

## Young African leaders prepare to change the world

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From left, Abel Williams Cheayan of Liberia, Christian Cirhigiri of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angella Mecha of Kenya, Theo Ndindwa of South Africa and Matty Jobe of Gambia are among the participants at a leadership training session on the uptown campus June 25. The session, led by New Orleans City Councilmember LaToya Cantrell, focused on the intersection of nonprofits, business and government. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

A select group of 25 leaders from 17 sub-Saharan African countries is spending six weeks on the Tulane University campus this summer. Age 24 to 36, the leaders are part of the inaugural [Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders](#), an exchange program of President Barack Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative.

Imagination, courage and the spirit of youth change the world, said Obama when he launched YALI in 2010. He pointed out that young leaders determine the future of their countries.

“History is in your hands,” he said.

More than 50,000 young African leaders applied for the opportunity to come to the United States this summer. Five hundred were selected for the U.S. State Department’s sponsored program administered by International Research and Educational Exchange. The Washington Fellowships are simultaneously occurring at

20 U.S. colleges and universities, including Tulane.

The Tulane track of the fellowship is on civic leadership, while at other universities the focus is on business and entrepreneurship and public management.

“The goal of the White House is, in part, to help train them [the fellows] in leadership, in principles of democratic governance and to teach them some of the ways our nonprofit organizations work,” said Brian Mitchell, Tulane associate provost and an organizer of the Tulane program.

Katie Houck, assistant director of the [Tulane Center for Public Service](#), also is organizing the program at Tulane. She said, “It’s a great opportunity not only for them to learn from our experience but for us to learn from their experience. They are the movers and shakers within their local communities.”

The program’s academic component includes classes taught by Tulane professors of public health, architecture, education and music.

In the public service aspect of the program, the leaders are becoming involved with Tulane’s community partners, such as the New Orleans Healing Center, Project Lazarus, Make Music NOLA and others.