

New VP reaches out to students

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James Davidson "Dusty" Porter, vice president of student affairs, takes on his first semester with a focus on getting to know students and their concerns. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

James Davidson "Dusty" Porter, the new vice president for student affairs at Tulane University, is on a mission to engage with the university community through as many avenues as he can.

Between seemingly endless meetings, getting accustomed to campus traditions and moving into a new house, the first few weeks of the semester have been incredibly

busy for [Porter](#), but he has made student relations and visibility of the staff in the [Division of Student Affairs](#) a top priority.

Since joining Tulane on July 28, he has met with resident advisers and leaders of multicultural organizations, attended a Tulane University Marching Band rehearsal and the freshman Riverboat Cruise, and presided at the Student Affairs tailgate tent at the recent opening of Yulman Stadium.

Anyone wondering about his nickname will learn that he inherited it from his maternal grandfather, who was dubbed “Dusty” by friends after a Southern country song.

At events in which he speaks with students, Porter hands out note cards so that students can write down what they want him to know about their experience with student life on campus. He keeps these student testimonials on his desk to remind him of the improvements that students want to see on campus.

Porter encourages students to meet with him directly and eventually hopes to set up “structured mechanisms for interactions with a variety of student leaders,” in order to understand multiple student perspectives.

His priorities are to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Tulane as an institution, and focus on learning about the university’s strengths and weaknesses in residential student life, which he feels is central to a student’s college experience.

Porter also wants to work on leadership development for students by uniting all departments that are involved in this area through a “more holistic, coordinated approach that will create a more interconnected program for students looking to gain leadership skills.”

Hannah Dean is a sophomore majoring in Latin American studies and political science at Tulane University.

“I am excited to be working to improve the student life experience on campus during a new chapter in Tulane’s history.” -- James Davidson “Dusty” Porter, vice president for student affairs