

## Countdown is on for Tulane Commencement 2014

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Tulane University Commencement is not a typical graduation event; the Mercedes-Benz Superdome and a New Orleans flair make it unique. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

For President Scott Cowen, Saturday (May 17) will be the 16th and final time to wear the presidential robe and chain of office as he leads the [Tulane University Commencement ceremony](#). He will step down from the presidency on June 30, but at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome on Saturday, the real stars are the more than 2,800 graduates who are about to become Tulane alumni.

It is a ceremony that was designed at Cowen's direction to bring together the entire university community. Cowen took office in mid-1998, and when Commencement 1999 rolled around, he ushered in a ceremony with a tantalizing mix of New Orleans music and traditions, as well as memorable speakers and guests.

This year follows that tradition.

Renowned jazz trumpet player, bandleader, composer and native New Orleanian [Wynton Marsalis](#) will be the keynote speaker, and he also will perform with the ceremony's longstanding house musicians, Dr. Michael White and the Original Liberty Jazz Band.

Marsalis is well remembered for his inspiring speech to the campus community in January 2006 when Tulane reopened after its Hurricane Katrina closing. He will receive an honorary Tulane degree at Saturday's event.



Grads second-line with special umbrellas at the ceremony's closing. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The ceremony will be special for Michael White as well. Also a celebrated jazz musician, White will receive the Tulane [President's Medal](#) for his outstanding work in preserving early jazz traditions.

Joining White in receiving a President's Medal is someone who needs no introduction in this city: New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees, whose Brees Dream Foundation has provided nearly \$20 million in funding for health, education and family programs.

Two other honorary degrees will go to F.K. Day, who developed the World Bicycle Relief program, and Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation.

In sum, it's enough to draw interest from both the NBC, CBS and ABC national news programs, as well as the rapt attention of 15,000 family members, friends, graduates, faculty members and staff volunteers who make the ceremony possible.

Watch the Tulane University Commencement ceremony live on the [commencement website](#) beginning at 9 a.m. Central Time on Saturday (May 17).

On the eve of the commencement ceremony, graduates from all schools and their guests are invited to [Wave Goodbye](#), an annual party given by President Cowen and Mrs. Marjorie Cowen that is modeled after New Orleans' many springtime festivals.

Guests are invited to mingle on Gibson Quad on the uptown campus on Friday (May 16) from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. to enjoy music by Rockin" Dopsie Jr. & the Zydeco Twisters and New Orleans food in small plates.