

A Letter from the Executive Director

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Anita Raj, Ph.D., MS

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Photo of Anita Raj, Ph.D., MS

June 29, 2023

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I am pleased to introduce myself to you as the new Executive Director of the Newcomb Institute at Tulane University. I am excited to get to know the Newcomb and Tulane communities and work with the amazing Newcomb Institute team to continue our path and leadership in the area of gender equity scholarship, training, and civic engagement.

We have some exciting things planned for the coming year to build awareness and use of Newcomb Institute activities and scholarship that can position us as a local and global leader on issues of gender equity and empowerment. We are also revitalizing our website and engagement efforts to increase our visibility in terms of both our work and our impacts. Look for our new website, as well as some great new messaging and interactive social media activities from us this fall. Newcomb Institute is one of only a handful of academic institutes in the country that is committed to advancing scholarly research, and training focused on gender equity and women and girls' leadership, but not enough people know the scholarship produced by our faculty, students, and staff, nor about the impacts our work has locally and globally. Our team is excited and energized to build Newcomb Institute into a recognized global leader on these issues.

As a psychologist who has been working in public health for more than 20 years, starting my career focused on HIV risk for women and most recently leading efforts on gender-related risks to COVID-19 (e.g., mental health and violence) across multiple national settings, I plan to expand Newcomb research to include a focus on public health and medicine. We will of course, continue to support the existing Newcomb researchers' foci in the areas of social sciences and liberal arts. These efforts, I hope, will facilitate the expansion of Newcomb connections across Tulane's diverse schools. We also plan to use the coming year to leverage some of the existing relationships I have with key organizations in the US as well as multilateral organizations focused on gender data, gender equity research and policy, and gender-focused collective action, to increase our national and global partnerships and collaborations.

At the same time, as we build and adapt Newcomb Institute to a rapidly changing world with ongoing as well as new challenges to gender equity and human well-being, we will also continue the important traditions and maintain our commitment to progressive values related to the advancement and leadership of gender diverse individuals and undergraduate students. Students and faculty will remain central to scholarly research, training, and convening activities led by Newcomb, and focal areas of scholarship will continue to emphasize ending gender-based violence and discrimination, strengthening women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights, and advancing women's civic engagement and leadership on these issues, in partnership with community organizations and policy advocates and stakeholders.

Sincerely,

[Anita Raj, Ph.D., MS](#)

Executive Director, Newcomb Institute of Tulane University

*Nancy Reeves Dreux Endowed Chair & Professor, Tulane School of Public Health and
Tropical Medicine*