

Dr. Laurie O'Brien Appointed Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs

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The School of Science and Engineering (SSE) at Tulane University is pleased to announce that Dr. Laurie O'Brien has been appointed Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs. Dr. O'Brien, a distinguished Professor of Psychology at Tulane University, brings a wealth of experience in teaching, research, and academic leadership to her new role. As Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, Dr. O'Brien will oversee all aspects of undergraduate education across the school, including curriculum development, program assessment, undergraduate research, academic advising, student success initiatives, and support for new and existing undergraduate degree programs. She will also collaborate closely with faculty, staff, and student leaders to enhance the overall academic experience for undergraduate students in the School

of Science and Engineering.

Dr. O'Brien earned her Ph.D. and M.A. in Social Psychology from the University of Kansas and her B.A. in Psychology, summa cum laude, from Saint Louis University. Since joining Tulane University in 2005, she has made significant contributions to the Department of Psychology, where she currently serves as Chair. Her research focuses on promoting equality in STEM—an area in which she has built a strong record of peer-reviewed publications and external funding.

She is an accomplished scholar with over 50 peer-reviewed publications and multiple book chapters in the fields of social psychology and intergroup relations within STEM. She has served on editorial boards for several top journals and has received research support from the National Science Foundation, Heterodox Academy, and the Louisiana Board of Regents. Her sustained record of research, mentorship, and academic leadership reflects a deep commitment to inclusive excellence in higher education.

“In my published scientific research,” Dr. O'Brien explains, “I have studied the psychological processes that influence participation, performance, and retention in STEM fields. I will draw on my research expertise on this topic and take an empirical, data-driven approach to improving undergraduate STEM education and programs at Tulane.”

In this role, Dr. O'Brien pledges to focus on strengthening undergraduate research opportunities, an area she is particularly passionate about. “Undergraduate research participation will be one of my priorities. I plan to build on the recommendations from the SSE Undergraduate Research Task Force in order to increase and improve participation in undergraduate research among our majors.”

She also emphasized her commitment to supporting innovative STEM teaching across SSE. “We have many experts on innovative STEM pedagogy among our SSE faculty. I'm looking forward to working with these experts to support advances in STEM teaching across SSE.”

Dr. O'Brien is also excited to work closely with student leaders. “We have many SSE majors who are engaged in undergraduate programs such as the Grand Challenges Scholars Program and the SSE Student Government. I'm excited to work with the student leaders to take our undergraduate programs to the next level.”

Looking ahead, Dr. O'Brien will play a pivotal role in supporting the introduction of new undergraduate majors and minors. "Dean Rajan and [the] SSE are in the process of introducing several new undergraduate majors and minors. I plan to work with our faculty and staff to support the roll-out of these new degree programs."

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Laurie O'Brien on her new role as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs.