

Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast Aug. 29, 2005, displacing hundreds of thousands of residents, including college students. A total of 33 students — 22 from Tulane University and the remainder from Loyola, Xavier and the University of New Orleans — found shelter from the storm at Mizzou. Three are graduate students, one is studying law, and the others are undergraduates. Twenty-four of them hail from Missouri; seven are from Illinois, Louisiana and Texas. Two are international students.

The students had paid their fall semester fees to their New Orleans colleges. Mizzou waived their tuition, room and board for fall semester. Faculty members rolled them into their classes, offered new sections starting Oct. 10 and helped them get caught up. The University Bookstore loaned or discounted textbooks. And the athletics department threw in sports passes.

Hear these students' stories from the storm.

Salvaging the Semester

Story by Karen Worley
Photos by Rob Hill
Map by Dory Colbert

Hurricane survivors Katy Walker, right, and Christal Badour, above, share empathy and a room in Johnston Hall.





The numbered maps highlight locations referred to in the stories.

1. Tulane University: Christal Badour, Katy Walker, Amanda Walker, Bob Murrell, Sean Milford and Scott Gossett attended college here.
2. Holden: Christal Badour took refuge here.
3. Garden District: location of Amanda Walker's apartment
4. Xavier University of Louisiana: Roslyn Reeves attended college here.

5. Jefferson Parish: Bob Murrell's home
6. University of New Orleans: Reagan Marshall attended college here.
7. Baton Rouge: Reagan Marshall evacuated to here.
8. Jackson [Miss.] State University: Sean Milford was bused here.
9. Sulphur, La.: Scott Gossett's hometown

Christal Badour, 20

Junior

Major: psychology/international relations

Hometown: New Orleans

Katy Walker, 21

Junior

Major: architectural studies

Hometown: Carterville, Ill.

Katy Walker was knee-deep in a five-year master's program in architecture at Tulane University (No. 1, see map) when Katrina struck.

Within a week, she had switched gears and was attending classes in architectural studies within the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences while her dad, Roger Walker, was arranging housing for her in Johnston Hall. Her fondest hope was to salvage the fall semester. "It's nice to be in school somewhere, to still be learning and doing something," she says. "Everyone's been really helpful. It's been the easiest transfer process that I could've had."

Figuring out what to do was difficult, but because of this fall's twist of fate, she landed at a school she loves. Mizzou almost recruited her as a high school senior, but the University of Mississippi lured her to Oxford with more scholarship dollars. After trying out majors in vocal performance and business there, she decided to pursue architecture and transfer to Tulane University for her sophomore year.

Now at Mizzou, she has a roommate who truly understands the situation: Christal Badour, a native of New Orleans, former Tulane student and current Mizzou student. "I've lived in New Orleans for the majority of my life, so it's hard," Badour says. "I haven't really

met anyone here, and it's been tough emotionally for me, and people here don't really understand what it's like." No one, that is, except roommate Walker.

"Katy will ask me, 'Do you have this?'" Badour says. "I'll say, 'Yes, it's right there ... no, it's underwater in New Orleans.' Then we laugh about it, but it's not funny. It's an alternative to crying. We do a good job of cheering each other up. We're going through a process together. It's a good arrangement for both of us."

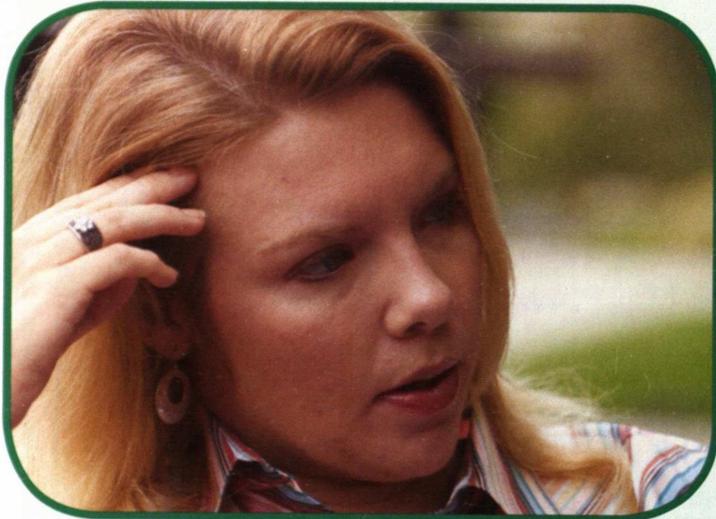
Badour was heading back to New Orleans from her parents' home in Moberly, Mo., when she got wind of the hurricane. On Aug. 28, she and friends boarded up a house in Holden (2) north of Lake Pontchartrain to wait out the storm. For a week, a battery-powered radio and text messaging via cell phones linked them to the outside world.

