

Film incentives in Louisiana: What

February 22, 2013 3:45 AM Julia Gautreaux
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Is Hollywood South the end of Hollywood? That's one of the provocative questions addressed by Susan Christopherson, professor of economic geography at Cornell University, as she spoke to more than 75 students assembled in the Lavin-Bernick Center at Tulane University.



A movie crew spreads out equipment for the 2011 filming on the Tulane campus of *So Undercover*, featuring pop star Miley Cyrus. Film production companies are a common sight around New Orleans and Louisiana, thanks to generous state tax incentives. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The event, hosted on Wednesday (Feb. 20) by the School of Liberal Arts, the Honors Program, the Murphy Institute, the [New Orleans Center for the Gulf South](#) and the Tulane Department of Communication, was so popular that attendees found themselves sitting on the floor and standing in the corners to hear the professor.

Christopherson began by stating her one wish for the night's talk: that interest would be sparked and that her audience would be able to walk away with at least one new idea on film incentives in Louisiana.

It is safe to say her wish was fulfilled.

The creative aspects of film often are discussed, but Christopherson spoke from an economic and business standpoint that raised many questions. "Film incentives have very little to do with creativity or culture; it's about the money. This activity is a business proposition," she said.

As many Tulane students have witnessed, production sites in Louisiana and on the Tulane campus are commonplace.

The state has the highest tax incentive rate in the country and an astonishing \$1 billion has been spent in the last 21 years in the form of subsidies and grants, all in hopes that someday Louisiana will establish its own production industry similar to the movie industry in Los Angeles.

The key question Christopherson posed was, is it worth it? Do the benefits of having movies and television shows shot here outweigh the cost of spending taxpayers' dollars?

Although the professor's personal opinion was clear ? she does not think the benefits are worth the costs ? her goal was not to persuade but instead to excite. And she most certainly did that.

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