



Search for the  
Presidential Chair of Economics  
School of Liberal Arts  
Tulane University  
New Orleans, Louisiana

## THE SEARCH

Tulane University, one of the nation's premier research institutions, seeks a visionary and interdisciplinary scholar to serve as the Presidential Chair in Economics within the School of Liberal Arts' Department of Economics. Serving at the highest echelon of Tulane's academic ranks, presidential chairs are endowed, full-professor positions that serve a vital role in advancing Tulane's research mission. The Chair will lead transformative, policy-oriented research that elevates the Department's scholarship, broadens its influence in the field, and attracts distinguished scholars and resources to support its continued growth. In doing so, they will help advance Tulane's bold vision for world-class scholarship embodied in its "*Always the Audacious*" campaign.

The successful candidate will be a nationally and internationally recognized economist with a distinguished research record and a demonstrated ability to bridge economic research with real-world policy applications. They will maintain a high-impact research agenda that enhances and expands the department's strengths and reputation in applied microeconomics. Additionally, they will play a critical role in fostering strategic, cross-campus collaborations, partnering with leading research centers such as the Stone Center for Latin American Studies, the Murphy Institute for Political Economy, and the School of Public Health. As a dynamic mentor and institutional leader, the Chair will support the growth and development of both faculty and students. Through their research and leadership, they will further strengthen Tulane's position as a global leader in economics and policy research.

Tulane has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.

## THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

The Department of Economics at Tulane University has been one of the fastest-rising economics departments in the country over the past two decades. The department's faculty members are highly productive [researchers](#), frequently publishing in some of the most prestigious outlets in the field, including top-five journals. Several faculty members have also assumed leadership roles in the profession, serving as presidents of major professional organizations such as the National Tax Association, the Southern Economic Association, the Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (LACEA), and the Society for the Study of Economic Inequality (ECINEQ), as well as holding key committee chair positions within the American Economic Association.

The Department has 19 regular faculty members, 4 postdoctoral teaching fellows, 2 visiting or adjunct professors, over 300 undergraduate majors, almost 40 graduate students, and 4 affiliated research centers. The department places a strong emphasis on research that influences public policy debates. Faculty research is frequently cited in national and international media, including *The Economist*, *Vox* (Europe), *The New York Times*, *NPR*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. This applied orientation is partially reflected in the department's four core fields: development, education and labor, health, and public economics.

As part of its commitment to advancing economic scholarship, the department recently launched a Distinguished Lecture Series, bringing the world's leading economists to Tulane. The inaugural lecture was delivered by Nobel laureate David Card, followed by Joshua Angrist in 2024 and Jim Poterba, scheduled for 2025.

Collaboration is central to the department, with many faculty members holding joint appointments in the [Murphy Institute for Political Economy](#) and the [Stone Center for Latin American Studies](#), one of the preeminent centers for Latin American Studies in the country. Additionally, the department houses two major interdisciplinary research centers on the economics of education: the [Education Research Alliance for New Orleans](#) and the [National Center for Research on Education Access and Choice \(REACH\)](#). The department also actively collaborates with faculty from computer science, psychology, and the School of Public Health, with the goal of expanding interdisciplinary partnerships across Tulane's School of Liberal Arts and the university as a whole.

The department is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. More broadly, the department is known for its collegial and intellectually stimulating atmosphere, making Tulane an excellent place for engaging in cutting-edge economic research and scholarship.

The department is currently led by Dr. Douglas Harris, Professor and Chair of the Department of Economics, the Schlieder Foundation Chair in Public Education, Director of both the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans (ERA-New Orleans) and Director of the National Center for Research on Education Access and Choice (REACH), all at Tulane University. He is also a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. Harris has published his work on the education of education policy in the *Journal of Public Economics*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Economics of Education Review*, and the

general interest journal, *Science*, among many others. He is author of the book, *Charter School City: What the End of Traditional Public Schools in New Orleans Means for American Education* (University of Chicago Press, 2020). His first book, *Value-Added Measures in Education* (Harvard Education Press, 2011), was nominated for the national Grawemeyer prize in education. With nearly 100 journal articles and other publications, and \$28 million in research grants, his research also has a practical impact on a wide variety of K-12 and higher education policy issues. He has advised governors in six states, testified in the U.S. Senate, and advised the U.S. Department of Education and Obama White House on multiple education policies. His work is also widely cited in national media, including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, CNN, and NPR.

More information about the Department of Economics can be found here:

<https://liberalarts.tulane.edu/economics>

### **ROLE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR**

The Presidential Chair will bring a distinguished research record in economics and expertise that aligns with one of the department's core fields while fostering interdisciplinary connections across the university in emerging fields such as climate, AI and machine learning applications, and data science, among others. In addition to leadership in their own research area, the chair will have the capacity to contribute to the department's overall strategic direction, ensuring that it is advancing new frontiers in the field and capitalizing on the strengths and assets of the university. This individual will be a catalyst for research, maintaining a high-impact research agenda, mentoring faculty and PhD students, and strengthening the university's reputation as a hub for impactful, policy-oriented economic scholarship.

