

Chess tournament shows revitalization of the game at Tulane

January 12, 2024 9:00 AM Molly McCrory
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In celebration of National Chess Day last semester, people from ages 10 to 75 gathered in the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life for a chess tournament. It was the largest all-ages United States Chess Federation (USCF) tournament in Louisiana since 2018, with 100 total participants coming from as far as Alabama. (Photo by Gabriel Young)

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This tournament, the first [Tulane Quick Chess Tournament](#), was jointly hosted by the Downriver Chess Club and the [Tulane Chess Club](#).

“Tulane has a really good setup for tournament chess,” said Andrew Squitiro, staff advisor to the Tulane Chess Club and president of Downriver Chess Club. The tournament itself took place in the Kendall Cram Lecture Hall, where tables were set up for games and announcements were made from the stage. “Kendall Cram is large, spacious, well lit, and has tall ceilings. It really added an aura of prestige to the tournament,” said Squitiro.

The 1834 Club was set up as a “skittles room,” a place where participants could relax between games and spectators could play pickup games. Couches on the mezzanine were available for people to socialize.

Chess has a surprisingly long history at Tulane. The early 20th century saw the existence of the Chess and Checkers Club, and chess tournaments and recreational games were hosted on campus by the Student Center Council in the 1940s and the Recreation Committee in the 1960s. More recently, the Chess and Gaming Club in the 1980s and 1990s was a place for students to play chess as well as other games, like Dungeons & Dragons.

The Tulane Chess Club was officially founded in 2021, though it existed in an unofficial capacity from as early as 2012. Co-president Carter Williams, a junior studying marketing and management, views the current work of the club as a continuation of the legacy of legendary chess player Paul Morphy. Morphy, who won the tournament at the First American Chess Conference and is considered one of the greatest chess players of his time, graduated with a law degree from Tulane in 1857.

Dexter Webster, a student at Tulane Law School, won this year’s tournament. A Louisiana native, Webster has won the Louisiana State Chess Championship three times, most recently in 2021. He has noticed an uptick in the popularity of chess in Louisiana in the past few years. “This tournament was very big for Louisiana chess tournaments,” he said, “which was a bit tiring at the end, but I thought it was very well run.”

Provost Robin Forman, himself an avid chess player, attended the tournament. “I have been thrilled to see the explosion in interest in chess at Tulane and on college

campuses across the country. My time spent at the Tulane Chess Club has reminded me of the joyful chaos and comradery of in-person chess, with the laughter and the sounds of pieces crashing, the boisterous congratulations and celebrations of victory and the consolations and lessons learned from defeat, all of which are missing from the online games,” he said. “And I am excited to see the leaders of the Tulane Chess Club hosting tournaments that will attract broader attention and participation and help revitalize chess in New Orleans.”

“This tournament was our biggest event so far, and we’re hoping to have more of them at Tulane,” said Williams. “People really liked it, and I think they’ll definitely come to the next one.”



Paul Morphy, who won the tournament at the First American Chess Conference and is considered one of the greatest chess players of his time, graduated with a law degree from Tulane in 1857. (Image from Wikimedia Commons. This image is in the public domain.)