When Badour learned Tulane wouldn't reopen fall semester, she decided to return home to her folks, Debra and Marlon Kendall. She gassed up her 1991 Honda Accord "with a huge oil leak in it and 180,000 miles" and drove 12 hours straight to get home. All the hotels along the way were booked. "It was pretty crazy," she says. When she got home, Badour found her mom "a wreck" and her family happy she was alive.

She rested and researched options over Labor Day, then registered for 15 hours of classes at Mizzou Sept. 6. The offer of free housing made the decision easier.

"All my stuff is in a house that's under 5 feet of water," says Badour, who had left her belongings stored with a friend over the summer. She lost her portfolio of drawings and paintings, "stuff that can't be replaced."

Come January, she plans to study abroad in Rome. Then, next fall, it's back to Tulane. "New Orleans is the only place I've considered home," she says.



Amanda Walker was a third-year law student at Tulane. Now she is getting familiar with Hulston Hall and MU's School of Law.

Amanda Walker, 26
Law student
Hometown: Dexter, Mo.

On a Friday in late August, Amanda Walker flew from New Orleans to Memphis, Tenn., for a friend's wedding. She had a carry-on bag with two changes of clothes, an income tax book and her bridesmaid's dress.

New Orleans had become the law student's home. It's where she lived and worked. She had started fall semester at **Tulane University (1)**, where she had hoped to finish her law degree in the spring. Now, she doesn't know whether she'll be taking the bar exam in Louisiana or Missouri.

What about her apartment, her computer, her clothes? "I don't know," she says. Her car? "I don't know." She saw on TV that looting had occurred in her **Garden District (3)** neighborhood. "Until I can get down there, I really don't know." She hopes to return to Tulane in January, but it'll depend on the state of the city. "It could smell really bad," she says.

In the meantime, why did she choose Mizzou? "To be near family." Walker is living with her aunt and uncle, Myla Randolph, BS Ed '70, and Gary Randolph, BS EE '70, MS '71, of Columbia. Her brother, Michael, is a junior business major at MU.

The visiting student lauded law Assistant Dean Donna Pavlick for making the transition a smooth one. With New Orleans' basic services disrupted, "Normal paperwork couldn't take place," Walker says. A number of her new classmates came through with a reconditioned computer and palm pilot, as well as books, supplies, clothes and \$550 cash. Their generosity eased the second back-to-school shopping spree once Walker landed in Columbia.

Walker is thankful for support from her family and new friends: "It's something you take for granted."

Roslyn Reeves, 19
Sophomore
Major: nursing
Hometown: Chicago

After the initial shock of the hurricane passed, choosing to come to Mizzou was a no-brainer for Roslyn Reeves. In fact, she plans to stay.

After evacuating her dorm room at **Xavier University of Louisiana (4)**, America's only historically black and Catholic university, Reeves spent a few days thinking about her possibilities. "Mizzou popped into my mind," she says. "It was the school I wanted to go to, and they were making it so easy for me to be here."

Over the summer, Reeves had spent a week in Columbia with her best friend from high school, Ashly Matthews. She liked the atmosphere and size. "There's not as many distractions here as in New Orleans," she says. "This is a place to be focused. I knew what I wanted to do with my life (nursing), and I have a backbone (my friend)." Reeves is still away from home for college but not so far away anymore. "I can drive home; I don't have to fly."

Reeves missed orientation during the start of fall semester in mid-August. She started classes here Sept. 5. As of mid-September, she was still challenged to find her nursing classes in a hospital location. "My teachers have been understanding," she says.

"People are trying to work with me and me with them." She has found Mizzou to be a place where people do what they need to do. "I'm independent. I'm on my own," she says proudly.



Fall semester is turning out OK for Roslyn Reeves. She has found her calling in nursing and her home at Mizzou.

Bob Murrell, 20
Junior
Major: computer science/modern European history
Hometown: New Orleans

Bob Murrell is a second-generation New Orleans native. His family, including his mom, Mary, and his grandfather, the late Staff Sgt. Robert Devlin, had never evacuated from their home in **Jefferson Parish (5)**. “He probably passed on that stubbornness to her and she to me,” Murrell says. He and his family — his mom and dad, Richard, and his little brother, Timothy — weathered the storm but left when they realized they weren’t going to have food and water for weeks or months.

“The people who left had places to go,” Murrell muses. “Other people stay and hope for the best.”

The Murrells found refuge in Pilot Grove, Mo., 40 minutes southwest of Columbia, with his father’s best friend, Kenny Lucas. Given Murrell’s ROTC scholarship, Air Force headquarters said he had to enroll somewhere for fall semester, and Mizzou was the logical choice.

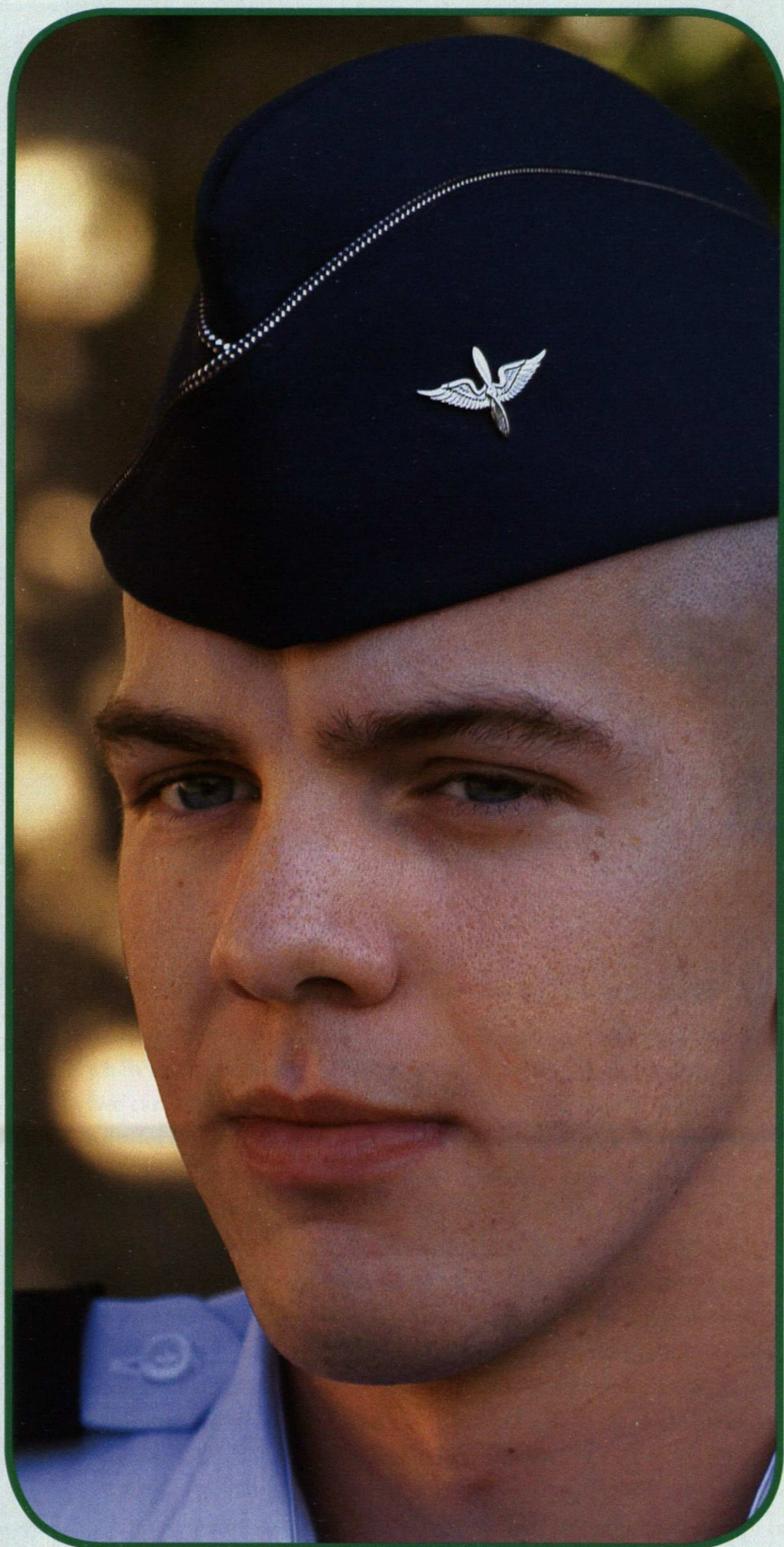
“I got stuck here,” says Cadet 2nd Lt. Murrell. “But the school has been amazingly open to helping us. I don’t have to worry about meal plans or books or housing. It’s all taken care of.”

