

Tulane to co-host 2020 Imagining America National Gathering in October

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A group including graduate students and faculty members from Tulane University is in the initial stages of planning the national gathering of Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life, to be held at Tulane University in October 2020. The group held introductory receptions last week at Tulane's Small Center for Collaborative Design and Café Reconcile and is currently building a steering committee that will include local artists, scholars and cultural organizations. (Photo by Imagining America)

Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life and Tulane University have announced that Imagining America's 2020 National Gathering will be held Oct. 9-11, 2020, at Tulane University and at sites around New Orleans. The two organizations

will work with local institutions including Xavier University and Ashé Cultural Arts Center in organizing this dynamic national conference.

The Imagining America (IA) Gathering is an annual convening of public scholars, artists, students, designers and leaders who are addressing critical public issues through creative cultural organizing, collaborative research and engaged learning. The conference offers participants a three-day immersive experience in which to connect, dialogue, learn and strategize around the ways to build new knowledge and inspire collective imagination toward transformative education and action.

Tulane and IA are currently working to build a steering committee with a broad range of scholars and artists from around campus and beyond.

New Orleans will serve as a powerful context in which to showcase local and global work around this year's themes of displacement and movements. "The last time IA hosted a gathering in New Orleans was in 2009, when New Orleans was grappling with recovery and questions about its future," said Imagining America Faculty Director Erica Kohl-Arenas. "Eleven years later in 2020, we are even more acutely aware that the climate crisis is displacing communities and threatening entire regions around the world.

"Our New Orleans organizing team deeply understands displacement, from sea level rise and coastal degradation, to housing insecurity, to histories of Native removal and slavery and their continuing legacy in our country's carceral and immigration systems. New Orleans is also home to longstanding creative movements that hold the key to organizing a more hopeful future. We look forward to working with Tulane University and our local steering committee to shape a gathering that centers these urgent challenges while lifting the thriving cultural movements from the region and our national consortium."

"Our commitment to community engagement is at the core of Tulane University, and we are a national leader in bringing interdisciplinary teams into conversation with community partners to address our most pressing challenges. We are excited to be

partnering with Imagining America to bring this national conference back to New Orleans, a gathering that resonates deeply with our mission and our values,” remarked Tulane University Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Robin Forman.

Ashé Cultural Arts Center, a nonprofit organization that creates and supports programs, activities, and creative works emphasizing the contributions of people of African descent, will serve as another key member of the planning team. “Ashé Cultural Arts Center is deeply appreciative of our longtime partnership with Imagining America, which has generated opportunities for us to push past envisioning a more equitable and just world, into co-creating one with collaborators across the country who share our dream and our mission,” said Asali DeVan Ecclesiastes, executive director of Ashé Cultural Arts Center.

“Under the leadership of our chief creative officer, Frederick Delahoussaye, Imagining America board member and Tulane Mellon Fellow, we have connected with national and local movements for the innovation of art and culture and are profoundly invested our collective capacity for transformation. We eagerly await our colleagues and welcome them to an immersive experience in our great city.”

For updates on this event, contact [Ryan McBride](#) or [Diana Soto-Olson](#) of the Tulane Mellon Graduate Program in Community-Engaged Scholarship, School of Liberal Arts and Center for Public Service, or subscribe to Imagining America’s [newsletter](#) and follow them on Twitter [@ImaginingAmer](#).

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Robin Forman