

Executive director selected for Amistad Research Center

June 04, 2015 9:00 AM Alicia Duplessis Jasmin
aduples@tulane.edu



Kara Tucina Olidge replaces Lee Hampton, who retired in June 2014, as head of the Amistad Research Center on the uptown campus of Tulane University. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

In her new position as executive director of the [Amistad Research Center](#) at Tulane University, Kara Tucina Olidge has outlined several goals for her first few years of tenure. The most ambitious of these goals is to double the center's endowment over a three- to five-year period.

“This will allow us to focus on staff development and collections development,” says Olidge, who holds a doctorate in educational leadership and policy from State University of New York-Buffalo. “You have to think big, and you have to hit the ground running.”

The center's current endowment is \$2.25 million, and Olidge plans to use her previous experience in corporate development, grant writing and strategic planning to hit the \$4.5 million goal by 2020.

This experience is what made Olidge the standout candidate, says Sybil Morial, a 30-year Amistad board member and chair of the executive director search committee.

“She knew about fiscal management and fund development,” says Morial of Olidge. “We were also impressed with how engaged she'd been with the community in previous positions. We're confident she'll do the same at Amistad.”

In addition to fundraising, Olidge will enhance the center's panels and public talks by bringing in more nationally and internationally renowned speakers. A new endeavor will be the implementation of online curricula that teachers can access in real time.

“This will take time because we have a small staff of seven,” says Olidge. “But they are very meticulous with the collections, so we'll just need to take the information and build a digital component based on historic moments that people will be interested in.”

Sample curricula in the works are the American Missionary Association's work in the area of education for people of color and the integration of public schools in New Orleans.

Prior to joining Amistad, the New Orleans native served as deputy director of the [Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture](#) in New York City and as the director of the [Hetrick-Martin Institute](#) for LGBTQ youth in Newark, New Jersey. While in graduate school at the University of New Orleans, she served as the director of education for the [Shakespeare Festival at Tulane](#) and as a visual art curator at the Amistad Research Center.

Olidge is the first woman to serve as executive director of the center [since its](#)

[establishment](#) on the campus of Fisk University in 1966.

"We were impressed with how engaged she'd been with the community in previous positions. We're confident she'll do the same at Amistad."

Sybil Morial, board member, Amistad Research Center