

The white coat, a uniform and a calling

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On Sunday (Aug. 2), 185 new Tulane medical students line up to receive a white coat, symbol of their future profession as physicians. (Photo by Frank Aymami)

Newly minted medical students lined up on Sunday (Aug. 2) at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans to receive the symbol of their future profession at White Coat Ceremony, marking the official beginning of their medical careers at Tulane University.

The coat, a hallmark of a doctor, is much more than a uniform. It represents a responsibility and commitment to patients, Dr. Marc Kahn, senior associate dean of student affairs, told new members of the Class of 2019.

“The white coat symbolizes the compassionate humanity that really is essential to what we do,” said Kahn, Peterman-Prosser Professor of Medicine. “Wear your white coat with honesty, integrity, professionalism and pride.”

The Tulane [School of Medicine](#) welcomed 185 new medical students at the ceremony, which featured a keynote by Dr. Nia Terezakis, an alumnus and distinguished dermatologist.

More than 9,880 applied to join this year's class, which hails from 38 states and Canada. Students completed undergraduate studies at 82 schools and colleges across the country, including 10 from the University of Virginia; eight from the University of California—Berkeley; seven from the University of Southern California and six each from UCLA and Vanderbilt University. The class includes 25 from Tulane.

Dr. Lee Hamm, dean of the medical school, noted that students begin their training during a momentous week as the school mourns the loss of distinguished trauma surgeon [Dr. Norman McSwain](#) and celebrates the opening of the new University Medical Center downtown. McSwain, who led the city's only Level 1 trauma center, represented the “Spirit of Charity,” an ideal to always put patient care first.

“The class will work in the new facility, but the new hospital is just a building,” Hamm said. “What will make a difference is the compassion they bring as they care for their patients.”

For new student Tim Prior, of Westport, Conn., the day represented the realization of years of hard work to get into medical school.

“This is when it becomes tangible.”

“Wear your white coat with honesty, integrity, professionalism and pride.”—Dr. Marc Kahn, senior associate dean of student affairs