

[A Welcoming Wave](#)

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Groups of students and parents bustling around the uptown campus in the New Orleans summer heat signal that the third year of summer orientation is in full swing at Tulane University. This year promises to be a unique experience for both parents and students as innovative programs have been developed to welcome new members of the Tulane community.



Incoming first-year students (from left) Sarah Mollere, Brittany Bozzell, Alonna Murray and Katherine Moser study their orientation guides. (Photos by Sally Asher)

[Orientation](#) has been divided into seven two-day sessions to accommodate the 1,120 incoming students who have signed up for the optional sessions, along with 749 parents, who are arriving in waves. The sessions (which end on June 30) are meant to prepare students for the upcoming fall semester by allowing them to get an exclusive look at campus life.

“They will spend one night in a residence hall, register for classes, obtain their student ID card and most importantly, begin establishing friendships that may very

well last a lifetime,” says President Scott Cowen. [Click here](#) to view a video about the orientation experience at Tulane.

Incoming students are given the opportunity to “have the Tulane experience become more concrete and receive a little taste of everything,” says Penny Wyatt, director of the Office of Orientation and Student Transitions. “This whole experience is what makes the students feel more confident about coming in August.” As of today (June 18), a total of 1,568 incoming first-year students is expected to enroll for the fall semester.

This year's program is designed to build up students' self-confidence and sense of belonging to a new community through the introduction of a campus resources scavenger hunt that acts as a team-building exercise for the digital age, Wyatt says.



Liberal arts adviser Nasr Nance, right, helps Jimmy Balsler, left, Antonia Colombo, center, and Laurel Kieser register for classes during summer orientation.

Students work in competitive groups and receive clues via text message that lead them to 20 locations around campus through GPS technology that is provided by Scvngr, an online program used to create interactive mobile games and tours. Once students log in, they receive clues and questions to which they respond to learn the next site of their campus tour.

This updated version of the scavenger hunt uses technology that is relevant to students while providing need-to-know information such as where to go for laptop repairs and everyday procedures like picking up a package in the mailroom, Wyatt

says.

To welcome parents, orientation continues the Very Informed Parent (VIP) Program, for which 14 parents from around the country have volunteered their time to help greet, check in and answer the questions of newcomers.

“This program is for parents who want to give back to the university,” says Maylen Aldana, assistant director of orientation. “This parent-to-parent support gives a real sense of joining the Tulane family rather than just an administrative welcome.”

Two VIPs were scheduled per session this summer, including parents like the Darcos, who traveled from Chicago to take part in orientation as VIPs.

“We wanted to give back to Tulane. We were incoming parents not too long ago, and we would highly recommend all parents to come in and take part,” says Pam Darco, mother of Scott Darco, who will start his junior year at Tulane this fall.

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