

## **Risky business: Expert conducts biosafety world tour**

Mary Cross  
mcross3@tulane.edu



The Department of State and Defense Threat Reduction welcomed Angela Birnbaum, director of the Tulane Office of Biosafety, to its summer tour in Zanzibar and Dubai. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Tulane research facilities at the [School of Medicine](#), [School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) and the [National Primate Research Center](#) are continuously on the forefront of solving global issues. As director of the [Office of Biosafety](#), Angela Birnbaum ensures that the university's state-of-the-art laboratories are also exemplary in their biosafety practices.

The Office of Biosafety provides resources to Tulane labs where researchers work with various biological materials. The goal is to minimize the health risks of research that involves biohazard materials, like recombinant DNA, biological toxins and infectious agents.

“We ensure that the work that they’re doing is completed in accordance with biosafety laws and responsibilities,” said Birnbaum.

Birnbaum also serves as the national co-chair of the Biological Select Agent Toxin Community Advisory Committee, which helps to guide federal regulators who oversee programs that use high risk select agents and toxins.

An international expert in her field, Birnbaum travels across the world to help other research facilities establish their own vital safety regulations, which can prevent the spread of diseases to healthcare workers and biomedical researchers. This summer, she took part in the Department of State and Defense Threat Reduction Middle East/North Africa tour with a group coordinated by [Sandia National Laboratories](#).

“The purpose of the tour was to set up bio risk-management programs, since many of the countries in that region have limited resources and are now learning about biosafety and biosecurity,” said Birnbaum. “We do quite a bit of training for them as well.”

In June, the tour brought Birnbaum to Zanzibar, Tanzania and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

This was Birnbaum’s third time joining this international effort. She previously traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Amman, Jordan; and Casablanca, Morocco.

“Attending this tour has been a tremendous component of team building across the world,” said Birnbaum. “And, of course, it’s a great representation of Tulane.”

“The purpose of the tour is to set up bio risk management programs, since many of the countries in that region have no resources or very limited knowledge of biosafety and biosecurity.”

— Angela Birnbaum, director of the Office of Biosafety