating the spirit of New Orleans, capturing shots of wrought iron in French Quarter architecture and an evening skyline of colorful Creole cottages.

“It’s an amazing opportunity that we’re able to offer to incoming students,” said Andres Gonzalez, NOLA Experience coordinator. “They’re able to get a feel for the university and the city that they’ll be living in for the next three to four years. They also make connections and bonds with other participants throughout the week.”

Gonzalez added that the NOLA Experience makes such an impact on participants that many return to the program as orientation coordinators.

Tulane senior Jamie Palefsky served as an orientation coordinator for the Lagniappe track this year, hoping to create a memorable experience for others, similar to the one that she enjoyed as a first-year student.

“I’m still in touch with a lot of people from my program. Since I had such a great experience, I knew that I would want to become a mentor for freshmen,” said the public health major.

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“It’s a snapshot of what it’s like to live here.”

— Jamie Palefsky, orientation coordinator for the NOLA Experience