

EXPLORE ignites first-year students

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New Orleans artists and community activists Derek Shackelford (“Shack Speaks”) and Ayanna Molina, affiliated with True Love Movement, discuss the role of artists as activists and their responsibility to bring awareness to social issues. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Do artists have a responsibility to bring awareness to social justice issues through their art? As part of [EXPLORE](#), a program that began 24 years ago, a group of incoming Tulane University students participated in a workshop to identify social justice issues that are personal and pertinent to them, as well as create real solutions using their art.

The “NO Arts for Arts Sake: Arts as a Tool for Community Activism” workshop was part of IGNITE, a new program this year that was a collaboration of the Tulane [Center for Public Service](#), the Tulane [Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching](#) (CELT) and the [Office of Multicultural Affairs](#).

Participants in IGNITE Aug. 18-21 learned ways they can use any genre of art (visual, musical, movement, literary) as a tool for any level of activism from two New Orleans artists and community activists, [Ayanna Molina](#) and [Derek Shackelford](#) (“Shack Speaks”).

This year, the core [NOLA Experience](#) program included tracks called: 21st Century Citizenship, Art and Soul, beWELL NOLA, Down and Dirty, Home Field Advantage, Muses and Mystique, Street, Stage and Screen: Performing in New Orleans; and Take a Bite.

There also was a Summer Journalism Experience with [The Hullabaloo](#), [Tulane Hillel](#) conducted a program for 25 students, and the Office of Alumni Relations led [Greenie Camp](#).

A total of about 300 incoming students participated this year.

The tracks are entirely run by volunteers who are Tulane staff members, says Penny Wyatt, director of orientation and parent programs.

“From 2008 to 2013, the program capacity expanded 147 percent,” Wyatt says. “I examined similar “pre-orientation” programs at our peer institutions to get some ideas for changing our format and worked with several campus partners and with former NOLA Experience track leaders who had program ideas related to their department missions to create the new Greenie Camp, Hillel and IGNITE programs. This allowed us to expand the overall program capacity another 20 percent.”

“Many Tulane students are eager to learn from, and serve alongside, the New Orleans community, and IGNITE is one way we can help make that connection.” -- Rebecca Otten, AD for social innovation, Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching