

From Tulane to Capitol Hill: Virginia Congressman Suhas Subramanyam (SLA '08)

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As a Tulane student in post-Katrina New Orleans, Suhas Subramanyam (SLA '08) found his calling in service — one that would ultimately lead him to Capitol Hill. Now

a U.S. Representative for Virginia's 10th Congressional District, Subramanyam credits his experiences at Tulane with shaping his career in public service.

When Subramanyam arrived at Tulane, he was on the pre-med track, planning to follow in the footsteps of his parents by becoming a doctor. He intended to major in biology while exploring philosophy and history courses, but he wasn't entirely certain medicine was the right path. Then Hurricane Katrina struck, forcing him to temporarily relocate to Rice University in Houston, his hometown, while Tulane's campus underwent repairs. When he returned to New Orleans, Subramanyam felt compelled to do more than just watch from the sidelines.

"I wanted to be part of the rebuilding of New Orleans, so I started volunteering with different community projects," he said. He took on a leadership role in the Tulane Green Club, focusing on environmental initiatives, and became deeply involved in CACTUS, Tulane's community service organization. "Before Katrina, I was just kind of going through the motions, unsure of what I would do with my life. But afterward, I saw a purpose — serving the community."

Subramanyam said that at first, he was "deliberately apolitical," trying to keep politics out of the Green Club and his work with CACTUS.

However, he realized that meaningful community service and activism often required political engagement, so he began working more closely with local politicians, particularly the city council and the mayor's office. One initiative focused on hosting out-of-town volunteer groups to aid in rebuilding efforts, while another pushed for more environmentally friendly reconstruction, such as installing energy-efficient light bulbs in new homes.

At the same time, he was honing his skills as a writer. As the sports editor for *The Hullabaloo*, he had always enjoyed journalism, but his growing involvement in local politics sparked an interest in covering news and policy. He applied for a scholarship that funded an internship in Washington, D.C., where he worked for "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" at ABC News.



Interning for the show was eye-opening. “I took that opportunity to just follow producers at ABC around Capitol Hill, and that’s when I started being more aware of what happens in national politics.”

Though journalism gave him a deeper understanding of government, he remained deeply engaged in life at Tulane, balancing a full academic and extracurricular schedule.

In addition to majoring in philosophy, Subramanyam minored in economics and history and played violin in the university orchestra. He was always on the move,

juggling his studies, leadership roles and volunteer work. His longtime friend, Mark Joyner (SLA '07), a history and art history double major, wasn't surprised by his drive.

"I've been fortunate enough to be friends with Suhas since the spring semester of 2006 when we met in our Tibetan class," Joyner said. "It wasn't just his intelligence that immediately struck me, but how kind of a person he is. You could tell within the short time of speaking with him that he was going places, even with a philosophy degree!"

Joyner recalled that Subramanyam's dedication to service was evident early on, whether he was organizing environmental initiatives or routinely going to the Lower Ninth Ward to help with the post-Katrina cleanup. "He did all this while maintaining an active social life, good grades and being the sports editor of *The Hullabaloo!* I never knew where he found the time, but he did, and this has continued to be the case after we graduated. We've stayed in touch as he moved around the country, worked in government and stood in each other's weddings!"

During Subramanyam's senior year, he applied for a position with the FBI in New Orleans but then was offered a position on a congressional campaign in Houston. Seeing it as an opportunity to gain hands-on political experience before possibly attending law school, he accepted the role.

He went on to earn his law degree from Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, but politics continued to call him back. After graduation, he joined the Obama White House as a technology policy advisor.

Inspired by his time in public service, Subramanyam eventually ran for office himself. In 2019, he made history as the first South Asian American elected to the Virginia General Assembly. Four years later, in 2023, he continued his political rise by winning a seat in the Virginia Senate. Building on this momentum, Subramanyam was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in November 2024, representing Virginia's 10th Congressional District, and was sworn in on January 3, 2025.

Through it all, Tulane has remained a defining part of his journey. He values staying engaged with the Tulane community, and this dedication to fostering the next generation of leaders is reflected in his own office, where Tulane alumnus Matthew

Fisher (SLA '23) now serves as a staffer.

Looking back, Subramanyam credits Tulane with providing not just an education, but a foundation for leadership, service and lifelong connections.