

From farm to table

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newwave@tulane.edu

Who knew summer could be so tasty? A group of public health students now do after participating in the inaugural Tulane Public Health Summer Institute. During the course of four weeks, the students learned about nutrition, epidemiology, food systems, sanitation and alternatives to current food system methods.



Students Merritt Van Meter and Emily Cardinas check out fresh oysters at Motivati Seafood in Houma. They were participating a field trip conducted within the Public Health Summer Institute. (Photograph by Chris Lane)

“Nutrition and food is a hot topic in public health and among our students,” says LuAnn White, interim dean of the [School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#). “The great food in New Orleans makes this topic a natural. The question for public health is: how do we enjoy the great food, yet eat healthy?”

Along with taking numerous interactive field trips and a listening to a number of industry speakers, students earned six credits spread out over two consecutive courses taught by Lorelei Cropley and Elisabeth Gleckler, both assistant professors.

Junior Victoria Novak said she was drawn to the institute by her interest in food systems and agriculture.

“I started out not really knowing about nutrition and honestly thought counting calories was annoying,” Novak says. The institute changed her outlook, especially since she recently moved off campus and has to cook her own meals. “It was interesting to learn what 'healthy food' really means.”

Field trips introduced students to different aspects of the food system ? a trip to Houma, La., to visit an oyster processing facility; stops at local markets and backyard beehives and chicken coops to learn about urban agriculture; and visits to local restaurants with a focus on food inspection and safety.

At the conclusion of the course, participants developed a list of recommendations to make Tulane a healthier campus and presented it to representatives from Sodexo, the university's food service provider, and [The Well](#).

“It was a great experience for the students to be heard by Tulane decision-makers, using what they had learned over the summer,” says Gleckler.

Dee Boling is director of communications for the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.