

Middle East peace program at Tulane awarded \$1 million grant

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Tulane alumna and donor Stacy Mandel Palagye, third from right, visits the cohort of the Stacy Mandel Palagye and Keith Palagye Program for Middle East Peace in Israel. (Photo provided by the School of Liberal Arts)

The [Stacy Mandel Palagye and Keith Palagye Program for Middle East Peace](#) at the Tulane [School of Liberal Arts](#) has received a new \$1 million grant from the Stacy and Keith Palagye Fund.

Established in 2015 through a gift from Stacy Mandel Palagye, a 1983 Newcomb

College graduate, and her husband Keith Palagye, this groundbreaking program annually sends a group of Tulane students to live and study in Israel with the goal of learning about the complexities of the region's long-standing conflict.

The five-week summer program is open to all Tulane students. After completing two weeks of intensive online coursework on modern Middle East history and politics, students then travel to Israel where they continue their studies in association with local non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, such as the Harry S. Truman Research Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Sites typically visited include Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Ramallah. An array of speakers, tours, and cultural events allow the students to be immersed in the daily lives of the region's inhabitants and experience a variety of points-of-view which inform their individual research projects.

"Keith and I are pleased to be able to support the Program for Middle East Peace once again," Stacy Mandel Palagye said. "The tremendous acumen of the faculty and administrators has led to exponential growth over the years. When I visited the 2022 cohort in Jerusalem, I was astounded by their energy and their desire to learn about this ongoing and heart-breaking conflict. Their plans for what they wanted to do later in life were so reassuring. We hope this incredible mix of young people can take their knowledge and try to change the world—just a little bit."

The new grant funds will support the extension of the program over the next four years and cover all tuition and travel expenses for students. The next cohort will be in 2024.

"Generous and continued commitment such as this from dedicated supporters like Stacy and Keith is vital to Tulane's mission of creating positive change in the world," Tulane University President Michael A. Fitts said. "Understanding our world's most pressing issues is central to the Tulane student experience and is at the heart of this innovative program, which will help train tomorrow's leaders in the pursuit of peace."

School of Liberal Arts Dean Brian T. Edwards lauded the program's "hands on approach."

"To understand a complex world, there is no substitute for engaging with real people and places. The genius of this program is that it is committed to taking a balanced

approach to one of the longest standing conflicts in modern world history,” Edwards said. “At a time when many have either given up hope or turned their attention elsewhere, I want to thank Stacy Mandel Palagye for her insistence that we continue to provide the most rigorous and grounded education about Middle East peace for the next generation.”

The program attracts students aspiring to careers as diplomats, human rights lawyers, journalists, and foreign policy experts. Over the past several years, the summer program helped fuel the expansion of Middle East studies on campus and inspired the development of Tulane’s first Middle East and North African (MENA) Studies program, founded in 2022.

“Historically, the program has solidified students’ interest in the study of the Middle East region,” according to MENA Program Director Edwige Tamalet Talbayev. “The rigorous training they received in the program and, after returning, in Middle East-focused classes at Tulane has led to prestigious professional opportunities for Tulane students.”