

Tulane to host international conference on social innovation

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Tulane City Center students work on the Sankofa Mobile Market with Sankofa leaders Rashida Ferdinand, right, and Rosa Torres. The Mobile Fresh Stop brings fresh local produce to residents across the city. (Photo by Tulane City Center)

Social innovators from colleges and universities around the world will gather in New Orleans Feb. 25-27 for the annual [Ashoka U Exchange](#), a conference that focuses on how to use higher education as a platform to catalyze long-term change and social impact.

Tulane University is hosting the Exchange, which will include sessions on reimagining the classroom experience, building community partnerships and creating student pathways for innovation.

“New Orleans and Tulane are the perfect hosts for this event,” Tulane President Mike Fitts said. “The city has become a center for people seeking new and enterprising solutions to complex problems, and Tulane is one of the forces nourishing this community of social entrepreneurs and innovators.”

Fitts will deliver the opening address, and Maggie Hansen, director of [Tulane City Center](#), the community design center of the [Tulane School of Architecture](#), will accept one of five Ashoka U-Cordes Innovation Awards on behalf of the program.

The award recognizes top educational approaches in social entrepreneurship, and Tulane City Center will be honored for advancing more than 80 community-driven projects in collaboration with groups traditionally underserved by the design professions.

“Tulane City Center brings together creative makers who are working for a better city by design,” said Kenneth Schwartz, dean of the Tulane School of Architecture and director of the [Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking](#) at Tulane. “The award highlights how teams across Tulane have defined their own role in promoting social innovation education on campus and beyond.”

Ashoka U is an initiative of Ashoka, the world’s largest network of social entrepreneurs, with 150 colleges and universities advancing an education that emphasizes interdisciplinary, entrepreneurial and solutions-oriented skills.

In addition to networking sessions and workshops, attendees will visit sites that exemplify social innovation, including Tulane City Center, the Grow Dat Youth Farm and the Idea Village.

“Our focus this year is on strengthening the connection between this international gathering and the city in which it is hosted,” said Rebecca Otten, assistant director of the Taylor Center.

The conference is not open to the public, but media are invited to attend.