

## **Tulane builds path to strengthen public health workforce**

November 24, 2025 9:00 AM Barri Bronston  
bbronst@tulane.edu



A new program from the Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine will give working professionals in a variety of roles the opportunity to expand their knowledge of epidemiology, health policy and statistics. (Photo by Shutterstock)

A new initiative at Tulane University's Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine will focus on training local and state healthcare employees who lack formal training in public health, including areas such as epidemiology, health policy and statistics.

The ambitious effort captures the mission and momentum that have defined the

school's first year under its new name, which honors Celia Scott Weatherhead and her landmark total lifetime giving of more than \$160 million in support of Tulane.

"We promoted this to her, and she saw the potential," said Thomas A. LaVeist, dean and Weatherhead Presidential Chair in Health Equity. "Only about 20% of the employees of state and local health departments nationwide have any training in public health."

As the inaugural director of the school's new Workforce Development Program, Rodney Anthony is leading the training initiative, which he expects to launch in the summer of 2026.

"From our informal conversations, people are very excited about it. The work has a lot of energy behind it," said Anthony, an assistant professor at the Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, who holds a doctorate in health science.

The program is especially meaningful to Celia Scott Weatherhead. Public health workforce development is among the key areas receiving seed funding from her support for the school.

The program is geared to working professionals in a variety of roles, including physicians, nurses, administrators, health educators, clinical researchers and policy experts, as well as students interested in exploring the public health field.

The certificate program is comprised of five 3-credit-hour courses: Foundations in Public Health, Biostatistics for Public Health, Epidemiology for Public Health, Health Systems Policy and Management, and Design Strategies in Public Health Programs. Courses can be completed on a full- or part-time basis, online or in-person.

The program will also incorporate workshops, guest lectures and professional development opportunities to strengthen both technical and leadership skills. Participants who complete the certificate can apply those credits toward a Master of Public Health, with scholarship support available. Plans are also underway for an annual Public Health Summit to bring together practitioners, educators and policymakers.

By earning the certificate, participants will have a better understanding of how diseases spread and are tracked, how to interpret and analyze health data, how physical and social environments affect health outcomes and how to design and evaluate public health policy, Anthony said.

Anthony and his team are planning a series of focus groups with health leaders and practitioners to ensure the program meets real-world needs. He plans to work closely with employers so that participants can balance work responsibilities with their studies.

“I think on so many levels, this is going to be a good thing for not just the school or the university, but certainly for the communities in the South,” LaVeist said. “And this is where we have the worst health challenges in the country.”

Just over a year since the celebrated naming of the Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, LaVeist says the school feels “different”—more visible, confident and recognized. That shift was underscored this year when Tulane’s public health program earned a top 10 national ranking from U.S. News & World Report.

“Those rankings are based on votes from academic leaders across the country,” LaVeist said. “It tells us that our peers hold the school in high esteem.”

While many public schools have seen steep enrollment declines since the pandemic, Tulane’s numbers have remained steady — and early data show applications for next year trending upward.

LaVeist credits the Weatherhead name and giving that is supporting a growing slate of innovative programs.

“I think a lot of that has to do with the name change, the promotion that came around that, the ranking in the top 10 and the fact that people are now thinking of us a little differently,” LaVeist said.