### **APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS**

Tulane University has retained Isaacson, Miller a national executive search firm, to assist the search committee in its identification and review of candidates. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications in strict confidence to the following:

Kate Barry, Partner  
Damla Williams, Senior Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/tulane-university-school-liberal-arts/presidential-chair-economics>.

*Tulane University is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution committed to excellence through diversity. Tulane University will not discriminate based upon race, ethnicity, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, marital status, military or veteran status, or any other status or classification protected by federal, state, or local law. All eligible candidates are encouraged to apply.*

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## APPENDIX: ABOUT TULANE UNIVERSITY

Tulane traces its origins to 1834, when it was founded as the Medical College of Louisiana. It was renamed the University of Louisiana by the state legislature in 1847. The legislature subsequently transferred it to the Board of Administrators of the Tulane Education Fund in 1884. With that transfer, Tulane University was established as a private, nonsectarian university and named in honor of benefactor Paul Tulane, a wealthy merchant who donated more than \$1 million in land, cash, and securities “for the promotion and encouragement of intellectual, moral and industrial education.” In 1886, the H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College was established as Tulane’s college for women. The unified Newcomb-Tulane College now enrolls all full-time undergraduates at the University.

Today, the University has an operating budget of just over \$1 billion and an endowment of \$2 billion. Tulane enrolls approximately 8,600 undergraduate and 5,900 graduate and professional students from every state in the U.S. and more than 85 nations worldwide. The Tulane faculty totals over 1,200 full-time members with a staff of approximately 2,900. The University is organized into ten academic divisions: Newcomb-Tulane College, A.B. Freeman School of Business, School of Architecture, School of Professional Advancement, School of Law, School of Liberal Arts, School of Medicine, Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, School of Science and Engineering, and the School of Social Work. The mix of schools is an asset that is rich with opportunities for cross-school collaboration in research and education.

Tulane’s [School of Liberal Arts](#) houses the humanities, social sciences and fine & performing arts disciplines across 16 departments and 19 interdisciplinary programs at Tulane University. Led by [Dean Brian Edwards](#) since 2018, SLA is home to 425 faculty with more than 2,500 undergraduate majors and graduate students. It combines scholarly research with high quality teaching and deep community engagement in New Orleans and the Gulf South to provide a liberal arts education within a premier research university setting.

Tulane University is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching ranks Tulane as a university with “very high research activity.” As such, it is committed to the highest level of research. Tulane attracts an outstanding student body that is both intellectually curious and driven by community engagement. The University’s 8:1 undergraduate-student-faculty ratio allows Tulane undergraduates to receive the personalized attention of a smaller liberal arts college with the resources of a major research institution. In 2006, Tulane became the first major research institution to require public service as a graduation requirement for undergraduates, which led to the Carnegie Foundation recognizing Tulane with its Community Engagement Classification. Tulane is also the most national university in the country, with its undergraduates traveling further to attend college, on average than those of any other university. As such, it plays a valuable role in recruiting talent to New Orleans, as only 15% of Tulane’s students are from New Orleans, and about 20% of all Tulane graduates stay in Louisiana after graduation.

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## UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

**Michael Fitts** is the 15th president of Tulane University. He arrived at Tulane in July 2014, bringing with him a strong emphasis on heightening cross-disciplinary education and research. President Fitts believes students and higher education institutions can set themselves apart in a fast-changing world and ever-shifting economy through the combining of different fields and skills. In his first year at Tulane, he launched task forces to lead the University in deepening its unique strengths for interdisciplinary collaboration. He sees powerful advantages in the University's manageable size, its wide selection of professional schools, and the unified undergraduate college.

Previously, President Fitts served 14 years as Dean of the Law School at the University of Pennsylvania, where he was recognized for greatly boosting their offerings in interdisciplinary education. He also presided over a quadrupling of Penn Law's endowment, a more than 40 percent increase in the size of the Law School faculty, and a doubling of all forms of student financial aid. President Fitts is a native of Philadelphia. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from Harvard University and received his juris doctorate from Yale Law School.

**Dr. Robin Forman** was appointed Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost in September 2016. He previously served as Dean of the Emory College of Arts and Sciences and the Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Mathematics at Emory University. He has held faculty and administrative appointments at Rice University and has served as an instructor at MIT and as a visiting professor at the University of Burgundy, Harvard University, and the Mathematical Research Institute. Dr. Forman received a bachelor of arts and a master of arts in mathematics from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctoral degree in mathematics from Harvard University. His research, which has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the National Security Agency, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, focuses on combinatorial methods in topology and geometry.

For more information about Tulane University, please visit the Tulane website: <https://tulane.edu/>.