

Convocation Welcomes New Students

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It's a little after 2 p.m. on Saturday (Aug. 21), and the venerable McAlister Auditorium waits patiently for the new-student convocation ceremony to begin in less than an hour. It's cool inside the building, and although the house lights are on, it's not nearly as bright as is the blinding light of August that bears down on the campus outside.



Dr. Michael White's Original Liberty Jazz Band sets a New Orleans tone at the convocation ceremony. Undergraduates start fall semester classes today (Aug. 23). (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

McAlister hums with relaxed energy as preparations are finalized. In the lobby, student volunteers arrange stacks of T-shirts that will be distributed to the 1,630 first-year students who will soon be pouring through the doors. The T-shirts read: "Only at Tulane. Only in New Orleans."

On stage, Green Envy, the university's oldest a cappella group, is playfully bopping and giggling through a rehearsal of the Tulane alma mater, while members of the Tulane University Marching Band, off their feet for this gig, sit tuning up in the balcony at the back of the auditorium.

At 2:20 p.m., the first group of students – all women – enters the building, having walked across campus from their residence halls. Their parents, who have helped them move in all morning, will watch the ceremony from video screens at remote locations on campus.



Wearing green T-shirts proclaiming “Only at Tulane. Only in New Orleans,” the class of 2014 enjoys the convocation ceremony on Saturday (Aug. 21).

More students follow and the auditorium quickly fills. The band launches into “Get Crunk,” the song that became the unofficial anthem of the New Orleans Saints NFL team last year – a fact surely lost on most in the audience.

As convocation unfolds, the [class of 2014](#) hears from Tulane President Scott Cowen, Newcomb-Tulane College Dean James MacLaren and other administrators. Students settle back into their seats, elbow-to-elbow, a group of strangers from nearly every state in the union, as well as many who have arrived from abroad.

During the proceedings, they are told a little about themselves. Among their ranks are several recognized creative writers, a nationally noted blues guitarist, entrepreneurs who started their own businesses, a student who spent a year studying climate change in Antarctica, a member of the Olympic synchronized ice dance team and a championship bagpiper.

The members of this newly formed class look at the stage, then at their neighbors. They smile, nod, fidget (some are *still* texting), and, no doubt, wonder about the days, weeks and years that lie ahead.