

Tulane faculty to be honored with 2025 university-wide teaching awards

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Tulane University will recognize the extraordinary dedication of some of its leading faculty members with a variety of university-wide teaching awards during the

Unified Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 17, 2025 in the Caesars Superdome.

The awards include the Tulane President's Awards for Excellence in Professional and Graduate Teaching, the Suzanne and Stephen Weiss Presidential Fellowship for Undergraduate Education and the Oliver Fund Award for Excellence in Faculty Mentoring.

The recipients of the 2025 President's Awards for Excellence in Professional and Graduate Teaching are Randy Sparks, professor of history in the School of Liberal Arts and Catherine O'Connor, professor in the School of Social Work.

The 2025 Weiss Fellows are Katherine Raymond, senior professor of practice in the School of Science and Engineering, and Jacquelyne Howard, professor of practice and associate director of the Connolly Alexander Institute for Data Science.

Recipients are nominated by faculty, students and any other member of the Tulane community and then reviewed and chosen by a selection committee of past award winners.









Randy Sparks, the Clement Chambers Benenson Professor in the Department of History in the School of Liberal Arts, has been a member of the Tulane faculty for 25 years. Professor Sparks has advised dozens of graduate students, brought clarity and insight to difficult topics in the classroom and published extensively. He oversaw a complete revitalization of the history graduate program that will have a positive impact on students for years to come. One student described him as “a tremendous lecturer, a studious scholar, and a most supportive advisor” who “provided a warm and welcoming environment;” the phrase “the best class I’ve ever taken” reverberates throughout his course evaluations.

Receiving the Weiss award marks a full-circle moment for Katherine Raymond. In 1999, she was among the bachelor’s degree graduates when Tulane held its inaugural Unified Commencement ceremony. She ultimately earned her PhD from Tulane and joined the faculty of her alma mater. A Senior Professor of Practice in the Department of Biomedical Engineering in the School of Science and Engineering, Professor Raymond has advised and mentored students both within and beyond her field. A colleague wrote: “The passion and energy that Katherine brings to her teaching are awe-inspiring,” and a current student noted that “Dr. Raymond has

made such a positive impact on every single student and... is consistently there for everyone to talk about anything at all.”

Jacquelyne Thoni Howard is an inaugural Professor of Practice in the Connolly Alexander Institute for Data Science. An interdisciplinary scholar whose expertise stretches from history to data literacy, she impressed the selection committee with her pedagogical engagement and her dedication to meeting students’ needs to achieve better learning outcomes. A faculty colleague wrote that “she goes above and beyond consistently for students and contributes and innovates in every dimension of the student experience.” A current student wrote: “Every member of the Tulane community is indebted to wonderful teachers like Dr. Howard [who] sacrifice their time and energy in the pursuit of educating the next generation.”

Catherine O’Connor is a Professor in the School of Social Work who is lauded for putting her students first, building cross-disciplinary collaborations with faculty from other schools, and creating opportunities for experiential learning and leadership. A current doctoral student cited her “vibrant approach to teaching” and “the emotional support she provides without hesitation.” A former student and recent graduate — now a tenure-track professor at a flagship public research university — wrote: “I have received and continue to benefit from [Dr. O’Connor’s] excellent, rigorous, and compassionate teaching and mentorship... in more ways that I can possibly recount, but most specifically in relation to instruction, research support, and professional development.”