Reaction from one fellow student is a different story. Upon seeing Murrell’s **Tulane (1)** T-shirt, he said, “Ha, ha, your campus is underwater.” Murrell thought: “Not just my school. It’s my city. There’s mass devastation.”

Capt. Megan Thiedeman, assistant professor of aerospace studies, says Murrell and Heather Woller of Decatur, Ill., joined Air Force ROTC Detachment 440 at Mizzou after Labor Day: “It’s hard for us to understand what they’ve been through, the emotional and mental setbacks they’ve encountered.”

Two days before the hurricane struck, Murrell had just returned from a four-week training session at Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City, S.D. He hadn’t seen his best friends for a month or more. “I wanted to see all my friends and have a regular life. I only got to see five people. I miss the city life, the food. Nothing’s like it.”

Nothing personal against life in Mark Twain residence hall, but, Murrell says, “The food is kind of dull.” He’s holding out hope to find some seafood, red beans and rice, chicken with red gravy, and sweet tea in Columbia.



Bob Murrell is at home in his ROTC uniform, but his favorite article of clothing is a Tulane T-shirt.



Getting settled into a college routine twice is unsettling, but Reagan Marshall is working on it.

Reagan Marshall, 18
Freshman
Major: Elementary education
Hometown: Plano, Texas

This fall, Reagan Marshall has moved into college quarters twice. What's more difficult is making friends a second time around at a different school, two weeks into the fall semester. And she won't even think of swimming for another coach.

Recruited by coach Ashley Tappin to swim for the **University of New Orleans (UNO) (6)**, Marshall was having the time of her life there. "I had a good group of friends from the swim team. I made good friends fast," she says. Was she homesick? Not at all.

Now she's far away from those new friends at that new home. "But we're fortunate that we're here," she says, referring to the students who relocated from New Orleans universities to Mizzou. "If they're here, they're lucky. They didn't get stuck down there." She's relieved to know that her friends from UNO got out OK.

Back when she and fellow UNO students had two hours for a mandatory evacuation, the hurricane had four projected paths. "My swim coach said she'd never leave," Marshall says, but Tappin did leave this time. At the time, the students were joking about the weather. Once they arrived in **Baton Rouge, La., (7)** and realized that New Orleans had been hit, Marshall felt bad for joking about it.

One lesson Marshall has learned is to take natural disasters seriously. "I never thought anything like this would happen to me," she says. "To think that this is the worst natural disaster [in this country] ever, and I was in it." When falling to sleep at night, Marshall catches herself thinking of New Orleans natives. "Some people lost everything, and they have nothing to go back to."

Sean Milford, 18
Freshman
Major: biomedical engineering
Hometown: Webster Groves, Mo.

On Saturday, Aug. 27, the same day Sean Milford moved into a great dorm room at **Tulane University (1)**, he left Tulane for temporary quarters in the **Jackson [Miss.] State University (8)** gym. A wristband identified him as a passenger on bus 6. Instructed to pack for a few days, he packed a small bag with two pairs of shorts, three or four T-shirts, his iPod, cell phone, camera, a sheet and a jacket. In retrospect, he regrets leaving his computer behind.

