

From war-torn Bosnia to Tulane

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Sanela Frasch, selected to carry the gonfalon (ceremonial banner) for the Tulane School of Liberal Arts as a graduate at this year's commencement ceremony, isn't your traditional student. Frasch, of Bosnia, came to the U.S. for a two-week visit in 2000 with a tourist visa. Application for her student visa was denied, but on her way to the airport she received news that she was cleared to study in the United States.



Sanela Frasch of Bosnia will carry the gonfalon banner for the School of Liberal Arts at the Tulane University Unified Commencement Ceremony on May 18. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

"I enrolled in school and was taking English because I didn't speak any English at the time," Frasch says. "After September 11, I didn't have a breakdown but for me it was very touchy. I came all the way from a war-torn country to a place of freedom and for something like that to happen I thought I was going to go crazy. But I was fine."

Well-versed in many languages including her native Serbo-Croatian, she decided to take Chinese as her language at Tulane "because I knew it would be a challenge,"

says Frascch. "It wasn't easy but now I can get around China pretty easily if I wanted to." She has traveled to many locales including Burma, China, Thailand, India and Haiti with her husband, Tripp Frascch, a lecturer in the Tulane School of Medicine, and they are planning a trip to Turkey and Greece.

She has worked with autistic students, many of whom are nonverbal, at the Chartwell Center, a small nonprofit charter school, to fulfill her public-service requirement and a public-service internship.

"Her story and background are compelling and add richness and diversity not only to Tulane's student body but also to the Public Service Internship Program," says Vincent Illustre, executive director of the [Tulane Center for Public Service](#).

Frascch would like to work with international students. "I'd like to use my own experience to help international students because I know where they come from."

Chase Vicenzi is a junior at Tulane who is studying communication and political science.