

Tulane moves to BIG EAST Conference

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Tulane University has accepted an invitation to join the BIG EAST Conference in all sports, beginning in the 2014-15 season, President Scott Cowen and BIG EAST Conference Commissioner Mike Aresco announced today.



President Scott Cowen announces that Tulane accepted an invitation to join the BIG EAST at a press conference in the Wilson Center on Tuesday (Nov. 27). The move will be effective for the 2014-15 season. (Photo by Sally Asher)

“Tulane University is an outstanding addition to the BIG EAST Conference and we are very excited to have them as a full member,” Aresco said. “They will make great contributions. Tulane has a superior academic reputation and they are committed to excellence in athletics. They are a great fit for the BIG EAST.”

“Tulane University is pleased to accept membership in the BIG EAST Conference,” Cowen said. “The BIG EAST is a distinguished collection of institutions that will be a wonderful home for Tulane. We look forward to our mutual association and we are delighted to welcome the BIG EAST to the Big Easy!”

Tulane's appeal to the BIG EAST centered around its academic profile as a major

research and highly selective university with membership in the Association of American Universities (AAU); its location in New Orleans, which provides a new market for the BIG EAST, and its track record as holder of more C-USA championships than any other school from 1997 to 2005, said Cowen.

The BIG EAST presidents were also impressed by Tulane's recovery after Hurricane Katrina and its renewed commitment to athletics that included the reinstatement of a full complement of Division I athletics programs.

The move to the BIG EAST comes at a time of unprecedented growth in Tulane's athletics program. In the last four years, Tulane has either completed or announced plans to upgrade facilities for nearly every athletics program. This includes the recently announced Yulman Stadium, Tulane's first on-campus stadium in 40 years.

"This is yet another step forward for our athletics program and Tulane University," Tulane Director of Athletics Rick Dickson said. "Tulane is joining a conference that has the largest footprint in college sports and one that has a storied history. Our coaches and student-athletes are thrilled with the opportunity to compete at the BIG EAST level. In addition, many of our alumni are located in the Northeast and we attract many students from that area. Tulanians will come out in force to support the Green Wave in the BIG EAST."

Tulane's other major athletics facility improvements include a major renovation of the Avron B. Fogelman Arena in the Devlin Fieldhouse, home of the Green Wave men's and women's basketball and volleyball programs as well as construction of the Hertz Center, a basketball and volleyball practice facility. Tulane also completed Greer Field at Turchin Stadium, home of the Green Wave baseball team in 2008.

On the horizon is an Olympic-style village that will serve as the home for the Green Wave's track & field/cross country programs, the men's and women's tennis programs, women's sand volleyball and football practice fields.

Until the move to the BIG EAST in July 2014, Tulane will continue to compete in Conference USA (C-USA).

"As we prepare to for the transition of our programs, I would like to acknowledge C-USA Commissioner Britton Banowsky and his tireless efforts on behalf of the

members of the conference. He is a great ambassador for college athletics,” Dickson said.

Founded in 1834, Tulane is one of the most highly regarded and selective independent research universities in the United States and a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities, an association of 62 leading research universities in the United States and Canada.

Tulane will join a conference that features many of the top universities in the nation, including six schools that rank among the top 100 universities in the *U.S. News & World Report's* 2013 Best Colleges.

Over the last eight years, Green Wave student-athletes have been among the highest achievers in the nation in the classroom, according to the most recent multiyear Academic Performance Rates (APR).

One of the top destination cities in the United States, New Orleans was listed as the top selection for “America's Favorite City” by *Travel & Leisure* in 2012. New Orleans' population of 1,337,726 ranks 35th nationally, while its local television market ranks 52nd with 643,660 television homes in 2012.

With the addition of Tulane, the BIG EAST football membership will now be in 12 states, 12 of the top 50 Nielsen media markets and six of the top 25 media markets. The conference will have a television households reach of 24.3 million ? by far the largest number in college football.