

Tulane president welcomes university community to The Commons with music and more

August 23, 2019 10:45 AM Mike Strecker
mstreck@tulane.edu



The Commons will serve as a meeting, studying and gathering place for students, a unified home for the Newcomb Institute and a state-of-the-art dining facility with multiple serving stations, a rotating menu of local and international cuisine and a Chef's Table demonstration kitchen. Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano.

Tulane University President Mike Fitts will officially welcome students and the entire university community to The Commons at a fun-filled ceremony at 6:15 p.m. Monday, August 26 in the dining room of The Commons.

The event will feature music, giveaways (including Tulane-branded AirPods) and a special guest performance by an iconic New Orleans group.

The Commons, the newly completed \$55 million, 77,000- square-foot marvel located in the heart of the uptown campus, will serve as a meeting, studying and gathering place for students, a unified home for the Newcomb Institute and a state-of-the-art dining facility with multiple serving stations, a rotating menu of local and international cuisine and a Chef's Table demonstration kitchen.

"This transformative space, the largest Tulane construction project since Yulman Stadium, combines student life, academics, research, inquiry and, in true New Orleans style, great food," Fitts said. "Imagine, the academic and social engagement when you have students and faculty from multiple fields and backgrounds gathering for discussions in an exquisitely designed ultra-modern building with commanding views of the campus. Think about the synergies created by having all the operations of the Newcomb Institute under one roof with classrooms, student meeting areas, reading rooms, media labs, conference rooms and more."

Sally Kenney, Newcomb Institute's executive director who worked closely with architects in designing the Institute's new space on the top floor of The Commons, said the building not only provides a unified home for the Institute, it also raises its profile on campus.

"As we just celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Newcomb Campus, it is only fitting that the H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College Institute remains on Newcomb ground but is elevated to reflect our post-Katrina times," Kenney said. "The Newcomb Institute's mission is to educate students to achieve gender equity and our new central location places that goal at the center of Tulane."

As with most things in New Orleans, food plays a central role at The Commons. Its award-winning chefs and wide variety of offerings ranging from comfort rotisserie and deli choices to vegan, gluten-free and allergy-free options, are designed to please any palate. But dining serves a larger purpose at The Commons.

"Eating together reminds us of our shared humanity," said Patrick Norton, senior vice president and chief operating officer. "It builds relationships, strengthens

bonds, mentally nourishes us, and serves up memories for a lifetime. That's what The Commons is all about – fostering intellectual and interpersonal community at Tulane.”

Construction on The Commons began in February of 2018. Since then, progress on the building, which is connected to the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life and is just steps away from the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, has been closely followed and anticipated by the university community.

Besides the value it brings as an intellectual, social and gastronomical hub, the opening of The Commons will also give Tulane the opportunity to tear down Bruff Commons, the university's 60s era dining hall which is far too small for Tulane's current student population. Bruff Commons will be replaced with a unified residential quad for first-year students, expanding the number of Tulane's academically themed Residential Learning Communities.

“We currently have nine such communities on campus. They promote social/academic engagement that serves our students well during their college years and beyond,” Fitts said. “Making way for the new quad is just one of the many opportunities that The Commons opens up.”

Take a closer look at The Commons, Tulane's new dining hall, gathering space and home of the Newcomb Institute.