

Faculty Receive Community-based Research Grants

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With a community-based research grant, Tulane faculty member Sadredin “Dean” Moosavi will expand his efforts assessing beach erosion on Grand Isle, La., with students, residents and Grand Isle State Park officials.



Sadredin “Dean” Moosavi, right, a professor of practice in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, works on a beach erosion project with students at Grand Isle, La., a spit of land on the edge of the Gulf of Mexico. (Photo from Dean Moosavi)

Tulane's community engagement is not limited to students working in the community ? faculty members have long worked with the local community to jointly address issues important to both. To assist faculty members in implementing their projects, the Tulane Center for Public Service annually awards funds to support this engagement.

Moosavi, a professor of practice in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, is one of five Tulane University faculty members who received a \$4,000 grant from the [Center for Public Service](#).

“The faculty grant will enable us to take the [Grand Isle Project](#) in two new directions, both of which will enhance the quality of the science our students are conducting,” Moosavi says.

Moosavi plans to establish a collaboration with Grand Isle High School to enlist, train and equip the teachers and students on the island to perform work in parallel with the Tulane students.

This collaboration will allow data collection to cover far more of the island, a spit of land on the edge of the Gulf of Mexico, Moosavi explains.

“Up to now we have only been able to focus on Grand Isle State Park on the eastern end of the island,” he says. “With the high school's help we can see the whole system while helping to develop the science and inquiry skills of the local island population, the people with the most immediate interest and need to understand what is happening on their island.”

The second component arises from the discovery of old land surfaces containing peat and woody material, including ancient logs, within the beach on Grand Isle.

“We hope to obtain age dates from some of these surfaces as this may allow us to get a long-term, independent measure of the island's rate of subsidence ? a true contribution to the science of coastal subsidence in this area,” Moosavi says.

The other faculty members receiving community-based research grants are:

- So'Nia Gilkey, assistant professor in the School of Social Work, who will use her grant to lead students in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of transitional housing services for the homeless in New Orleans.
- Laura Kelley, adjunct professor in the Department of History, who will use her grant to lead students in exploring how, why and when the American Indian tribes of Lower Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes merged together following French colonization.

- Janet Ruscher, professor and chair of the Department of Psychology, who will use her grant to direct graduate student Alyssa Boasso and a team of undergraduate students in tracking post-Katrina mental health in New Orleans.
- Nick Spitzer, a professor of communication and American studies, who will use his grant to lead students in restoring and expanding the efforts of folklorists and oral historians to record and preserve local culture. Spitzer is producer of the nationally heard public radio program “AmericanRoutes.”

The Tulane Center for Public Service, which administered these grants, is the portal through which community organizations communicate with Tulane and through which the university's resources flow into the community.