A Guide to Campus Life for Grad Students

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Attending graduate school requires a major academic commitment, but the experience extends far beyond the classroom. For students in on-campus programs, campus life can have a significant impact on how they build relationships, access support, explore career opportunities, and balance the demands of school with the rest of the responsibilities in their lives.

A student’s ability to feel connected to their college community can also influence their academic progress. The Institute for Higher Education Policy describes a student’s experience (the daily realities of their college life) and sense of belonging as important drivers of their learning, with a positive experience contributing to a greater likelihood of them completing their program.

At the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University, campus life is supported by the university’s community and the resources available to graduate students. From professional development programs to opportunities to get involved outside the classroom, these resources can help students find their footing and make the most of an in-person program.

The surrounding environment also plays an important role in campus life. Tulane’s location in New Orleans gives graduate students access to a broader community that can shape where they live, how they build routines, how they connect with their peers, and how they spend their time off campus.

What Is Campus Life Like for Grad Students?

For graduate students, campus life encompasses the university experiences that foster connection, engagement, and professional growth. At Tulane, these experiences are closely tied to the collaborative student community and its emphasis on connecting students with their peers and with industry professionals.

They also involve the practical side of being an in-person student. Where students live, how they structure their days, and how they move between their school, work, and personal commitments can all affect their time in graduate school.

The resources students use along the way also shape how well they manage campus life at Tulane. Graduate students may turn to the university for career training, campus involvement, housing guidance, or insights from students or alumni who have already navigated the program.

Living in New Orleans adds another layer to the campus experience. For students who are new to the city, campus life can extend into the surrounding neighborhoods, restaurants, cultural events, and professional communities that help define daily life in New Orleans.

Tips for Adjusting to Campus Life as a Grad Student

Settling into campus life can be challenging and typically takes time, even for graduate students who have attended an in-person program before. A few key early steps can make the transition easier.

Connect With Students

Speaking with current students or alumni can give prospective and incoming graduate students a better sense of what to expect. These conversations can offer insights into everything from classes and campus resources to life in the city from people who have already gone through the adjustment process.

Tulane's Student Ambassador program enables prospective students to connect with current students and alumni from different graduate programs, including the Master of Business Administration, Master of Accounting, and Master of Business Analytics programs. Students can also speak with graduate admissions staff to learn more about the school's graduate business programs and the application process.

Join One or More Student Organizations

Student organizations provide opportunities for graduate students to get involved without having to navigate the campus community on their own. These organizations are a great place for students to form bonds with their classmates who share similar interests or career goals.

Tulane offers several organizations — each one focused on a different area of business — geared specifically toward graduate students, such as:

- **Freeman Consulting Group:** This student consulting group provides consulting services to local organizations while giving members practical industry experience.
- **Graduate Business Council (GBC):** All graduate business students are members of the GBC, which aims to serve their academic, professional, and personal interests. The group also acts as a liaison between the student body, the faculty, the administration, and the wider Tulane community.

- **Tulane Energy Club:** This student organization is for those who are interested in the energy industry. It offers activities such as speaker events, networking opportunities, and field trips.
- **Women in Business:** This organization helps students of all genders and majors network with professionals and collaborate with their peers, while promoting equality in the workplace.

Explore Campus Before Classes Begin

Getting familiar with the campus before the semester starts can make the first few weeks feel a little less overwhelming. It can also help students minimize the amount of time they spend figuring out basic logistics once their classes are underway.

Before classes begin, students can look for:

- Study spaces
- Classroom buildings
- Student housing
- Technology resources
- Areas for social gathering

Tulane offers a virtual tour that allows students to explore the Freeman School of Business and the broader university from anywhere. Students can tailor the tour to a specific area such as student life, community, or technology, making it a useful starting point before visiting campus in person.

Exploring Housing Options

A student's housing can have a notable impact on how easily and well they adjust to campus life. Where a student lives can influence their commuting time and access to campus resources, as well as how connected they feel to the community, both on campus and beyond.

At Tulane, students have several options to consider. The university offers graduate housing on its downtown campus, with furnished studio, one-, and two-bedroom apartments. Many Freeman students choose to live near the uptown campus, however, as it is home to the business school and is located in a residential area. Students can also use Tulane's off-campus housing resources to compare neighborhoods and find roommates.

As students begin exploring their housing choices, a few general steps can help make the process easier to navigate:

- **Start early:** Housing, particularly off-campus apartments, can move quickly. Beginning their search early can give students more options.
- **Set a realistic budget:** Rent is only part of the cost of housing. Students should also account for utilities, transportation, groceries, and other day-to-day expenses.
- **Think about the commute:** For students considering living off campus, a less expensive place may not be the best fit if it adds significant travel time or makes it harder to participate in campus life.
- **Ask current students about their housing and daily life:** Current students can offer firsthand insights about housing on or off campus. At Tulane, prospective students can take advantage of the Student Ambassador program to speak with current students and alumni as they weigh their housing options.
- **Use visits or virtual tours to understand the area:** Campus tours and virtual resources can help students get a clearer feel for things like the layout of the campus and daily logistics.

