

Student Commencement speaker proud to advocate for change

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Da'Sean Spencer, a student speaker at the Unified Commencement Ceremony, advanced cultural change at the Tulane Undergraduate Assembly. (Photo by Rusty Costanza)

Of his many experiences as a Tulane undergraduate, Da'Sean Spencer is especially proud of helping advance cultural change at the Tulane Undergraduate Assembly (TUA).

The organization that preceded it, the Undergraduate Student Government (USG), was rebranded to the TUA last fall and launched with a new model centered on supporting student advocacy and amplifying the voices of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students.

Born and raised in New Orleans, Spencer had experience in student government at the Willow School (formerly Lusher Charter School) and joined the USG as a freshman in 2020. During his time at Tulane, Spencer also served as the finance director of the College Democrats, and was also part of Phi Alpha Delta and Alpha Kappa Psi professional fraternities. He has been selected as a student speaker at the Unified Commencement Ceremony this year.

He found the USG to be a space where much of the power was centered around the executive board.

"I felt the culture was very exclusive. It was difficult to reach out to the administration and a challenge to navigate," he said.

When Spencer ran for USG vice president of student life in 2021, he detailed how he, along with another Black student running for the position, experienced harassment during the election process, which affected his health. Spencer and two other students issued public statements detailing their experiences.

Nonetheless, Spencer remained with the USG, helping lead the equity subcommittee through the TUA relaunch in his commitment to creating a more inclusive culture, where all students could have a voice.

"We wanted to ensure that we do not keep repeating these harmful cycles," he said.

With the assistance of outside consultants to address structural concerns, the TUA body now consists of 34 members.

Spencer is graduating with a Bachelor of Arts from the School of Liberal Arts with a major in Political Science. He will take this experience with him this summer as a fellow with the International Economic Development Council.

“I am excited to continue in equity work and am really honored to be a part of this program,” he said.