

The Insider: Student snags a surprise judge for Tulane

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The Asian American Student Union at Tulane University puts on its popular spring talent show ?[Tulane's Got Talent](#) ? annually. Now in its sixth year, the organization's president, Darren Cheng, sets his sights on inviting a guest judge whose appearance would be “a small miracle.”



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Cheng, a Tulane senior from Orange County, Calif., takes a breath and presses send on an email to Becky Desporte, President Scott Cowen's executive secretary. In the email he asks for Cowen to sit as a guest judge at the show.

Two weeks pass. No response.

Nervous about his next move, Cheng walks up the Gibson Hall stairs and heads toward the president's office.

Desporte informs him that a response declining his request was sent. A quick scroll through his spam folder reveals the misfiled email.

On the walk away from Gibson Hall, Cheng's phone buzzes with a new email from

Desporte. "Can you come back in 30 minutes? The president would like to speak with you in person."

"I took a snapshot of the message because I was just that excited," Cheng recalls.

Cowen was drinking tea. Cheng sits on "an incredibly beautiful couch" in Cowen's office. Cowen asks about his experience at Tulane, and Cheng gives his best event pitch.

The outgoing president caves and agrees to attend the show.

"Tulane has that kind of president," says Cheng of Cowen, whose term ends June 30. "He actually changed his schedule so that he could be there."

Alongside Cowen as judges will be James MacLaren, dean of Newcomb-Tulane College; Devon Walker, former Tulane student-athlete and graduating senior; Carolyn Barber-Pierre, assistant vice-president for student affairs; and John Nonnamaker, associate vice-president for student affairs.

[Tulane's Got Talent](#) takes place on Friday (April 25) at 8 p.m. in McAlister Auditorium. Entry is free to members of the Tulane community with a Splash Card and \$5 for each guest.