

Student aids brutality victims

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Erin Rumsey undertook a [dual degree in law and social work](#) at Tulane University believing it would prepare her to better assist crime victims such as those she had encountered while working at a sexual assault crisis center.



Erin Rumsey, who is pursuing dual degrees in law and social work at Tulane, is working as a Schweitzer fellow with the Office of the Independent Police Monitor in New Orleans. (Photo from the Schweitzer Fellowship)

But an internship with the [Orleans Public Defenders office](#) shifted her thinking. Now, she hopes to help those who've been victimized by the criminal justice system. And through a new Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, she'll spend the next year working with the [Office of the Independent Police Monitor](#) to assist residents whose encounters with New Orleans police have resulted in lingering emotional trauma.

The police monitor handles complaints against police officers, and the goal of Rumsey's project is to develop a method of screening for post-traumatic stress disorder, compile a network of referral agencies that can offer low-cost treatment to complainants who need it and work with the police department to decrease brutality incidents.

The [Schweitzer Fellowship program](#) aims to improve the health of populations in underserved communities. The 12 [New Orleans fellows](#) for 2014-15 include three students from the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and four

from the Tulane School of Medicine.

Sofia Curdumi Pendley, the New Orleans program director for the Schweitzer Fellowship, says Rumsey embodies the characteristics of Schweitzer fellows, including passion for service and community involvement. Rumsey is scheduled to complete her Master of Social Work in December and her J.D. in 2016.

Rumsey says her experience with Orleans Public Defenders broadened her perspective of the criminal justice system and showed her there's much work to be done in dealing with "injustice right under the surface" in the city.

New Orleans, she says, is "just the best place to really make a difference."

Linda P. Campbell is director of communications for the Tulane Law School.