

The Tulane School of Science and Engineering Welcomes 24 New Faculty Members

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The Tulane School of Science and Engineering is thrilled to announce the addition of 24 outstanding new faculty members who have joined our community since 2024. These scholars bring a wealth of expertise from institutions around the globe and are already making an impact across our departments. Dean Hridesh Rajan, notes, “As the saying goes, talent is the treasure. I have no doubt that we have become significantly richer intellectually with the arrival of our new colleagues. Each new colleague has brought not only unique expertise, but also strong interdisciplinary connections to other departments and schools at Tulane. I am excited to see and support their trajectory at Tulane School of Science and Engineering.” Here’s a look at who’s joined, where they came from, and the exciting work they’re undertaking.

Biomedical Engineering

Mykel D. Green

Assistant Professor Mykel D. Green leads REEL at Tulane. His lab develops biomaterial-based therapies informed by disease pathology to improve cell-based treatments, with a focus on bone marrow transplantation for sickle cell disease and therapies addressing postmenopausal health. Dr. Green is dedicated to advancing innovation in biomedical engineering and STEM education.

Velencia Witherspoon

Dr. Velencia Witherspoon joins as Assistant Professor in Biomedical Engineering. Her focus is in chemical engineering, nuclear magnetic resonance, transport in porous media, electrical impedance spectroscopy, and dynamics of complex media. Dr. Witherspoon specializes in low field MRI technology and micro physiological systems for low tech personalized medicine. She is committed to advancing healthcare technologies.

Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering

James Park

Dr. James Park joins Tulane as an Assistant Professor in Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering. He brings expertise in molecular engineering and biotechnology, with a passion for innovative solutions to complex chemical challenges. Dr. Park completed

his doctoral work at the University of Delaware and is eager to collaborate with students and colleagues on cutting-edge research.

Chemistry

Wenxiao Guo

Assistant Professor Wenxiao Guo's research focuses on catalysis and renewable energy, with an emphasis on developing sustainable chemical processes. Dr. Guo is excited to contribute to Tulane's chemistry community and mentor students in innovative research.

Muhammad Nazir Tahir

Professor of Practice Nazir Tahir brings extensive experience in chemical engineering and process optimization. Dr. Tahir has worked internationally in both academic and industrial settings and is committed to advancing Tulane's chemistry curriculum.

Computer Science

(Leon) Victor Bankston

Professor of Practice Leon Bankston joins the Computer Science department with a background in computational quantum information and combinatorial designs. Dr. Bankston aims to foster a dynamic and engaging learning environment, focusing on the intersection of these two fields.

Rebecca Faust

Dr. Rebecca Faust joins as an Assistant Professor in Computer Science. Her work centers on incorporating interactive visualization into data science analyses, and she is dedicated to fostering a collaborative and comprehensive research environment. Dr. Faust is enthusiastic about mentoring students and contributing to Tulane's academic community.

Jiyuan Wang

Dr. Jiyuan Wang is an Assistant Professor in Computer Science. His research interests include machine learning, data mining, and computational biology, with a focus on developing algorithms for large-scale data analysis. Dr. Wang is committed to advancing the field through both research and teaching.

Earth and Environmental Sciences**Thomas DeCarlo**

Assistant Professor Thomas DeCarlo is a marine scientist whose research focuses on coral reef resilience and the impacts of climate change on ocean ecosystems. Dr. DeCarlo is passionate about using science to inform conservation and policy and looks forward to engaging with Tulane students and colleagues.

Jamiat Nanteza

Professor of Practice Jamiat Nanteza specializes in hydrology and water resources. Dr. Nanteza brings a global perspective to Tulane, focusing on sustainable water management and environmental resilience, and is committed to advancing research and education in earth sciences.

Yi Wang

Assistant Professor Yi Wang's research explores marine biogeochemistry, paleoclimatology, paleoceanography, trace metal cycling, and isotope geochemistry. Dr. Wang is focused on how global climate change affects oxygen as well as its subsequent consequences (such as fisheries and global biogeochemical cycles).

Yanxu Zhang

Associate Professor Yanxu Zhang's research is at the intersection of Earth and Environmental Sciences, focusing on the biogeochemical cycling of global contaminants. Dr. Zhang's work focuses on understanding the interactions between human activity and the environment, and he looks forward to collaborating with Tulane's interdisciplinary teams.

Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

Joan Bennett

Professor Joan Bennett returns to Tulane, bringing her renowned expertise in fungal genetics and science leadership. Dr. Bennett is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and is committed to mentoring the next generation of scientists. **Dr. Bennett has also been appointed the Ida A. Richardson Chair of Botany.**

Brian Sidlauskas

Professor Brian Sidlauskas joins from Oregon State University, where he focused on fish biodiversity and conservation. Dr. Sidlauskas is passionate about field research and engaging students in hands-on scientific discovery. Dr. Sidlauskas will also take on the role of curator of the Royal D. Suttkus Fish Collection and director of the Tulane University Biodiversity Research Institute. The research collection of fishes at TUBRI is the largest collection of post larval fishes in the world, with over 7 million specimens in over 200,000 lots.

Mathematics

Alessandra Costantini

Professor of Practice Alessandra Costantini joins the Mathematics department with a focus on mathematical education and student engagement. Dr. Costantini's research is in commutative algebra and its connections with algebraic geometry and combinatorics and her work focuses on Rees algebras, with geometric motivations stemming from the study of singularities, multiplicity and toric algebraic varieties.

Emily Gamundi

Professor of Practice Emily Gamundi, a New Orleans native, earned her Ph.D. in Mathematics from Tulane University before joining Trinity University in Washington D.C. as a Clare Boothe Luce Professor of Mathematics. There, Dr. Gamundi developed a deep enthusiasm for teaching and mentoring students. Now, she is delighted to be back at Tulane, teaching in both the Mathematics Department and The Murphy Institute's Master of Political Economy with Data Analytics.

Neuroscience Program

John Horne

Professor of Practice John Horne brings a strong background in marine biology and ecological modeling. Dr. Horne has previously worked at the University of New Orleans and is excited to support Tulane's neuroscience and interdisciplinary science initiatives. Dr. Horne's current research interests focus on identifying effective strategies for teaching undergraduate biology. Previous research included investigating the cell biological mechanisms of neural development in zebrafish.

Physics and Engineering Physics

Ahmad Majed

Dr. Ahmad Majed attended Tulane University to complete his Ph.D. in Material Physics and Engineering Physics in June of 2024. He joins the Tulane team as a Professor of Practice. Dr. Majed's research includes mechanical engineering/metallurgy/nanomaterials synthesis, characterization, and electrochemical testing.

Anoop Rajappan

Assistant Professor Anoop Rajappan joins the Physics department with a focus on fluid mechanics, soft robotics, and wearable devices for mobility assistance and rehabilitation. Dr. Rajappan is excited to contribute to Tulane's growing physics program and collaborate on interdisciplinary research.

Psychology

Yolanda (Yo) Jackson

Dr. Yo Jackson brings a distinguished background in clinical child psychology, having

previously served as a leader and principal investigator on major research projects. Dr. Jackson is excited to contribute her expertise in clinical practice and research to Tulane's academic community and looks forward to mentoring students and advancing the field of psychology at the university. Dr. Jackson is also the Lila L. and Douglas J. Hertz Endowed Chair in Psychology.

Selin Zeytinoglu

Assistant Professor Selin Zeytinoglu is a developmental scientist whose research explores how social experiences with caregivers and peers, along with individual characteristics like temperament, shape children's and adolescents' emotional and social development. Dr. Zeytinoglu's interdisciplinary approach brings together students from psychology, neuroscience, computer science, and data science to address complex questions about human development.

River-Coastal Science and Engineering

Matthew Czapiga

Assistant Professor Matt Czapiga brings expertise in environmental monitoring and river-coastal dynamics. Dr. Czapiga is dedicated to advancing research in riverine and coastal systems and supporting student learning through hands-on experiences.

Ibrahim Demir

Dr. Ibrahim Demir is a world-renowned researcher in climate and data science who has been appointed the inaugural Michael A. Fitts Presidential Chair in Environmental Informatics and Artificial Intelligence. Previously a professor at the University of Iowa, he specializes in hydroinformatics. Demir joins the Department of River-Coastal Science and Engineering and is a core member of the ByWater Institute, helping drive interdisciplinary solutions for coastal, riverine, and climate challenges locally and globally.

Richard W. Wagner

Wayne Wagner is a Professor of Practice in the Department of River and Coastal

Science and Engineering at Tulane. With over two decades of teaching experience, Dr. Wagner is passionate about fostering students' cognitive development and teaching them how to think, analyze, and synthesize.

We are excited to see the innovative research, teaching, and community engagement these new faculty members will bring to Tulane. Their varied backgrounds and expertise will enrich our academic environment and inspire our students for years to come.