

Guiding a Path Through Research

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(Photo of Mickey Mickle)

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I'm a first-generation college student from Birmingham, Alabama attending Tulane University studying political science with minors in French and Africana studies on a pre-law track. My primary areas of interest are policy and organizing geared towards social justice advocacy, southern political organizing, and labor equity. So when Dr. Anna Mahoney, Administrative Associate Professor of Women's Political Leadership at Newcomb Institute and member of the Congressional Research Team, offered me a position to serve as a research assistant working on a project at the end of my first semester at Tulane, it was an incredible surprise. I was under the impression that these positions were reserved for upper-level students and graduate students, so this was an excellent opportunity to see faculty and staff commitment to uplifting the voices of students at the start of my journey through academia at Tulane.

After taking Dr. Mahoney's TIDES course that studied leadership in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, she reached out to me about applying for the research assistant position she was offering for a project researching Black women in legislative caucuses. Because this was directly in line with my area of study, I was happy to apply for and accept the job. We study their voting records, party affiliations, influence on their fellow congress members, and how they impact future legislators. We specialized in district data retrieval, literary analysis, as well as transcribing and analyzing interviews with congresswomen. I also managed communication between Georgetown University, UNC-Chapel Hill, and Rutgers University. A portion of our research was recently published in the [*Journal of Women, Politics, & Policy*](#). This research is being done in conjunction with Christopher Clark at UNC-Chapel Hill and Nadia Brown at Georgetown University.

The experience that I have gained working with such an incredible team is indescribable. We have had the opportunity of a lifetime to begin interviewing congresswomen to get direct knowledge and insight for our research. I've been able to utilize cutting-edge approaches to political science research. For example, I worked with a researcher on the project from Rutgers University, Michael (MJ) Strawbridge, studying the way black female politicians utilize Twitter as an effective tool of outreach between congresspeople and their constituents. We also studied the way Black Twitter and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) affects politics and the way black women enact policy. I have also worked with the Newcomb Institute as an intern in the Reproductive Rights Internship Program as the Digital Development Intern for the podcast Black Feminist Rants, a Reproductive Justice podcast, hosted by LaKia Williams. The podcast discusses activism and Black

Feminism while centering on the experiences of Black women and femmes navigating social justice spaces and the world.

In just one year, I was able to find internships and research positions that directly allowed me to explore my fields, no matter how much they ebb and flow. And my experience is not unusual. Research and internship opportunities are widely available at Newcomb, and it's so easy to work it into your course load. I'm honored to be a part of these incredible projects.

[Mickey Mickle](#) (she/her/hers) is a first-generation sophomore here at Tulane from Birmingham, Alabama, majoring in Political Science with minors in French and Africana Studies. She plans on practicing law, then working in public policy.