

On a mission to save lives

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Graduating senior Suzanne McShane is determined to end breast cancer. She has a job lined up at the Center for Cancer Genome Discovery at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

From New Orleans neighborhoods to the laboratory of one of the most respected research facilities in the world, Suzanne McShane is determined to end breast cancer.

McShane will receive a bachelor's degree from Tulane University on May 16, with a political economy major and a minor in cell and molecular biology. She leveraged a blend of these disciplines to develop a research project that measures the accessibility and affordability of breast cancer screenings in New Orleans.

The research assesses the supply and demand of breast cancer screenings to determine if the services available match the need for screenings. Examining information from the eight parishes in the metro area, McShane's work reveals that the city does not have the minimum resources available to provide every woman over 40 with a mammogram every two years.

Louisiana is ranked second in the nation for highest deaths due to breast cancer, and New Orleans has some of the highest mortality rates in Louisiana.

"The story, however, is not just a numbers game," says McShane. "The risk of developing breast cancer varies across all ages, races, income levels, education levels, insurance statuses and even location."

As part of the [Newcomb Scholars](#) honors program, she presented her findings at the group's annual symposium. She advocated simple steps that could make a real difference for those most at risk, including a mobile mammography van that would provide services to those in the many neighborhoods without clinics or mammography machines.

McShane, originally from Warwick, New York, has spent her undergraduate career pursuing solutions as well as accessibility. In addition to her fieldwork in the community, she spent the last two summers interning for the Center for Cancer Genome Discovery at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. Following graduation, she'll take a position there as a research technician, continuing her mission to save lives.

"Access and utilization of screening and current treatments are obviously incredibly important," McShane says. "However, it is research that will bring a definitive end to cancer."

The 2015 Commencement ceremony will be [streamed live online](#). Follow us on social media at #tulane15.

Aidan Smith is external affairs officer for the Newcomb College Institute.

“I am incredibly excited to begin working on another facet of the battle against cancer: cancer genome analysis.”—Suzanne McShane, Newcomb Scholar, class of 2015