

Service Requirement Rewarding, Students Say

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Tulane students enjoy and are rewarded by the university's public service requirement, according to a study led by Barbara Moely, professor emerita in the Tulane psychology department and research affiliate of the Center for Public Service. Survey responses from more than 800 students over a three-year period show a consistent desire to help rebuild New Orleans.



Tulane student Brendan Carter, second from right, mentors the drum line of the Lafayette Academy Charter School band as part of a service-learning course. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The results include those from students enrolling four years after the city was impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

“Implementing this [requirement](#) was a really drastic change for the university,” says Moely, who served as director of the Office of Service Learning, precursor to the Center for Public Service, from 1997 to 2004. “There has been very little research about how university students would react to such a requirement, so it's impressive to see the positive response that these students have shown and continue to express.”

[Moely](#), who has been studying [student involvement](#) in service for many years, co-authored the study with [Vincent Ilustre](#), executive director of the [Center for Public Service](#). It will be published in the next issue of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*.

The first students surveyed were those enrolling under the brand new public service mandate implemented in 2006. Incoming classes in 2007 and 2008 also were surveyed.

Tulane is among only a few institutions of higher education in the country with a public service requirement, and the only Carnegie-designated “very high research activity university” to do so. Moely says that students who have a good public service experience are more likely to have an enriched academic experience.

Moely hopes to reconnect with study participants a few years after they've graduated. What she hopes to find out is whether or not students have continued engaging in service after it's no longer required of them, and whether involvement in service contributes to their subsequent career and life choices.