

Mellon Fellows Connect to Tulane, New Orleans

December 02, 2009 10:45 AM Carol J. Schlueter
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In the post-Katrina rebuilding environment, Tulane University and New Orleans are magnets in attracting academic talent. Nearly 400 people applied to Tulane for prestigious postdoctoral fellowships, and the three new fellows are now on campus, teaching and doing research.



Mellon fellows, from left, Thomas Adams, Marguerite Nguyen and Michael Wiedorn came to Tulane this semester and will be at the university for two years for postgraduate work involving New Orleans-based research projects. (Photo by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)

Thanks to \$1.05 million in funding from the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#), the School of Liberal Arts at Tulane welcomed Thomas Adams, Marguerite Nguyen and Michael Wiedorn to the uptown campus this fall for two-year stays.

Adams is teaching in the history department, while Nguyen is in the English department and Wiedorn is in French and Italian. In addition to teaching, they also are involved in New Orleans-based research projects.

"The expertise of these fellows, especially their interdisciplinary interests, will make a big contribution to the intellectual life of the campus," says Richard Velkley, the Celia Scott Weatherhead Professor of Philosophy who serves as chair of the Mellon Committee.

Wiedorn, for example, who teaches Introduction to Literary Analysis, a survey of French literature, was attracted to Tulane by its "very strong" French and Italian department and to New Orleans for its French connection.

"For someone who studies the Francophone [French-speaking outside of France] world, New Orleans is an ideal location," Wiedorn says.

Adams, a Tulane alumnus, researches the history of political economy and capitalism. He is working on two book-length projects, one on the service economy in the U.S. and another looking at the commodity of oil.

Nguyen's expertise is in Asian American literature, Vietnamese diasporic literature and translation, and she is interested in learning more about the city's Vietnamese American communities.

The combination of teaching and research from highly qualified postdoctoral fellows is invaluable to Tulane, says Kevin Fox Gotham, associate dean of academic affairs who coordinates the [Mellon program](#).

"The fellows are able to help Tulane by filling important teaching slots, contributing to the education of our students, and adding new knowledge about New Orleans through their local research agendas," Gotham says.