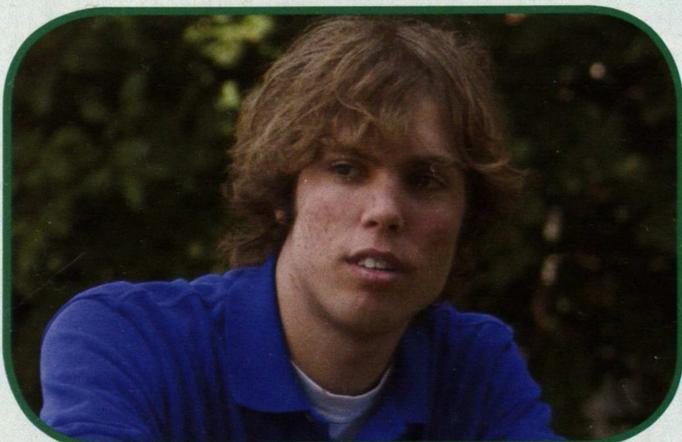
He missed his bed, too. "Even though I brought a sheet, the gym floor was still really hard," he says. Mattresses went to families first, then women. "There weren't enough mattresses for the girls."

After dropping him off at Tulane, his parents, Doug, BS Acc '82, JD '85, and Kim Milford, BS HE '83, had returned to St. Louis only for his mom to turn around and retrieve him by 2 a.m. Monday, Aug. 29. When Milford woke up in St. Louis on Tuesday, Aug. 30, he didn't know what he was going to do for fall semester.

Meanwhile, Doug Milford worked the phones with Mizzou, his alma mater. By Thursday, Sept. 1, Sean Milford had enrolled in classes. By Sunday, Sept. 4, he had moved into Wolpers Hall, built in 1963. Even though the amenities in Wolpers pale compared to his previous digs at Tulane, he's glad not to be living at home. He is enrolled in 12 hours of classes: microeconomics, logic, calculus and introduction to bioengineering.

He has caught up with his class work. His big decision of the semester will be whether to stay here, return to Tulane or go somewhere else.

What has he learned? "I had my life set," Milford says. "Then everything changed. You have to adapt to changes, go with the flow."



Sean Milford knew he needed a haircut before heading to college with his parents Aug. 27. As of this Sept. 20 photo, he still needed a haircut. Life has been a bit hectic for him.



The Romance languages faculty welcomed Scott Gossett into the fold.

Scott Gossett, 23
Graduate student in French
Hometown: Sulphur, La.

Think of Scott Gossett as a quick study. The graduate student joined Mizzou Sept. 6, two weeks into the semester. As a graduate student in Romance languages taking nine credit hours, he is behind in his classes.

His favorite place is a comfy chair on the second floor of Ellis Library. "I have a lot of reading to catch up on," Gossett says.

Gossett had moved back to New Orleans Aug. 7 for orientation at **Tulane University (1)**. He was about to start taking classes as a graduate student in French and teaching classes as a teaching assistant when the hurricane hit. He and five apartment-mates crammed in two cars and headed to his hometown, **Sulphur, La. (9)** In tow were a duffel bag and backpack; he didn't think they'd be gone long. The students' spirits were light-hearted. "We saw it as a vacation from school," he says. "We didn't expect the misfortunes that followed."

Now, he feels "almost guilty-lucky." His situation has worked out far better than he could've ever expected. Gossett is staying with his sister, Amy, who lives in Columbia and teaches at Lincoln University in Jefferson City. His girlfriend, Abby Beard, is a senior at Mizzou. Along the way, Gossett has received assistance from FEMA and the Red Cross.

"I'm trying to sort out pieces of my life now scattered all over the country," Gossett says. "It's all the little things you don't normally have to worry about." As if Katrina weren't enough, on Sept. 21, Gossett learned that his mother, Brenda Gunter, was planning to leave their hometown, which was in the path of Hurricane Rita. "It's unbelievable."

Fortunately, his mom is OK. ■■■