Time Management Tips for Grad Students

How students manage their time plays a crucial role in their campus life experience because it affects how they move through each day and week. Graduate students need time for coursework, but they may also want to attend events and socialize with their classmates off campus. Students who work while pursuing a degree have even more competing demands on their time.

That balance can be difficult to maintain without a plan. A graduate school program can be more demanding and often requires more independent work than an undergraduate program, making the structure of a student's day especially important.

A few strategies can help students make their schedules more manageable:

- **Establish a consistent schedule:** Having a regular schedule can help graduate students bring more structure to their days. When possible, students should set clear blocks of time for schoolwork and communicate their boundaries around other responsibilities to others.

- **Break large assignments into smaller tasks:** Instead of treating a paper, presentation, or exam as one large project, students can make progress by dividing their complex responsibilities into smaller, more reasonable tasks.
- **Prioritize what needs to get done first:** Identifying the most urgent items on a to-do list can help students manage multiple deadlines without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Plan around work commitments:** Students who have jobs may need to look ahead for busy weeks or schedule conflicts. Communicating early with employers, classmates, or instructors about their conflicting responsibilities can make it easier for students to manage those responsibilities.
- **Make time for breaks and campus life:** Taking periodic breaks can help graduate students maintain their focus and avoid burnout. As part of a healthy school-work-life balance, students should also make room for the campus events and social experiences that help them feel more engaged in their studies and their community.

Additional Resources for Graduate Students

Adjusting to campus life and everything that goes into it — finding housing, building relationships, managing school and life responsibilities — can feel daunting. The following resources can help graduate students better prepare for making that adjustment and the day-to-day realities of graduate school.

- **The Jed Foundation, "College Relationships 101: Building Connections" :** This guide offers advice on building relationships in college, emphasizing that connection takes time and may require students to put themselves in new environments.
- **ACT, How to Connect With Current College Students:** ACT explains how speaking with current students can give prospective students insights they may not get anywhere else, making this a useful resource for learning about campus life before enrolling.
- **Indeed, "How to Balance Work While Going to School (Specific Tips)":** Indeed provides practical guidance for students who remain employed while earning a degree, highlighting the importance of maintaining a positive work-life balance.
- **Citizens, "A Complete Guide to College Clubs and Student Organizations on Campus":** Citizens discusses how student organizations

can help students build connections, explore interests, and develop skills that support their broader college experience.

- **Tuition Rewards, "Picking the Club That's Right for You":** This article encourages students to choose clubs with intention, which can be helpful for graduate students who want to get involved without overloading their schedules.
- **Tulane University, Preparing to Live in New Orleans:** Tulane's Center for Global Education provides an overview of life in New Orleans, including neighborhoods, restaurants, cultural offerings, transportation information, and safety considerations.

How New Orleans Supports Campus Life

For graduate students at Tulane, campus life extends into the broader New Orleans community. The setting influences many aspects of the practical side of graduate school, from choosing where to live to finding ways to engage with the city beyond campus.

Housing offers a clear example of the significance of a graduate school's location. According to Apartments.com, the average monthly rent in New Orleans was 23 percent lower than the national average in July 2026 ($1,286 in New Orleans compared to the $1,662 national average) which may be helpful for students weighing the cost of graduate school.

New Orleans also has a sizable student population. *Forbes* named the city the No. 1 best city in the U.S. for college students in 2024. Among the factors that influenced its ranking, the publication noted that students make up nearly one-fourth of the city's population.

The city's entrepreneurial activity may be especially relevant for business students. Gusto ranked New Orleans among the top 10 cities for entrepreneurship in America in 2022, placing it at No. 9 for business applications per 1,000 residents. More recently, the Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center recognized the New Orleans metro area as the 14th fastest-growing entrepreneurial region in the country.

The city also boasts a pedestrian-friendly environment that can make it easier for students to explore beyond campus. New Orleans is considered one of the world's most walkable cities, with AllClear naming it the fourth most walkable city in the

world, one of only two U.S. cities in the top 10.

Additionally, New Orleans offers a strong cultural and culinary backdrop for life outside of class. *Condé Nast Traveler* Readers' Choice Awards recently ranked it among the best food cities in the U.S., placing it at No. 2. New Orleans is also known for its many parks, festivals, art galleries, and music venues.

For graduate students, the city's unique advantages can make time away from their coursework feel like a meaningful part of the campus life experience.

Make the Most of Campus Life in Grad School

Campus life can play an important role in how graduate students adjust to their new surroundings, both inside and outside the classroom. At Tulane University's Freeman School of Business, the graduate experience is supported by a strong campus community and shaped by the opportunities that come with studying in New Orleans.