

New Tulane-based podcast highlights faculty research

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Sienna Abdulahad is the host and producer of “Faculty Fridays,” a Tulane-based podcast that features faculty research that pertains to communities of color. The podcast is an initiative of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. (Photo provided by Sienna Abdulahad)

Just as Tulane University was making the transition to online learning in response to COVID-19, Sienna Abdulahad and her colleagues in the Office of Multicultural Affairs were thinking of ways to better connect students to faculty members. The topic

became even more timely as students moved off-campus and began attending online classes.

Abdulahad, director of that office, knew that Tulane students were fans of podcasts, and she herself was a devoted listener of the genre — and so “Faculty Fridays” was born, a Tulane-based initiative that examines topics surrounding communities of color from the research perspective of university faculty.

The office sought to improve “how we are emphasizing that partnership between faculty and the academic experience and Student Affairs or the social and cultural co-curricular experiences on campus. And we came up with a podcast that looks at what research our faculty are doing and are really finding out how that connects to relevant issues that [communities of color] are facing,” Abdulahad said.

Abdulahad recorded her first episodes in March. The Office of Multicultural Affairs will produce episodes through the end of the spring semester, and likely begin a new season in fall 2020.

The first episode focused on the theme of “Mothering in the Midst of a Pandemic,” with a faculty member from Hollins University in Virginia. Tulane faculty will be prominent in the lineup, but Abdulahad also leveraged her contacts in the world of higher education to make sure a variety of topics and perspectives were addressed. Future episodes will deal with mass incarceration, individual and community well-being, the experiences of young professors of color on a tenure track, and more issues surrounding COVID-19.

The podcast is built to appeal to anyone with an interest in higher education and communities of color, but Abdulahad’s goal is to improve student engagement while highlighting relevant research.

“My hope is that these conversations that [students] are hearing in the podcast would spark interest for them,” Abdulahad said. “If they're thinking about graduate school and they want to work with some of these faculty members, they have that access point to say, ‘I'd love to do research at your institution when I go to grad school.’ It'd be great for those folks who are looking at their next opportunity: to see that there are faculty who are looking for future graduate students to do this research and it's on things that students who are coming from communities of color care about.”

[Click here to listen to episodes of “Faculty Fridays.”](#) Listeners can also follow the series on social media and with the hashtag #facultyfridays.

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