

## Center for Public Service evolves into the next 10 years

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Vincent Ilustre, who graduated in 1998 and received an MBA in 2004 from Tulane, says Hurricane Katrina “galvanized a new generation of students to service, but I think this shift began long before the storm. This generation of students wants to be actively involved in the wider community, and they care about issues of social justice.” (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Vincent Ilustre, the founding executive director of the [Tulane Center for Public Service](#), says after Hurricane Katrina, the center's immediate goal was to ensure enough public service academic opportunities for students to complete the public service graduation requirement. Its new, 10-year strategic plan is more ambitious: to keep Tulane at the forefront of universities committed to public service.

### **Was public service always something you were passionate about?**

My grandparents held service in high regard, but it wasn't until high school that I really began to be passionate about service. I did the usual volunteer activities such as tutoring, visiting senior centers and helping at the local hospital. When I arrived at Tulane, I joined the Community Action Council of Tulane Students (CACTUS). It was exciting to find so many fellow students who were devoted to public service.

**Why does service matter for universities?**

Service is important for our society. At a time when government is reducing services, we will all be asked to do more. Universities are in a unique position to bring the intellectual and human capital to address issues plaguing our city, nation and the world. But service also is important for our students and faculty. It allows them to apply their theories to the complexities of the real world.

**When people ask you about your job, what's the most important thing you tell them?**

When people think about the public service graduation requirement, they usually associate it with the university's efforts to collaborate with the larger community. I appreciate that because New Orleans is my home, and I am extremely proud of my alma mater for instituting the requirement. But I also remind them that the requirement is part of our institutional mission to educate our students.