

Center Links Campus and Community

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Academic credit for research projects and internships that improve communities is just around the corner for Tulane students, when the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching launches pilot operations next semester under executive director Michael Cunningham.



Michael Cunningham, associate professor of psychology and African and African Diaspora Studies, is executive director of the new Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching at Tulane. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The new center will act as a hub for all of Tulane's engaged or "real life" learning, sponsoring research on improving the New Orleans community, providing internships that give Tulane students the opportunity to use classroom knowledge to help solve societal ills and supporting [social entrepreneurship](#) ventures ? businesses with the primary goal of social change.

"CELT will act as a cache of research opportunities, connecting students and faculty," said [Cunningham](#), an associate professor in the Department of Psychology

with a joint appointment in African and African Diaspora Studies. “Furthermore, CELT will facilitate opportunities for students to engage in innovative learning that takes place both within and outside the classroom.”

Faculty members also will benefit from CELT resources via faculty development seminars associated with best practices for incorporating engaged learning strategies in the classroom.

“The traditional role of the professor as information-giving lecturer can be supplemented with skills for the professor to engage students' ideas as a co-investigator and collaborator within engaged learning settings,” said Cunningham.

The center is the result of Tulane's preparation for 2011 reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Two task forces led by the provost's office have been working since 2008 to develop a strategic plan to enhance student learning, taking [“Big Ideas”](#) from the Tulane community.

Provost Michael Bernstein said, “The creation of CELT accelerates the process of transformation that, since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, has molded Tulane into a model university for the 21st century ? one that builds bridges between and among scholars and communities.”