

Spirited Welcome for Class of 2012

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August brings many things to the uptown area: heat, humidity and an influx of students and their families. Saturday (Aug. 23) marked the first steps on the college journey for the class of 2012, and the beginning of a string of events welcoming the new students and marking the beginning of a new school year.



A procession of colorful Tulane gonfalons bearing the university shield makes its way through the audience of green-shirted Tulane students in the convocation ceremony that marks the start of their collegiate careers. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

After moving into their residence halls, 1,550 first-year students packed McAlister Auditorium for their official welcome, while their parents watched from satellite locations around campus.

Green Wave head football coach Bob Toledo kicked off the new student orientation, commending the students for their decision to come to Tulane. He and head women's volleyball coach Liz Kritza drummed up fan support for their teams, which start their fall seasons in September.

The Tulane marching band and cheerleaders gave the convocation a pep rally feel and kept students cheering and laughing. After being prompted to put on T-shirts they received upon entering McAlister, the students transformed the hall into a sea of green and school spirit.

Dr. Michael White's Original Liberty Jazz Band set the tone for the convocation with the traditional "Just a Closer Walk With Thee." The dirge, slow and solemn at first, seemed a symbolic jazz funeral marking an end to childhood. Then the musicians switched to an upbeat tempo as a celebration of the journey into adulthood.

The new students were urged to absorb their new environment by Cynthia Cherrey, vice president of student affairs and dean of students. "The people of New Orleans will teach you what it means to have strength and conviction," Cherrey said.

After brief speeches from others welcoming the class of 2012, Tulane President Scott Cowen told the students to follow their hearts and develop their minds.



First-year students, 1,550 strong and new arrivals to the uptown campus, applaud a speech by Tulane President Scott Cowen, who lauded them for being the most qualified class ever to enter the university.

"Your presence here today shows that you already have a lot of heart," Cowen said. "By coming here, you have shown your willingness to use your talents to enhance the quality of life for people and communities that are still in great need of assistance."

Cowen lauded the students for being the most qualified class ever to enter the university, and told them that faculty, staff and administrators would work hard to help them achieve all that is expected of them.

Cowen quoted Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said he was “set on fire” after reading the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Cowen pushed the audience to find something that would equally ignite their passion and imagination, setting their college careers ablaze.

Following the president's welcome, the Original Liberty Jazz Band struck up again, blaring out the brass-band sound that surely will surround students during their years in New Orleans. Led by the band, the students streamed out of McAlister to be greeted by rows of cheering parents, waving green pom-poms and snapping pictures. A picnic followed on the Lavin-Bernick Center quad.

Welcome events continue this week, including a riverboat cruise and the [Hot Summer Nights](#) concert series, featuring Bonerama and Rockin' Dopsie and the Zydeco Twisters.