

Tulane Commencement: "like no other in the world"

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cjs@tulane.edu



Tulane University Commencement closes with a New Orleans-style celebration, led by a traditional brass band and grand marshal, as students second-line with umbrellas and dance on the floor of the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

President Mike Fitts will have quite a rousing, New Orleans-themed closing to his first year at the helm of Tulane University on Saturday (May 16). He will be leading his first [Tulane Commencement](#) ceremony before more than 15,000 guests at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome and approximately 2,840 graduates-to-be from across the university.

It was 17 years ago when the idea of an all-university ceremony was revived and became a new tradition. Since then, graduation at Tulane has not been the usual “Pomp and Circumstance” routine. New Orleans culture and music are infused in the ceremony, much to the delight of students who have spent their college careers surrounded by the unique sights, sounds and people of the Crescent City.

The annual ceremony has its share of traditional elements such as the stately procession of students and faculty, presentations of awards and the conferring of all degrees by the president. Surrounding those elements, however, is traditional jazz music by the longtime Commencement house band, Dr. Michael White and the Original Liberty Jazz Band, along with salutes to New Orleans traditions in the students' joyful second-line celebration with decorated umbrellas and waving handkerchiefs.

“I've heard Tulane commencements are like no other commencements in the world,” Fitts says. “The music and culture of New Orleans are center stage. It captures the experience of going to school in New Orleans.”

Actor and comedian [Maya Rudolph](#) will be keynote speaker for the annual event, and will receive the Tulane University President's Medal. Fitts will honor four faculty members with universitywide teaching awards, two recognizing the top teachers of undergraduates, and two awards going to outstanding teachers in graduate and professional schools.

Commencement is “one of the magical moments in life,” Fitts says. It is a moment “to stand back and reflect on what these wonderful individuals have achieved and what a difference they're going to make in the world.”

The 2015 Commencement ceremony will be [streamed live online](#). Follow us on social media at #tulane15.

“Experiencing my first commencement at Tulane will be an incredible moment for me -- indeed, unforgettable.”—Tulane President Mike Fitts