

President Fitts' photo contest winners

September 25, 2015 11:00 AM Mary Ann Travis

mtravis@tulane.edu

When Tulane University President Mike Fitts addressed new students at the [convocation](#) in late August, he issued them a challenge: "Start harnessing your dynamism," he said. [Fitts](#) urged the students to start exploring and to take pictures of places that intrigue them.

He invited them to submit their best images to the president's website. The incentive: brunch at Commander's Palace for five winning photographers and two friends each.

The photos could be of "the grandest locations or the finest details," Fitts said.

Dozens of students submitted photos. Tulane staff members compiled the photos and worked with the president to narrow the submissions before he made the final picks.

After he selected the five winning photos, Fitts said, "New Orleans and Tulane are incredibly beautiful, complex, vibrant places. Every new class of Tulane students gets the opportunity to experience this anew, with fresh eyes on one of the most distinctive communities in the world.

"I love looking through their pictures and getting a renewed sense of what it's like to join the community for the first time. Then it's invigorating for me to meet the students and hear their observations about this amazing university and city."

The winners ? Alyssa Bialek, Colleen Dychdala, Kennis Htet, Erin Reed and Kaitlyn Tholen ? were excited to be invited to brunch with the president on Saturday (Sept. 26).

"Brunch with President Fitts is something I'm looking forward to, because not only is Commander's Palace the place to eat in NOLA, it holds a special place in my heart ? and the funny thing is, I've never actually been," said Reed, a first-year business

student from Long Beach, California. "My grandma has raved about eating at Commander's ever since I committed to Tulane. And I now get to experience the delicious food while feeling connected to her."

See the students' winning entries below, followed by descriptions of the photos in their own words.



1. After a rainstorm, near Stanley Thomas Hall on the Tulane University uptown campus, an oak tree frames sculpture in puddles. “Wanting to remember how breathtaking this tree looked, I quickly got out my phone and captured this picture,” said Erin Reed, a business student from Long Beach, California. (Photo by Erin Reed)

2. A man on horseback saunters through Audubon Park. “I photographed it because it was interesting and so different from what I’m used to,” said Colleen Dychdala, a student with a double major in business and math with a minor in art and philosophy, from Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia. “Needless to say, you don’t see many men on horses around that area.” (Photo by Colleen Dychdala)

3. The steel girders of the Crescent City Connection are steady under storm clouds. “I was in a taxi crossing from the east side to the west side [of the Mississippi River],” said Kennis Htet, a School of Science and Engineering student. “I was intrigued by this parallel, majestic structure of the bridge.” Htet is from Yangon, formerly the capital of Myanmar (Burma). “I like this picture not only because it is dramatic, but also it resembles New Orleans in a way that no matter how many dark clouds and thunderstorms loom over, this unswerving structure will always be standing.” (Photo by Kennis Htet)

4. In a Louisiana bayou, water, land and sky appear in harmony. Alyssa Bialek, an ecology and evolutionary biology major from Columbia, Maryland, took the photo while on a swamp boat tour, part of [EXPLORE](#), a program to introduce students to the environs before classes began this fall. “I took that picture in the bayou, surrounded by alligators and birds,” she said. (Photo by Alyssa Bialek)

5. The steamboat Natchez awaits Tulane first-year students before a cruise at the end of August. “The sunset and the Mississippi River were gorgeous, and I could not pass up taking this picture,” said Kaitlyn Tholen, a student from New Orleans, who is majoring in neuroscience with a minor in music. (Photo by Kaitlyn Tholen)