

Tulane showcases statewide impact at Louisiana Capitol

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Tulane took center stage in Baton Rouge as university leaders, students and partners gathered at the Louisiana State Capitol on April 4 to showcase the university's impact on the future of the state. (Photo by Kenny Lass)

Tulane University leaders, faculty, staff and students gathered at the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge last week for [Tulane Day at the Capitol](#), an annual opportunity to showcase for state legislators and policymakers the university's contributions to Louisiana in research, education, innovation, workforce development and more.

During the day-long event, the Louisiana House of Representatives and Senate passed resolutions honoring Tulane's contributions to the state, including its groundbreaking research and its \$5.2 billion annual economic impact statewide.

The \$5.2 billion figure, which continues to grow, marks a significant increase from a 2019 study that placed Tulane's economic impact at \$3.14 billion.

The university is also fueling major investments in downtown New Orleans, including the planned redevelopment of the former Charity Hospital building and the reimagining of the former Tulane Medical Center site as part of a broader vision to establish a hub for bioscience innovation in the heart of the city while strengthening the regional economy and improving lives across Louisiana and beyond.

"This day is an opportunity for us to underscore how closely Tulane and its home state are linked and how grateful we are for our partnership with the state, which is helping us make a positive impact in the lives of Louisiana residents," Tulane President Michael A. Fitts said. "We also highlighted major efforts like Louisiana Promise, which is expanding access for Louisiana students to attend Tulane."

Throughout the day, representatives from across the university staffed tables in the Capitol's Memorial Hall, showcasing Tulane's breadth of work and how, by attracting and retaining the world's leading researchers and scholars, the university is working to reverse Louisiana's brain drain.

This year's Tulane Day participants included the Tulane Innovation Institute, the Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine, the School of Science and Engineering, the Tulane National Biomedical Research Center, the Office of Government and Community Relations, the School of Professional Advancement, the Tulane Energy Institute and the Louisiana Center for College Access.

Faculty, staff and students engaged with legislators, visiting school groups and members of the public in the Memorial Hall, sharing how Tulane is addressing critical issues facing Louisiana.

"I think the School of Science and Engineering plays a huge role in the economic development of the state," said Daniel Shantz, associate dean for Research and PhD Programs in the School of Science and Engineering and the Entergy Chair in Clean Energy Engineering "We're doing things that really make an impact."

Shantz said the School of Science and Engineering plays a vital role in supporting Louisiana's workforce and economy by preparing students for careers in the state and fostering innovation that leads to job creation.

For Eric Smith, associate director of the Tulane Energy Institute at the A. B. Freeman School of Business, the event is an important opportunity to connect policymakers with the realities of Louisiana's energy economy.

"It's good exposure to Tulane for the legislature and the administration," Smith said. "Energy is critically important to the state's economy — we are an export state, from fertilizer to fuel — and if we want to continue to prosper and provide high-paying jobs, we need to build the infrastructure to support that."

Smith emphasized the need for continued investment in systems such as pipelines and port infrastructure, noting that Louisiana's economic strength depends on its ability to move resources efficiently and remain competitive.

Students also shared Tulane's impact. Alejandro Rengifo, a Master of Management in Energy student in the Freeman School, who works with Smith at the Energy Institute, highlighted the importance of communicating the university's work.

"We're getting the message out about the great work that we do at the Energy Institute," Rengifo said. "Our research covers a range of energy topics, and we take a very pragmatic approach to energy education while helping build business in the energy sector."

"And coming to the Capitol allows us to connect with our representatives and see how state government works," said Catherine Cobb, a pre-med and sociology major.

Tulane representatives also highlighted programs that are strengthening the state's economy and communities, from supporting startups and expanding access to higher education to improving public health and advancing scientific research.

Jeanne Exnicios, director of marketing and communications for the Tulane Innovation Institute, said the institute supports both the university and the broader region by helping new startups and ventures grow.

"We support the Tulane community, and we're also working regionally to encourage startups to stay in Louisiana," she said, noting that funding for the university's own Tulane Ventures can provide investments of up to \$250,000 to help early-stage

companies succeed.

Throughout the day, Tulane leaders also met with elected officials and agency representatives to discuss priorities in reinforcing Tulane's ongoing partnership with the state.