

Risks and Awards: Celebrating the 2010 Class

May 07, 2010 2:00 AM

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"Pomp and Circumstance" is usually played at graduation exercises, but don't expect to hear it on Saturday (May 15) in the Louisiana Superdome. The Tulane Commencement Ceremony has its own festive style, laced with traditional New Orleans music and featuring a renowned speaker with ties to the Crescent City — this year, CNN anchor Anderson Cooper.



Tulane University treats its graduates to a festive ceremony at commencement, full of New Orleans traditions. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Cooper made more than 20 trips to the Gulf Coast to follow the reconstruction process in his nightly newscasts on "Anderson Cooper 360°."

Cooper's refusal to let New Orleans' story fade away prompted Tulane President Scott Cowen to call him "a favorite of New Orleanians and many Tulanians," adding that his address to the graduating class "will no doubt be one of the highlights of this semester."

Saturday's [ceremony](#) will be full of highlights for the expected audience of more than 10,000. Family members and friends will be cheering on the 2,150 prospective graduates who had no pre-Katrina connection to Tulane but four years ago took a chance on the still-recovering city and university.

The university ceremony will be [streamed live](#) on the Tulane website beginning at 9 a.m. central time on Saturday.

Leading the musical program will be Dr. Michael White's Original Liberty Jazz Band. Clarinetist and band leader Michael White is a Tulane alumnus and jazz historian at nearby Xavier University. In addition to traditional jazz music, singer Wanda Rouzan and the band will entertain the guests with the song, "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?"

Tulane will award honorary degrees to U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin, a Tulane alumnus; Geoffrey Canada, president and CEO of the Harlem Children's Zone; and John Ruffin, director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

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In addition, ceremony planners are promising a "black-and-gold surprise" with special guests.

After the Saturday morning event, Tulane schools will hold separate diploma ceremonies. See the [schedule](#) for additional details.