

November 11, 2026
3:00 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, Director of the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (OGPS), Nha Nguyen, Administrative Program Coordinator of OGPS, Lauren Lukkarila, Academic Support Specialist of OGPS, Ryan Stivers, Senior Career Advisor of OGPS, Myan Wright, Career Advisor of OGPS, Shannah Boucher, Graduate Assistant; Alex McNally, Graduate Assistant; GSSA Executive Board: Carlie Epstein, Mitchell Nuland, Jordan Lopez, Kearán Sparks and the GSSA Departmental Representatives; Kristen Fransen, Owner of Constance Creative; 3MT Judges: David Barksdale, Colette Raphel, 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

DAVID BARKSDALE is the Principal of Alluvian Capital LLC, a New Orleans-based private investment office. He previously served as Chief Executive Officer of Spread Networks, which built a Chicago-to-New York fiber optic network acquired by Zayo Communications in 2018. He received his B.A. from Tulane University and a J.D. from New York University School of Law and began his career as an attorney at Cleary Gottlieb. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of BankPlus and on the Board of Tulane University and is former board chair of the Greater New Orleans Foundation and The Idea Village.

COLETTE RAPHEL serves as the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and University Registrar at Tulane University, where she has dedicated more than 25 years to advancing student success and improving the student experience. A New Orleans native, Colette earned her undergraduate degree in Music from Tulane and returned to the university nearly three decades later to earn her Executive MBA. Throughout her career, she has focused on modernizing academic operations, implementing innovative technologies, and developing student-centered solutions. Colette is also a dedicated mentor who is passionate about creating opportunities for students and staff alike, supporting their educational and professional growth.

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

MARY E. SCHULZ
"A New Frontier in Secondary Lymphedema Treatment: Could GLP-1 Medications Be the Breakthrough We've Been Waiting For?"

Mary is a PhD candidate in the Biomedical Sciences program at Tulane University School of Medicine and works under the mentorship of Dr. Jorge Castorena-Gonzalez. She received her BA in Biochemistry from Lawrence University in Appleton, WI. Prior to graduate school, Mary worked as a research tech at the University of Wisconsin-Madison studying immune responses in schistosomiasis, at Mayo Clinic investigating receptor trafficking in cholangiocarcinoma, at the Medical College of Wisconsin examining vascular reactivity of arterioles from patients with cardiovascular disease, and at Adaptive Biotechnologies developing novel DNA extraction methods from blood samples. Her current dissertation project focuses on investigating the roles of TRPV4 channels and GLP-1Rs in the regulation of lymphatic function, with a particular emphasis in evaluating their therapeutic potential for treating secondary lymphedema associated with obesity, metabolic syndrome, and breast cancer-related lymphatic dysfunction.

MELIKA RAD
"Developing a Sex-Specific Human Model of Pain"

Melika Rad is a PhD student in Biomedical Engineering at Tulane University. Her research focuses on engineering neural tissue models that recreate key features of the nervous system in a controlled laboratory environment. Currently, she is working on incorporating sex-related biology into a model of pain signaling to better represent biological differences between males and females within these pathways. Through this work, she hopes to contribute to more reliable preclinical testing and the development of safer, non-opioid pain therapies.

YU LIU
“Does College Make Us Healthier Decades Later?”

Yu Liu is a PhD candidate in Economics at Tulane University. Her research interests lie in health economics and the economics of aging. She studies how educational opportunities and public policies shape health behaviors, healthcare use, and long-term well-being. Using policy changes as natural experiments, she examines how opportunities earlier in life affect outcomes as people age. Her broader goal is to inform institutional reforms that strengthen human capital and support healthier aging.

WILL T. EATON
“The impact of bed nets on malaria burden in Haiti”

Will Eaton is a PhD candidate in the Department of Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease. His research supports malaria elimination on Hispaniola, the last remaining malaria-endemic island in the Caribbean. Working in Grand’Anse, the department with Haiti’s highest malaria incidence, he evaluates the impact and cost-effectiveness of interventions targeting mosquitoes that bite mostly outdoors. He also studies serological biomarkers that measure human exposure to Anopheles bites.

MEHRNOOSH ARABI
“Outsmarting Breast Cancer: When Tumors Fight Back”

Mehrnoosh Arabi is a PhD candidate in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Tulane University School of Medicine. She is passionate about understanding how mutations in the RAS gene family drive breast cancer and therapy resistance. Her research centers on a novel syngeneic mouse model of RAS-driven breast cancer, through which she investigates how tumors survive targeted therapies through metabolic adaptation. She aims to turn these discoveries into smarter, more durable treatment strategies for patients with aggressive, hard-to-treat breast Cancers.

KUN LIU
“Mapping What Software Hides, Before Attackers Do”

Kun Liu is a PhD candidate in the Computer Science Department. His research focuses on using artificial intelligence to understand and analyze software when its original code is unavailable. He develops AI-driven techniques to reconstruct hidden paths in software, helping security researchers identify potential vulnerabilities and malicious behaviors that traditional methods may overlook. His goal is to make software security analysis more reliable and effective, enabling researchers to discover security risks before they cause real-world harm.

CHASE RICHARD
“High Pressure in the Brain vs the Body”

Chase Richard is a PhD candidate in the Neuroscience department at Tulane University. His research focuses on investigating the impact of cardiovascular disease and estrogen loss on neurovascular coupling, vascular integrity, and dendritic spine dynamics in menopausal animal models. He is passionate in discovering how the presence of menopause and cardiovascular disease leads to increased risks of Alzheimer’s disease and vascular dementia in women. Chase hopes his research provides insight on creating more alternative therapies for protecting vascular health against hypertension

NUSRAT JAHAN URMY
“Resilient to Alzheimer's Pathology: What Can We Learn from Them?”

Nusrat Jahan Urmy is a PhD student in the Department of Aging Studies at Tulane University School of Medicine. Her research focuses on the epigenetics of Alzheimer's disease. She is interested in understanding why some people do not develop Alzheimer's disease despite having substantial Alzheimer's pathology and aims to apply her findings to improve Alzheimer's diagnostics and treatment.

ELIZABETH MACDOUGAL
“Restoring Coastal Wetlands with Recycled Glass”

Elizabeth MacDougal is a PhD Candidate in Tulane’s Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department. As an Ecologist, she studies how different species work together with their environment to overcome challenges. She likes to think about how human actions play a role in other organisms’ lives, and how to pair deeper understanding along with good intentions.

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