

Gift of \$1 million will expand Tulane summer success program for underserved students

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pdavis14@tulane.edu



Board of Tulane member Lisa Jackson (E '83) and her husband, Kenneth, have donated \$1 million to expand the Newcomb-Tulane College Summer Experience program. (Photo courtesy of Tulane's Office of Alumni Relations)

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A \$1 million gift from Board of Tulane member Lisa Jackson, Apple Inc.'s vice president of environment, policy and social initiatives, and her husband, Kenneth,

will double participation in the Newcomb-Tulane College Summer Experience (NTCSE). The program helps newly admitted students from underserved backgrounds get a head start on succeeding at Tulane before fall orientation.

Jackson credits a similar program at Tulane with sparking her passion for engineering as a teenager. A top student at St. Mary's Dominican High School in New Orleans, she attended summer STEM classes at Tulane on a scholarship from the National Consortium for Minorities in Engineering.

During those six weeks between her junior and senior years, Jackson said she "fell in love with engineering." She graduated as Dominican's valedictorian in 1979 and enrolled at Tulane on a scholarship from Shell Oil. After earning her bachelor's degree in chemical engineering *summa cum laude*, she attained a master's from Princeton. She made history by becoming the Environmental Protection Agency's first African-American administrator, nominated by President Barack Obama and serving from 2009 to 2013. She joined Apple in May 2013 as its environmental director.

"I'm still in touch with some of the Tulane faculty back then who saw something in me and nurtured me," Lisa Jackson said. "They encouraged me and told me I could do anything I set my sights on. This gift is about building future leaders not only at Tulane but beyond. If I learned one thing from college, it's that you can't be an island by yourself. Success depends on positive relationships and mentorship."

"We want students to feel comfortable when they come to Tulane," Kenneth Jackson added. "We want them to know what's available to them before they need help. We want them to know their value to Tulane, not just Tulane's value to them."

"Lisa Jackson is one of Tulane's most accomplished alumni, having served crucial roles in top positions both in the corporate world and at the EPA," Tulane President Michael Fitts said. "She and Kenneth's gift will exponentially increase the impact and reach of a program that has demonstrated its ability to transform the lives of underserved students and, in doing so, help bring about positive change to our university and world."

Participants in the 5½-week program include people of color, first-generation college students, LGBTQ+ students, and College Track scholarship recipients. Up to 15 students enroll each year, but that number is rising with the help of the Lisa and Kenny Jackson Summer Experience Endowed Fund.

“Thanks to the Jacksons, twice as many students will be able to benefit from the program,” said Lee Skinner, dean of Newcomb-Tulane College. “Students who participate in NTCSE earn academic credits, connect with campus resources, and receive mentoring from faculty, staff and students.”

The Center for Academic Equity has run the NTCSE since 2017 in partnership with the Carolyn Barber-Pierre Center for Intercultural Life. Its executive director, Paula Nicole Boone, is excited about the momentum the donation will provide.

“This gift will fuel expanded interactions with faculty in small-group settings and catalyze students’ first research experience,” Boone said. “The NTCSE supports students as they set, meet and exceed their academic goals and deepen their understanding of Tulane, New Orleans and the region. Participants learn to chart their path to success and develop a sense of belonging at Tulane.”

Since 2017, almost 40 students have completed the NTCSE. Participants on average achieve higher grade-point averages than students who don’t join the program. They report greater confidence, more resilience, and success in rigorous introductory courses.

“These types of programs have been shown to be highly associated with retention and positive student experiences,” said Tulane’s vice president for student affairs, Dusty Porter. The Jacksons’ gift also represents “an incredible next step in Tulane’s focus on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.”

And that’s music to the ears of Carolyn Barber-Pierre, assistant vice president for student affairs and head of the Carolyn Barber-Pierre Center for Intercultural Life. “The Jacksons are providing our BIPOC and other marginalized communities with opportunities to hone their leadership, service, cultural awareness, life skills and—most importantly—their academic skills,” she said. “We look forward to even greater successes ahead in the efforts to help our students thrive.”

In addition to the Board of Tulane, Lisa Perez Jackson sits on the School of Science and Engineering Board of Advisors. Tulane awarded her an honorary doctorate in 2012 and the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2019. In 2020, Tulane renamed its Professional Achievement Award as the Lisa Jackson Professional Achievement Award for her outstanding career and dedication to the university. She is a board member of the American Film Institute, Conservation International, and the San Francisco Film Society.

Before retiring, Kenneth S. Jackson devoted his career to the tech sector within the finance and banking industry. Active in the Bay Area social services community, he volunteers at Meals on Wheels San Francisco. He also served as a board member for Community Housing Partnership in San Francisco and volunteered with CASA/CASASF, Community Technology Network and other nonprofits.

The Jacksons serve on the National Campaign Council in Northern California, which supports *Only the Audacious, The campaign for an ever bolder Tulane*, the most ambitious and comprehensive fundraising effort in Tulane's history. They have two children.

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-Board of Tulane member Lisa Jackson