

Tulane launches new Center on Climate Change and Urbanism

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A new center will support research among faculty and students and drive public programming on how climate change is shaping the Gulf Coast, Latin America and the Caribbean. (Photo by Nicholas LiCausi)

Tulane University's School of Architecture has established the [Center on Climate Change and Urbanism](#) (CCU) to enhance understanding of the built environment's role in mitigating this issue by focusing on research, curriculum development and innovation across disciplines.

The center will support research among faculty and students, drive public programming on how climate change is shaping the Gulf Coast, Latin America and the Caribbean, and will serve as the host for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's multi-year [Gulf Coast Climate Futures Project](#). The latter

effort considers the legacies of energy extraction across the Gulf Coast, the tensions between current climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in Louisiana and Texas, and post-carbon futures that reimagine energy infrastructure and extraction sites.

In addition, the CCU has launched the Tulane Prize for Climate Change Curriculum in the Built Environment to recognize innovative course development by faculty across the world. Nominations are being accepted until January 31, 2025, with \$10,000 in awards available for selected winners.

“We recognize that climate change is an opportunity to redesign our built environment in a manner that advances affordability, accessibility and environmental sustainability, while also breaking down barriers to segregation, isolation and carbon-intensive ways of life that have constrained our quality of life,” said [Jesse M. Keenan](#), the center's director.

Keenan, the School of Architecture’s Favrot II Associate Professor of Sustainable Real Estate and Urban Planning, emphasized the importance of everything from measuring the carbon footprint of each building to evaluating physical risks in urban planning projects.

“By bridging teaching and research in climate change, we are preparing our students with the cutting-edge skills that they need to address some of our planet's most pressing social and environmental challenges,” he said.

One of the center's initial supported projects includes the "Carbon Budget Zero" studio led by Assistant Professor [Sonsoles Vela Navarro](#), which focuses on designing low-carbon housing and infrastructure in Florida, New York and California. By targeting these diverse regions, there’s opportunity to explore new ways of retrofitting existing buildings in New York to improve energy efficiency while simultaneously looking at water conservation solutions in California or the use of solar energy in Florida.

The center has also launched climatesyllabus.org, a searchable repository for climate-related syllabi in fields such as urban planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. The repository is designed to be a resource for faculty who are seeking

to bridge the center's focus with their current areas of expertise.

[Adam Marcus](#), the CCU's research director and associate professor of architecture, highlighted the critical mass of scholars at Tulane's School of Architecture already engaged in innovative approaches addressing climate change and plans for more.

"The School of Architecture and CCU are uniquely positioned to support and lead new interdisciplinary collaborations for engaging these challenges in novel and critical ways," Marcus said.

The CCU has just launched its first round of research grants for faculty and students, with applications due by Nov. 15. This support is designed to inspire exploratory research and facilitate collaborative efforts with local stakeholders, particularly in North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

[Catherine Sckerl](#), CCU's managing director and professor of practice in architecture, will build the center's infrastructure to support student and faculty research projects and field-based research studios, to deliver programming and events that promote cross-disciplinary dialogue and knowledge-sharing, and to facilitate intra- and inter-institutional initiatives.

"The impacts of climate change are accelerating, and there is no one who is not impacted," Sckerl said. "We can't continue to ignore it or be passive about including climate adaptations and mitigations in our work. It must be front and center."

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Jesse M. Keenan, School of Architecture