

Tulane senior champions civic engagement and community impact

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Tulane senior Barclay Zislin (right) leads a bipartisan program titled “Finding Common Ground: Civil Dialogue in Action,” as part of the Civic Engagement Fellows Program at Rogers Memorial Chapel. Panelists included Hyma Moore (left), former director for the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and Doug Heye, a former Republican Party spokesman.

When Barclay Zislin began the college application process as a high school student in Gulf Shores, Alabama, he prioritized schools that valued civic engagement. When his search led him to Tulane University, he knew he had found the perfect match.

“It was very important for me to feel a part of a community,” he said. “Tulane felt

very much like the kind of university I would want to go to and eventually graduate from.”

Four years later, the Tulane senior knows he made the right choice, and it is all because of his involvement in the Civic Engagement Fellows Program, an initiative he helped create a year ago as part of a collaboration between the [Center for Public Service](#) and the Division of Student Affairs.

As part of the inaugural cohort of seven fellows, Zislin has helped design, implement and evaluate initiatives aimed at promoting bipartisan understanding and civic engagement among the student body. The program includes workshops, public forums, guest speakers and collaborative projects.

“We brought on a team of six amazing students who have worked tirelessly to promote civic engagement on our campus,” said Zislin, who is double majoring in international relations and social policy and practice in the School of Liberal Arts. “After receiving feedback and interest from the broader community, we are looking to expand the program.”

The six other fellows are Aidan Goldsmith, Autumn Sommers, Kate Kisber, Chloe Roby, Morgan Bennett and Jules Hanisee.

Last semester, the group led such programs as D.C. Insider, a conversation focusing on careers and internships in Washington, D.C.; a bipartisan election night watch party featuring Tulane political science professor Brian Brox; a program titled “Finding Common Ground: Civil Dialogue in Action;” and Civic Connections Networking Night featuring young professionals in politics.

Zislin said he is especially proud of the “Civic Connections” newsletter, which he created to share information about civic programming and events on campus. What started out as a one-person operation now has a team of 20 students serving as writers and editors. The newsletter is sent to all undergraduates.

“I think our student body has the potential to make a real impact in the community,” Zislin said. “Tulane is built on principles of service and community, and I see civic engagement as a direct expression of those values. It also aligns with the core purpose of education on our campus, offering an avenue for students to make

change, express their ideas and contribute to meaningful causes.”

For Zislin’s dedication to civic engagement, President Michael A. Fitts nominated him for [Campus Compact’s Newman Civic Fellowship](#). Campus Compact is a national nonprofit dedicated to civic and community engagement in higher education. In the year-long program, Newman Civic Fellows learn to collaborate across disciplines and to apply their skills to create positive change in their communities.

“Barclay Zislin works tirelessly to build a culture of civic engagement and respectful discourse at Tulane and in the wider community,” Fitts wrote in his nomination. “Tulane’s motto is non sibi sed suis: not for oneself, but for one’s own. Barclay epitomizes our motto through his dedication to building a more civically engaged community and a more respectful society.”

Zislin credited Agnieszka Nance, director of the Center for Public Service, and former Tulane Vice President of Student Affairs Dusty Porter with providing him the platform and resources to explore his passions.

He said he wouldn’t have achieved success without the work of his peers, including the other six Civic Engagement Fellows. “Each program was a team effort,” he said.

Zislin and Nance encouraged interested students to explore the possibility of becoming fellows next year. Generally, students are selected based on their interest in amplifying already existing civic programs and in creating new initiatives that raise awareness of the importance of civic life, voting and reaching across the aisle.

“It’s all about helping students grow into thoughtful leaders who know how to listen, collaborate and make a real difference,” Nance said. “It’s a chance to have respectful conversations across different perspectives, to step up and tackle challenges, and to build a stronger, more connected campus community.”

The application for the next cohort of fellows will be released during the spring semester. Interested students can email Nance at anance@tulane.edu for more information.

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Agnieszka Nance, director of the Center for Public Service