

NIH awards Tulane \$2.65 million to boost research in women's health, sex differences

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BIRCWH principal investigator and research director Dr. Marie “Tonette” Krousel-Wood (left) with BIRCWH scholars Dragana Lovre, Catherine Burnette and Jylana Sheats. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The National Institutes of Health has awarded Tulane University \$2.65 million to continue its successful program to develop more researchers studying women's health and how disease progression and treatment differ in women.

The five-year grant funds Tulane's [Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health](#) (BIRCWH) career development program that connects junior faculty, known as [BIRCWH scholars](#), to senior faculty with shared research interests. Since 2002, the program has supported 29 BIRCWH scholars across disciplines, representing faculty from the schools of medicine, public health and tropical medicine, science and engineering, and social work.

“The BIRCWH program serves as a model for career development at Tulane and is vital to bridging the gap between research training and research independence for early career investigators,” said BIRCWH principal investigator and research director [Dr. Marie “Tonette” Krousel-Wood](#).

“Our long-term goals are to increase the number and diversity of highly trained, culturally competent, independent, interdisciplinary investigators in women's health and sex differences,” added Krousel-Wood, who is also professor and senior associate dean of Tulane University School of Medicine, associate dean of Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and Tulane associate provost for the

health sciences.

Since the program began, almost 80 percent of BIRCWH scholars have been women and 28 percent are under-represented minorities. The program has also supported scholars from Xavier University.

Current BIRCWH scholars include:

- [Catherine Burnette](#), assistant professor of social work, who is researching cardiovascular disease among Native American women.
- [Dragana Lovre](#), assistant professor of medicine, who is studying how novel estrogen complexes may improve metabolism after menopause.
- [Jylana Sheats](#), assistant professor of global community and behavioral sciences, who is studying a culturally-informed, mobile-phone based strategy to improve eating habits among African-American women and men.

Other Tulane BIRCWH program members include [Dr. Lydia Bazzano](#), Erin Peacock and Kathryn Rabstejnek.

Tulane's BIRCWH focuses on cardiovascular and related diseases and understanding how sex differences play a role in disease progression and treatment. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both women and men in the United States.

"Although men and women may both have cardiovascular disease, the way it presents is different and their response to treatment is also different," Krousel-Wood said. "We need to better understand those differences between men and women if we truly want to address the continued concern that cardiovascular mortality remains the No. 1 reason for death in this country."