

MacLaren classroom: A special spot

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Two seminars will be meeting this spring in the James M. MacLaren Classroom, named for the Newcomb-Tulane College dean. "I hope lots of different disciplines will take advantage of the space," he said. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The newest classroom on the Tulane University uptown campus isn't the largest--it seats 18 ? but it's still special. It has panoramic views, with floor-to-ceiling window walls showing campus oak trees on one side, and the Barbara Greenbaum House courtyard on the other. Most of all, it's special for its name, the James M. MacLaren Classroom.

The naming of the classroom, located in the front corner of the new Barbara Greenbaum House residence hall on the Zimple Quad that houses 256 students, is a tale with a bit of intrigue.

MacLaren, the dean of [Newcomb-Tulane College](#), took the helm in 2006 when the college was created as the home of undergraduate students. A [physicist](#), he came to Tulane in 1990.

Last year during a meeting of his Dean's Advisory Council, MacLaren asked if the group would like to raise the \$100,000 needed to complete the classroom at [Barbara Greenbaum House](#) and have the classroom named for the council.

During a break at the meeting, several council members hatched a plan, said Tulane parent Kylene Beers, a member of the advisory group.

"We all agreed that supporting the building of the classroom was something we felt important to do, but we also recognized that naming it in honor of the council wasn't what interested us," she said. "We wanted to name it after Dean MacLaren."

When the group reconvened, Beers said, "in a most unusual move" they asked MacLaren to leave the room. They all voted in favor of the plan, and surprised the dean with the news when he returned.

"The connection James MacLaren has to students at the university is a model for all deans," Beers said.

The dean's council is proud that the room bears his name.

"It was pretty exciting," MacLaren admitted. "I'm honored that my board felt that I was committed to the undergraduate experience at Tulane, and that they wanted to recognize that."

"This classroom honors all the work Dean MacLaren has done and offers deep appreciation for his efforts."

Kylene Beers, Dean's Advisory Council