

Veteran leader to head Tulane's new Innovation Institute

April 20, 2022 10:15 AM Keith Brannon

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Meet Kimberly Gramm, the inaugural David and Marion Mussafer Chief Innovation and Entrepreneurship Officer at Tulane University. Video by Roman Vaulin.

Tulane University has named Kimberly Gramm as the inaugural David and Marion Mussafer Chief Innovation and Entrepreneurship Officer. In this role, Gramm will lead [the newly announced Tulane Innovation Institute](#), a multi-million-dollar, long-term project in downtown New Orleans whose mission is to improve lives locally and around the world by bringing to market the discoveries and ideas of Tulane faculty, researchers, staff and students, as well as those of innovators throughout our region. The Institute will support new venture creation and spur economic development and sustainability in the Greater New Orleans area and beyond.

As a seasoned leader of university innovation and commercialization projects, Gramm has more than 14 years of early-stage technology venture development experience in Texas and Florida. Her initiatives have launched more than 279 startups, which have attracted more than \$470 million in investment capital. She is currently associate vice president of innovation and entrepreneurship at [Texas Tech University](#), where she is responsible for leading economic and industry engagement, increasing startup development, expanding commercialization programs for faculty and students, and growing the university's innovation district.

"Kimberly is passionate about developing, implementing and finding resources to support innovation and entrepreneurial programming for students, faculty and inventors," said Tulane President Michael A. Fitts. "She is a community builder and a dynamic leader with a proven track record in creating best-in-class entrepreneurship education and technology hubs. We're thrilled to welcome her to Tulane to launch the Innovation Institute, a critical initiative to transform the discoveries and ideas of Tulane and community innovators into successful ventures that benefit the entire

region.”

Gramm has been awarded more than \$12 million in federal and economic development grants for research and commercialization funding in support of innovators and entrepreneurs. She founded two university accelerators, [FAU Tech Runway](#) and [Texas Tech University Accelerator](#) as well as the Texas Tech Research Park Inc and a \$10 million seed fund to support agriculture technology startups, the first of its kind in West Texas.

“I envision the Innovation Institute as Tulane’s champion for innovators and entrepreneurs. This resource will provide the needed entrepreneurship education, mentoring, prototype development, business modeling development, as well as support competitive grant and private funding opportunities and so much more,” Gramm said. “The Institute will be an integral part of the Greater New Orleans entrepreneurial ecosystem and I can’t wait to get started. In my mind, this is the perfect place at the perfect time to seize the moment and make a difference.”

Gramm will join Tulane in July.

The [Innovation Institute](#) will have three main components — an innovation lab to accelerate startup creation and venture support; innovation and entrepreneurship programming across campuses; and a community accelerator to support, connect and partner with the region’s innovation and startup communities.

As the Institute’s combined technology and startup accelerator, The Robert L. Priddy Innovation Lab, will provide proof-of-concept and early-stage startup gap funding for aspiring entrepreneurs and promising technologies as well as mentorship, training and administrative support. Once operational, it will invest in numerous projects and startups by providing millions of dollars in grants and direct investment during the first five years of its commercialization push. The goal is to attract more than \$100 million in investment capital to the region.

The Tulane Innovation Institute will launch operations later this year on the ground level of Tulane’s new Thirteen¹⁵ residential development in downtown New Orleans. The institute will occupy leased space at the renewed Charity Hospital [once its redevelopment is complete](#).

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