



January 27, 2026
3:30 PM
Tulane University
Kendall Cram Lecture Hall, LBC

*An 80,000-word thesis would take 9 hours to present.
Their time limit?
3 minutes.*

Special Thanks

Michael Cunningham, Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research and Professor of Psychology; Jennifer O'Brien-Brown, Assistant Director of the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (OGPS), Lauren Lukkarila, Academic Support Specialist of OGPS, Ryan Stivers, Senior Academic Advisor of OGPS, Nha Nguyen, Administrative Program Coordinator of OGPS, Shannah Boucher, Graduate Assistant; Alex McNally, Graduate Assistant; GSSA Executive Board: Chase Richard, Jiachan Shi, Cody Woods, Olivia Shorter, and the GSSA Departmental Representatives; 3MT Judges: Jennifer Avegno, Desiree Packard, Kyle Pearson, and Catherine Tyner. Professor Ashley Keller Nelson, Department of Management Communication; Office of Academic Affairs and Provost; and the University of Queensland.

History of 3MT

Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) celebrates the exciting research conducted by PhD students. Developed by The University of Queensland (UQ), the exercise cultivates

students' academic, presentation, and research communication skills. The competition supports their capacity to effectively explain their research in three minutes, in a language appropriate to a non-specialist audience.

The first 3MT was held at UQ in 2008 with 160 RHD students competing. In 2009 and 2010, the 3MT competition was promoted to other Australian and New Zealand universities and enthusiasm for the concept grew. Due to its adoption in numerous universities, a multi-national event was developed, and the Inaugural Trans-Tasman 3MT competition was held at UQ in 2010.

Since 2011 the popularity of the competition has increased, and 3MT competitions are now held in over 200 universities across more than 18 countries worldwide.

Judges

JENNIFER AVEGNO is a New Orleans native who received her undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame, a Master of Arts in Sociology from Tulane University and her MD from LSU-New Orleans. She completed her residency at LSU/Charity Hospital Emergency Medicine and joined the faculty at both LSU and Tulane. As an academic faculty member, Dr. Avegno worked in medical education and established the Division of Social Emergency Medicine at LSU to facilitate innovative programming, interdisciplinary partnerships, and improved population health outcomes. In 2018, she was appointed as the Director of the Health Department for the City of New Orleans, where she led the City's public health strategy, programming, and responses to multiple epidemics and emergencies. As Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, Dr. Avegno has expanded her role, and continues to manage a dedicated team of public health and social services professionals in addressing critical health needs for the community, with intentional core focus on social drivers of health, equity and access.

DESIREE PACKARD earned her bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Alabama and her Masters of Public Administration from the University of New Orleans. She spent a number of years in the banking and financial services industry before pivoting to work with and advocate for youth development opportunities. She now serves as the Executive Director of Tulane's Strategic Summer Programs.

KYLE PEARSON is the Director of Case Management and Victim Support Services. He grew up in northeast Ohio, attending Youngstown State University where he received an undergraduate degree in social work before moving to Pittsburgh to pursue his graduate degree at the University of Pittsburgh. He has worked as an outpatient mental health therapist in Pittsburgh and joined Tulane's Success Coaching program in 2016 before joining the CMVSS staff in 2018.

CATHERINE TYNER earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Sociology from the University of New Orleans. Catherine spent 20 years working in the metropolitan area supporting individuals and families experiencing behavioral health challenges as well as housing insecurity and homelessness. Catherine entered the Higher Ed sector in 2013 when she arrived at Tulane in the office of Case Management & Victim Support Services. Catherine currently serves as the Assistant Dean of Students at Tulane University.

3MT Contestants

EDWARD LOOKER

“Changing the Flow: How Cell Messaging Changes Growing Blood Vessels”

Edward Looker is a PhD student in the Cell and Molecular Biology Department at Tulane University. His work focuses on understanding how signals sent between the cells that line blood vessels affect the development of malformed blood vessels in Hereditary Hemorrhagic Telangiectasia (HHT).

