

Tulane School of Professional Advancement broadens College in Prison Program to include bachelor's degree

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Tulane SoPA faculty member, Sukari Ivester, (left) speaks to students at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women on Monday, April 15, when representatives from Tulane and Operation Restoration visited to share the accreditation news. (Photo by Jess Joy)

Students at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) can now earn a full bachelor's degree through the Tulane School of Professional Advancement's (SoPA) [College-in-Prison Program](#). The new designation of LCIW as an accredited off-campus instructional site, allows the students to count their coursework toward a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science from Tulane SoPA.

Since 2018, [Tulane SoPA](#), in collaboration with Operation Restoration—an organization dedicated to supporting women and girls affected by incarceration—has provided access to high-quality education for students at LCIW through the College-in-Prison Program.

In April, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, which ensures quality in higher education, approved LCIW as an accredited off-campus instructional site. This accreditation enables Tulane SoPA to broaden the College-in-Prison Program from offering for-credit courses to offering full degree programs at the prison.

“I am grateful for our partners at Operation Restoration, our team at Tulane, and those at the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections who helped make this program possible,” said Ilianna Kwaske, interim dean at Tulane SoPA. “Our work must continue to keep this program going, but I am so happy our students at LCIW can now look forward to graduating from Tulane.”

The program, which originated with Operation Restoration and the Newcomb Institute, evolved into a partnership between [Operation Restoration](#) and Tulane SoPA to offer educational services and programs to persons incarcerated at LCIW. Both SoPA and Operation Restoration have agreements with the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections. Tulane SoPA manages admissions, develops and delivers the curriculum, provides academic and faculty oversight, and offers advising and student learning resources, while Operation Restoration provides wraparound student support services, fundraising support for the program, as well as operational support. Newcomb Institute was instrumental in securing funding to support getting laptops for students at LCIW.

“The students are so deserving of this degree program,” said Marko Salvaggio, director of the College-in-Prison Program at Tulane SoPA. “The students aren't just part of the College-in-Prison Program. They are part of the Tulane SoPA Humanities

and Social Sciences Program.”

To enter the College-in-Prison Program, Salvaggio explained that students at the prison must meet the same admissions requirements as other Tulane SoPA students. All students must complete 120-course hours to earn the undergraduate degree, including the Tulane SoPA degree major and degree requirements.

“There are currently two cohorts of about 15 students at LCIW and our first cohort is set to finish in the summer of 2025,” said Salvaggio. “A few of our students who have been released have continued toward degree completion as they start their new lives.”

Learn more about the Tulane School of Professional Advancement by visiting sopa.tulane.edu.