

The Taylor Center celebrates five years of positive social change

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Since 2014, the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking has worked to connect and cultivate a community of changemakers: individuals working towards positive social change. (Photo provided)

The [Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking](#) will celebrate its five-year anniversary on Nov. 13 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. in the center's headquarters on the fourth floor of Howard-Tilton Memorial Library.

Since 2014, the Taylor Center has worked to connect and cultivate a community of changemakers: individuals working towards positive social change. Taylor programs facilitate learning, share knowledge, and support work in the fields of Social

Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship, and Design Thinking.

"There is no center, program or school at Tulane that is better at inspiring our students, fueling our teaching and helping all Tulanians collaborate across multiple disciplines to discover the solutions that will truly change our world," Tulane University President Mike Fitts said of the Taylor Center. "And there is no one person who demonstrates that ambitious, world-changing spirit of Tulane better than Phyllis Taylor."

Kenneth Schwartz, former dean of the Tulane School of Architecture and founding executive director of the Taylor Center, has watched the center grow from a staff of one person with a plethora of colorful post-its to a team of 10 full-time faculty and staff members running multiple programs.

"Ten years of Social Innovation at Tulane signifies our university's commitment to providing opportunities for students and faculty to participate in positive social change from whatever discipline they might be pursuing," explains Schwartz. "These programs have reinforced and nurtured crucial qualities in Tulane students: empathy, humility, leadership, and a commitment to creating a more just and equitable society."

The Taylor Center continues the work of Tulane Social Innovation programs that began in 2009. Starting with a few ideas on Stephanie Barksdale's desk in the President's office, these initiatives engaged learners across the university to address social challenges in innovative ways.

"For me, the most powerful impact of this work is encouraging students to see themselves as changemakers," says Barksdale. "I am constantly inspired by students who have launched social ventures like [Fund 17](#) and [Trash to Treasure](#), or students who have gone on to graduate from medical school, become architecture professionals, and become scientists creating new biomedical instruments. These students who are leading lives with a positive impact on transforming their communities for the better."

One of Barksdale's former students is Newcomb-Tulane College alumna Rhea Lewis ('16). She is now a policy associate at the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, working towards "a Louisiana in which all young children, birth through age four, are safe, healthy, and reach their full potential."

"I needed experiences and places like the Taylor Center to help me explore and discover a sense of agency," Lewis reflects. "I am so grateful to Mrs. Taylor and the Taylor Center's incredible faculty, staff, programs, and experiences for helping me discover how social change fits into my career and giving me the tools, space, and encouragement to go figure it out."

For more information on The Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking, [click here](#).