SHANNAN YATES

“Cities Are Hotter: How Lizards Adapt to Heat”

Shannan Yates is a PhD candidate in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Tulane University. Her research focuses on evolutionary physiology, urban ecology, and thermal biology. She studies how thermal tolerance varies between urban and rural populations of green anoles (*Anolis carolinensis*), exploring how these lizards cope with extreme temperatures. Broadly, Shannan aims to understand how organisms adapt or fail to adapt to rapid environmental change, combining physiological experiments with field-based ecological measurements.

EMMA KAINZ

“What Language Do You Speak? Student Language Identification and Literacy in Guyana”

Emma Kainz is a PhD candidate in the Interdisciplinary Linguistics program at Tulane. She received BAs at North Carolina State University with concentrations in Spanish Language and Literature and Political Science, and a MA in Linguistics from Tulane. Before joining the program at Tulane, she served as a Peace Corps Literacy Volunteer stationed in Guyana. Her research investigates how multilingual speakers in postcolonial Caribbean classrooms negotiate linguistic norms and literacy practices, revealing how language contact, ideology, and identity interact in processes of language change and educational inequality. This research is primarily conducted in Guyana, but her interests extend to all multilingual language environments.

JILL LOVE

“Plasticity: When is Change a Good Thing?”

Jill Love is a PhD candidate in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Tulane University. Her research explores how organisms respond to environmental change, with a focus on when flexibility in traits is beneficial versus when it may be costly. By studying plant populations across natural environmental gradients, her work aims to better understand how species adapt to variable and rapidly changing environments.

SHREYA BAVISHI

“Repurposing Drug Treatment for a Rare Incurable Disease.”

Shreya Bavishi is a fifth-year Cell and Molecular Biology Ph.D. candidate at Tulane University researching therapeutics for a genetic vascular disease. Shreya has served in various student organizations and is a proud recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Student Leadership Award. When she isn't in the lab, you can find Shreya seeking out new experiences around New Orleans or ambitiously starting yet another crochet project.

ANINDITA BARUA

“Gut Instincts: Stopping Cancer’s Domino Effect on the Body.”

Anindita Barua is a PhD student in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology track of the Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program at Tulane University. Her research involves understanding tumor-induced paraneoplastic renal defects and the mechanisms underlying ascites development, with the goal of improving outcomes for cancer patients affected by kidney disorders and nephrogenic ascites. She serves as the Louisiana Cancer Research Center student representative for the Biomedical Sciences Student Association of Tulane University.

NICHOLÁS CABRERA-SCHNEIDER

“Voters and Interest Groups: Who Influences Mexico’s Electronic Vehicle Policy?”

Nicolás is currently pursuing his doctoral degree at the Stone Center for the Latin American Studies, Tulane University. His dissertation research investigates the interactions between China and Latin America, with particular emphasis on historical contexts, environmental considerations, and investment activities. Throughout his academic endeavors, Nicolás provides a critical perspective on understanding the impact of international economic policies on local communities.

ELIZABETH MACDOUGAL

“Restoring Coastal Wetlands with Recycled Glass”

Elizabeth MacDougal is a PhD candidate in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Tulane. She studies the relationships between plants, microbes, and the environment in marshes and swamps, in order to help people restore and protect these important ecosystems. Her projects involve testing recycled glass sand as a supplementary restoration material, and testing host vs. environment influences on soil and root bacteria.

EMILY PHILLIPS

“Not Always a Team Player: Macrophages and Breast Cancer”

Emily Phillips is a PhD candidate in the Biomedical Sciences program at Tulane University. She is a member of the Machado Lab, researching how cell to cell interactions influence everything from normal mammary development, all the way to invasive cancer and metastasis. She hopes to better understand how immune cells interact with cancer cells within the tumor microenvironment.

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