

Tulane and tennis forge social entrepreneurship role

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Anna Monhartova, a native of the Czech Republic, came to Tulane to play varsity tennis in 1998 and now is program director of the Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Program. "It feels nice to give back," she says. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Seventeen years ago, [Anna Monhartova](#) arrived at Tulane University as a student-athlete on the tennis team. She's still here after earning a doctorate in international development and co-founding a tennis and life skills program for schoolchildren after Hurricane Katrina. Now she's using all that experience to help lead the growing

Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Program at Tulane.

"I'm kind of a loyal person," she says. "Tulane gave me a lot in the undergraduate times, and a lot of support during my PhD as well. It feels nice to give back and be part of the Tulane and New Orleans community."

As SISE program director in the [Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking](#), Monhartova is often on the go. She is co-teaching SISE courses for undergraduates and also continues teaching graduate students in the Payson Graduate Program in Development. In a volunteer capacity she serves as board chair for [A's & Aces](#), a nationally recognized sports-based youth development program.

A's & Aces has grown steadily since its initial days when she and her tennis coach, David Schumacher, founded it. Last year it impacted over 1,000 New Orleans children via in-school, after-school and weekend programs as well as summer camps teaching life skills, sportsmanship and nutrition along with tennis and literacy.

This fall, SISE undergraduates are involved in service-learning activities with both A's & Aces and Tulane partner [Grow Dat Youth Farm](#). Working intensively with Tulane students as she does, Monhartova finds them inspirational.

"They are innovative at this age, they think creatively, they are more open-minded," says Monhartova. "The university environment fosters that mind-set to be creative, to explore, to inquire why things work, why they don't work, what the solutions could be. This program comes at the right time," with students having experience from service-learning and a community-minded focus.

Tulane students have the opportunity to declare a [minor](#) in the interdisciplinary SISE program.