

Taste of New Orleans

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While first-year college students around the country typically spend the days before fall semester roaming new and unfamiliar environments, incoming students at Tulane University arrive on campus, unpack their bags and hit the city's historic venues, eateries and museums. These activities are part of a popular orientation event known as the NOLA Experience.



New to Tulane and New Orleans, first-year students get a taste of Carnival during a tour of Mardi Gras World, part of the NOLA Experience orientation program. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Prior to arriving on campus, [NOLA Experience](#) participants pre-select a “track” based on topics including local politics, culture and religion. Those who this year selected the [“Newcomb and the City”](#) track ? a primarily cultural schedule ? spent one of their first days in the city perusing the float showroom at Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World and learning about Tulane's impact on Carnival.

“We want the students in our track to know that our graduates are not just an inspiration to the city, but also the world,” said Muni Adebimpe, assistant director of

Newcomb student programs.

To accomplish this, alumna Virginia Saussy shared the story of her role as one of the founders of Muses, an all-female Mardi Gras krewe.

“This is my fourth year talking with incoming students, and my goal is always to have them leave with one important piece of information,” said Saussy. “All it takes is one young woman to influence change in the role of women everywhere.”

After lunching at Liberty's Kitchen, operated by a culinary training program for at-risk youth, the students sampled a traditional king cake for dessert. New to the custom of having a plastic baby baked inside a cake, students gingerly poked each piece before taking a bite.

Chelsea Grimme, a first-year student from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., gave a rave review to the cinnamon-infused, icing-covered pastry.

“It's amazingly sweet,” said Grimme between chews. “I'll bet this is where the 'freshman 15' in this town comes from.”