

Bulb-Swapping Program Gets Green Light

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About 25 percent of Newcomb-Tulane undergraduates study abroad, and with an average of 3,000 pounds of carbon emitted on every airline flight, their travel contributes to the production of greenhouse gasses. A new program through the Tulane Center for Global Education seeks to mitigate the environmental impact.



Architecture student Mara Saxer installs a compact fluorescent bulb at a home in Gramercy, La. Town mayor Herman Bourgeois welcomed the group and worked with one of the student installation teams. (Photo by Matej Mavricek)

Starting in fall 2009, students will have the option of purchasing “carbon offsets” for air travel to and from their study abroad destinations. These carbon offsets are credits for emissions reduction that will be achieved by installing energy-saving light bulbs in small towns throughout Louisiana in partnership with the environmental organization Green Light New Orleans. A trip to swap out bulbs will be organized each semester.

On Saturday (April 18), a group of Tulane students and faculty members traveled to nearby Gramercy and Lutcher, La., to pilot the program. In doing so they installed 400 compact fluorescent bulbs in 13 homes within these communities. The goal is to help those families save \$18,400 on their electricity bills as well as reduce the amount of carbon produced from energy consumption.

“This is a great opportunity to do something hands-on, experience small-town Louisiana and connect with other environmentally minded individuals,” says Alice Murphy, a Tulane senior who studied environmental policy during a junior year abroad in Berlin.

Murphy and Mara Saxer, a fifth-year architecture student and president of the Tulane Green Club, created the program as a Clinton Global Initiative University challenge commitment. They attended the CGIU conference in Austin, Texas, in February and have applied for a grant through the CGIU to fund the program for the next five years.

Green Light New Orleans is an organization that installs compact fluorescent bulbs in residences at no charge. The organization already has installed more than 135,000 bulbs in New Orleans, for which the “carbon credits” have been sold.

“Many students have volunteered with Green Light New Orleans in the past and have found the experience to be rewarding, as they come away with a sense of the positive impact these light bulbs have on the environment, and on the lives of low and middle-income individuals who will save on their electric bills,” Murphy says.

The Tulane Center for Public Service has worked with Green Light New Orleans for the annual Outreach Tulane and the Martin Luther King Day of Service. Tulane students also have completed public service internships with Green Light New Orleans through the Center for Public Service. Alpha Phi Omega volunteers with the organization regularly.

The [Study Abroad Carbon Offset Program](#) is sponsored by the Office of Environmental Affairs and the Tulane Green Club, in collaboration with the [Office of Study Abroad](#), Center for Global Education and Newcomb-Tulane College.