

Carolyn Barber-Pierre recognized for service; center dedicated in her honor

November 14, 2021 3:15 PM Faith Dawson
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Carolyn Barber-Pierre reacts to an appreciative crowd gathered at the official dedication and ribbon-cutting at the center named in her honor: the Carolyn Barber-Pierre Center for Intercultural Life. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

At the official dedication of the [Carolyn Barber-Pierre Center for Intercultural Life](#) on Friday, Nov. 12, faculty and staff, students, alumni, and family and friends gathered

to honor the woman who is considered to be a champion for diversity at Tulane.

In her [almost four decades of service to the university and its students](#), Assistant Vice President for Students Affairs and Intercultural Life Carolyn Barber-Pierre has touched the lives of many Tulanians. They described her caring, her joie de vivre and her determination in seeing students succeed.

The event began with a celebratory luncheon in the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life and included a [video presentation](#) and the unveiling of a portrait by New Orleans artist Brandan “BMike” Odums, which is on display in the center.

In her remarks to the audience, Barber-Pierre said that students have been the highlight of her 38 years with Tulane, and she is continually learning along with them.

“Working with students has been my greatest inspiration and why I’m still here,” she said. “And I know we’ve come a long way and had many successes over the years. But there’s still much to be done in creating an inclusive, a diverse and equitable community.

“I’ve learned not to be afraid to take risks. Sometimes you have to go with your gut, step out on faith. I learned that you need to surround yourself with people who know your worth. Surround yourself with young people who are talented and gifted ... and get out of the way.”

[WATCH: Video presentation in honor of Carolyn Barber-Pierre](#)

President Michael Fitts, who named Barber-Pierre one of the first [Tulane Trailblazers](#), recounted his early years with the university.

“I was, in a sense, a ‘freshman’ president when I met Carolyn, and she was kind to me, she was thoughtful to me,” Fitts said, adding that she was also forthright but still supportive of his initiatives.

Former and current students, colleagues and even her sister Robin Barber took the stage to say how Barber-Pierre influenced their development and perspectives. Student Alexa Authorlee said her interactions with Barber-Pierre helped shape her notions of leadership.

“Miss Carolyn has a very special way of pushing us towards the right thing,” she said, going on to explain how her parents had met and spent time with Barber-Pierre at a previous Homecoming/Family Weekend. She said afterward, her parents reflected on “how grateful they were to Miss Carolyn and the center for fostering my best qualities and keeping me safe, because the scariest thing, to them, was me being on my own in college.”

Alumnus Joe Shorter, who graduated in 1998, announced the creation of the Carolyn Barber-Pierre Cultural Immersive Fund, an endowed fund that honors Barber-Pierre’s love of travel and cultural exploration and will support students with international and domestic travel, including service-learning projects.

Student Raven Ancar recalled a 2019 student trip to Brazil.

“She had the most energy out of all of us — constantly smiling, laughing through a long bus ride. She always was willing to help and encouraged us — to push us out of our comfort zone and practice the little Portuguese that we did know,” Ancar said.

“And do not get me started on the samba skills,” Ancar added, referencing Barber-Pierre’s love of dance.

After the luncheon, Barber-Pierre and members of Casa Samba, the dance troupe she founded, led a second-line from the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life to the Richardson Building, where the center is located. President Fitts joined Barber-Pierre for the official ribbon-cutting.





At a luncheon in her honor, Carolyn Barber-Pierre reflects on four decades of service to students and colleagues at Tulane University, to a standing ovation by the audience gathered in the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

Carolyn Barber-Pierre leads a second-line, followed by members of Casa Samba, the dance troupe she founded, to Richardson Building, the location of the Center for Intercultural Life. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)