

Architecture professor receives National Academies of Science grant for new studio design course

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Professor Margarita Jover of the School of Architecture received a grant of over \$250,000 from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Gulf Research Program to pilot a new interdisciplinary design studio investigating challenges along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

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Medicine's Gulf Research Program to pilot a new interdisciplinary design studio investigating challenges along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

The Gulf Research Program is dedicated to enhancing three major topics: offshore energy safety, environmental protection, human health and community resilience. Created as part of the settlement over the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, the program advances science, engineering, and public health knowledge to reduce risks from offshore oil spills and enable the communities of the Gulf to better anticipate, mitigate, and recover from such events.

"While scientists are inscribed in a tradition of *expected futures*, our approach of design-research combined with scenario planning allows students to focus on *desirable futures* and ways to get there," Jover said. "We are excited about the opportunity to partner with the Gulf Research Program on this project."

The new studio program will investigate the past and present context of Gulf Coast energy transition and the social and environmental challenges in relation to the built environment, including their impact on surrounding communities. Students will first gather information from a variety of perspectives and formulate major research questions toward design interventions. Then, the cohort will test their design hypotheses, drawing upon various disciplines offered throughout Tulane.

Faculty from fields such as architecture, real estate, design, engineering, coastal studies, climate change, ecology, geography, sociology, and urban studies will participate in the project. The studio environment will provide readings, lecture classes, site visits, guest speakers, and community meetings to educate students in the principles of urban reform to achieve socioecological improvements.

Community-engagement is central to the project. The [Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design](#) will serve as an off-campus space for public meetings, hosting forums to review project designs. Feedback will be integrated as part of the iterative design process, allowing stakeholders impacted by design decisions to actively participate.

Professor Jover will act as project director and is joined by Visiting Assistant Professor of Architecture and Landscape Architecture Liz Camuti as lead studio instructor. Jover is an internationally acclaimed architect and urbanist whose practice is renowned for its new approach to the relation between cities and rivers, in which the natural dynamics of flooding become part of the public space.

Camuti brings experience in resilience planning and design for climate adaptation in cities along the Gulf Coast. Her expertise is in visual storytelling, communicating complex ecological, economic, and social systems to public audiences and leading interdisciplinary teams developing public projects at multiple scales.

The objective of design-research is to find innovative solutions to complex contemporary problems. Faculty typically teach at least three years in the studio, which allows for deeper dives with more “generations” of students. Investigations, proposals, and community contributions all build upon each other iteratively, semester after semester. The goal is to build a conceptual framework for future collaboration with partner schools running similar studios throughout the Gulf region.

“This research project with the Gulf Research Program expands the reach of Tulane School of Architecture further into all the fields of the built environment in order to deal effectively with climate change and the acute social and environmental crises facing our planet and our region,” Dean Iñaki Alday said. “And it places us in a leadership role for bringing together multiple disciplines and universities from across the Gulf Coast.”

Faculty members sharing their expertise in the studio currently include Jesse Keenan in sustainable real estate, Josh Lewis in urban ecology, Richard Campanella in geography, Ehab Meselhe in engineering, Mead Allison in coastal geology, Alex Kolker in coastal geosciences, and in history, former Tulane faculty member Andy Horowitz, currently at the University of Connecticut.

[Read more about the program on the School of Architecture website.](#)

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