

Oscar-nominated, Emmy and Golden Globe-winning star of 'This is Us,' Sterling K. Brown, to address graduates at Tulane's 2026 Unified Commencement

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Sterling K. Brown, the award-winning actor known for his performances in the television series “This Is Us” and his Oscar-nominated role in the film “American Fiction,” will deliver the keynote address at Tulane University’s Unified Commencement 2026, which will be held at 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 16, in the Caesars Superdome.

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A three-time Primetime Emmy Award winner and Golden Globe recipient, Brown is widely recognized for performances that have shaped contemporary drama throughout a career marked by historic firsts.

“Across television, film and theater, Sterling’s unforgettable performances have illuminated the richness of the American experience,” Tulane President Michael A. Fitts wrote in a [university-wide announcement](#) of this year’s speaker. “His dedication to his craft is only matched by his exceptional commitment to giving back. He has championed causes from cancer research to food insecurity to domestic violence prevention. I am delighted that Sterling will join us to inspire and challenge our graduates at this year’s Unified Commencement.”

Brown first gained national acclaim in 2016, portraying prosecutor Christopher Darden in FX’s “The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story,” earning an Emmy Award for outstanding supporting actor.

Brown later became a household name as Randall Pearson on NBC’s critically acclaimed series “This Is Us.” For that role, Brown won the Emmy Award for outstanding lead actor in a drama series and a Golden Globe Award for best performance by an actor in a television drama, becoming the first African American actor to win in that category. He also became the first African American actor to receive the Screen Actors Guild Award for outstanding male actor in a drama series. In 2018 he was named one of the 100 most influential people in the world by Time magazine.

Following his success in television, Brown starred opposite Jeffrey Wright in Amazon/MGM’s “American Fiction,” which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2023 and went on to win the People’s Choice Award. For his performance, Brown received an Academy Award nomination for best supporting actor, along with nominations from the Screen Actors Guild, Independent Spirit Awards, NAACP Image Awards and Critics’ Choice Awards.

His additional film credits include Marvel's "Black Panther," the A24 drama "Waves," "Hotel Artemis" and "Marshall." In 2024, he appeared alongside Jennifer Lopez in the Netflix science-fiction film "Atlas." Brown has also lent his voice to animated projects, including "Frozen II" and the Amazon series "Invincible," earning an Emmy nomination for outstanding character voice-over performance.

Beyond acting, Brown has produced and narrated projects that reflect his broader engagement with storytelling and civic life. In 2021, he executive produced and co-hosted the OWN television special "Honoring Our Kings: OWN Honors Black Fatherhood" in partnership with Oprah Winfrey. He also narrated CNN's six-part docuseries "Lincoln: Divided We Stand," earning an Emmy Award for outstanding narrator. His voice was featured in the Netflix series "Amend: The Fight for America," which explored the history and impact of the 14th Amendment. Brown currently stars in and executive produces the Hulu drama "Paradise," which has earned him a number of additional award nominations as an actor and producer.

A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Brown earned a Bachelor of Arts in drama from Stanford University and a Master of Fine Arts from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

The Human Rights Campaign recognized Brown with the 2024 National Equality Award, and he has supported veterans and military families through ASAP, the Armed Services Arts Partnership. In partnership with the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, he launched the Aralean Brown Older Youth Readiness Fund. Named in honor of his mother, a foster and adoptive parent, the fund supports young adults as they age out of the foster care system, connecting them with education, jobs and housing during this critical transition.

Tulane's 2026 Unified Commencement will again take place in the Caesars Superdome, continuing the university's renewed tradition of celebrating graduates in one of New Orleans' signature venues. Graduates, families, faculty and friends will gather for a ceremony that pairs academic pageantry with the distinctive character of New Orleans, including live jazz, a second-line procession and more.