

## **Public service leads to her future career**

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It was a fluke that Michelle Liu, soon to be a graduate of Tulane University, discovered that her passion is elder care. As a first-year student, Liu attended an activities expo on campus and signed up to volunteer at a home for the elderly.



Graduate Michelle Liu is heading to medical school to become a geriatrician, after finding her passion working with the elderly at Unity Nursing and Rehab Center. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Thinking that she would spend a pleasant afternoon playing bingo and listening to the elders tell stories, Liu was shocked by the living situations of the elderly she encountered. She became indignant through her first-hand experiences of seeing older adults of poor socioeconomic status who live with poor nutrition, poor housing and poor access to quality health care.

Liu, who is earning dual degrees in anthropology and neuroscience, is heading to Louisiana State University School of Medicine with the goal of becoming a geriatrician. She will be the first physician in her family.

“My interest in geriatrics was largely triggered by my relationships with the inspiring and resilient residents of Unity Nursing and Rehab Center,” Liu says. “I had never

been so affected by the importance health has in a person's quality of life.”

Among her many public service activities, Liu became the leader of Project Grandpeople, an organization of CACTUS (Community Action Council of Tulane University Students), that plans activities for nursing home residents.

“Through community involvement, I have become aware of how too many people live with limited education, limited respect and limited affection. Learning the magnitude the smallest actions have to positively affect a person's quality of life has also fueled my pursuit of becoming a geriatrician and my conviction that my education should serve more than just myself.”

Liu is one of two graduates who are receiving the [Jim Runsdorf Excellence in Public Service Award](#) this year in recognition of their significant contributions to the New Orleans community.