

Cowen Institute receives grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York

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A philanthropic grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York awarded to the Cowen Institute at Tulane aims to help ensure New Orleans public school students can both start college and finish strong. (From left to right) Alida Murray, Upward Bound college counselor, John White, former Louisiana State Superintendent of Education, Amanda Kruger Hill, Cowen Institute executive director, present scholarship awards to local students Ahrmoud Lewis, Brianna Claverie and Elesha Williams at the institute's Life After High School event, supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York, in 2019. (Photo provided by Cowen Institute)

While the number of historically excluded students attending college has increased over the past several decades, racial inequities persist in college access, persistence, degree attainment, and student loan debt. Of the 40,000+ New Orleans public school students classified as economically disadvantaged (83 percent of the total population), only 61 percent of those go on to college and only 15 percent graduate with a degree, according to research conducted by the [Cowen Institute](#) at Tulane University.

With a new philanthropic grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Cowen Institute looks to change these outcomes by helping to ensure that New Orleans public school students can both start college *and* finish strong.

The \$250,000 grant will support work to remove bottlenecks that prevent youth from transitioning successfully from K-12 to higher education to employment; providing more traditional postsecondary completion and success pathways, including 2- and 4-year diplomas and certifications, while examining how universities can evolve and adapt to serve students better — especially first generation college students and students of color; and developing and piloting innovative pathways to postsecondary success.

The Carnegie Corporation has been an important supporter of Tulane since 1953, with over \$7 million in philanthropic funding to the university to date. Under the inspired leadership of the late Dr. Vartan Gregorian, Carnegie Corporation focused on Tulane efforts to aid the recovery of New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the failure of the federal levees in 2005. The foundation's grant support helped stand up Tulane's award-winning Center for Public Service, establish Professorships in Social Entrepreneurship, and, critically, assist in rebuilding the city's shattered system of public education through support for the Cowen Institute. The long, fruitful relationship between these two institutions demonstrates a shared commitment to ensuring that American public education is preparing *all* students, no matter the circumstances of their birth, with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to fully participate in democracy and thrive in the global economy.

"Making a college education more accessible to qualified students regardless of their backgrounds is one of our central goals," Tulane University President Michael Fitts said. "We are grateful to Carnegie Corporation of New York for all of the support it has given to Tulane through the years and especially for its support in making the

dream of a college degree a reality for more and more of our young people from diverse or disadvantaged communities and neighborhoods.”

That work carries on today as this grant means the Cowen Institute will continue to publish [*Life After High School*](#), a biannual report that analyzes the educational and employment outcomes for New Orleans students once they graduate from high school. The report includes an [interactive website](#) with extensive data visualizations, and a webinar to assist educators, public officials, and the community at-large to better understand how to use the data in their efforts to support public school students.

Funding will also support continuing institute-led professional development initiatives for local educators and college persistence practitioners. These include the College and Career Counseling Collaborative, the College Persistence Collaborative, the New Orleans Data Collaborative, which helps schools build capacity to ensure they drive data-informed decision-making, and the launch of the New Orleans College Attainment Network. Educators from almost all high schools in the city are represented in these collaboratives.

Ultimately, the Cowen Institute aims to help improve college persistence and attainment for New Orleans youth through the efforts supported by this grant. Recent successes include organizing a citywide FAFSA completion campaign; publishing a report on how the ongoing tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted New Orleans families and their access to education; and the launch of Trellis hybrid college, which provides New Orleanians with an affordable, supportive, and individualized pathway to a college degree with the goal of dramatically increasing college graduation rates for first-generation students, students from low-income communities, and non-traditional students. All of this work is made possible by philanthropic organizations like Carnegie.

“We truly appreciate the generous ongoing support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York,” said Dr. Amanda Kruger Hill, the Cowen Institute’s executive director. “This grant will make a meaningful difference in our ability to share actionable research and lead programming focused on improving postsecondary opportunities for New Orleans youth.”

The Carnegie Corporation of New York was established in 1911 by Andrew Carnegie to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. Its core program areas are education, international peace, and a strong democracy.