

## [Easing Into the Big Easy](#)

August 25, 2009 12:00 PM Alicia Duplessis Jasmin  
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The NOLA Experience has helped hundreds of incoming freshmen make the transition from high school to university life through its cultural explorations in and around the New Orleans area. Last week, 112 students participated in the program designed to immerse them in their new environment.



First-year students participating in the NOLA Experience program get a fun and informative introduction to the Crescent City. (Photo by Sally Asher)

"We designed the [NOLA Experience](#) to introduce the new students to the various different communities they are joining, " says Penny Wyatt, director of [orientation and student transitions](#) at Tulane. "There is the community of their fellow freshmen, the Tulane campus community, local New Orleans community and for some tracks, the surrounding region of southeast Louisiana."

Based on individual interest, participants selected one of nine "tracks" to follow throughout the week. Someone interested in learning about local cuisine could choose the track called "Take a Bite Out of New Orleans," with visits to the Southern

Food and Beverage Museum and a local farmers' market, while someone interested in politics could opt for the "Local Politics and Community Leadership" track, which allowed students to meet elected leaders and learn about local community-service projects.

Both of these tracks are new to the NOLA Experience this year. The program was founded in 1997.

"I was looking for ways to expand the number of tracks and feature more of what's distinctive about New Orleans," says Wyatt. "Food and politics are definitely among those things."

Throughout the week, participants enjoyed small group tours as well as larger group activities where they interacted with participants in other tracks. They also spent two days at either a retreat or on a camping and canoeing trip.