

Alum holds key role with Department of Defense

January 14, 2016 8:45 AM Mary Sparacello
msparace@tulane.edu



Tulane University alumnus David Berteau oversees the management of the \$170 billion Department of Defense logistics operations. (Photo by Sasha Haagensen)

[David Berteau](#), a 1971 Tulane University graduate, is U.S. assistant secretary of defense for logistics and materiel readiness.

When Berteau started his college career at Tulane in 1967, it coincided with the height of the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement and student unrest throughout the country.

"These were really dynamic times to be asking the fundamental question, of 'why are we here — in life and at Tulane — and what are we trying to do?'" Berteau says.

At Tulane, Berteau majored in English and minored in French, philosophy and mathematics. After graduation, he ran food co-ops, in Atlanta and then in Austin, Texas.

Early in his career, he worked in leadership at the Department of Defense under presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton.

Berteau credits his wide-ranging liberal arts education at Tulane as preparing him for a career that has crossed boundaries, both philosophical and practical.

“I wasn’t prepared for anything in particular, but I was prepared for nearly everything.”

Over the decades, his career has moved between positions in government, academia, lobbying and think tanks. Most recently, he was a senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington, D.C., think tank.

President Barack Obama nominated Berteau and the U.S. Senate confirmed his nomination to the Department of Defense in December 2014. He now oversees the management of the \$170 billion in Department of Defense logistics operations.

His advice for Tulane students who want to pursue a career in public service: take the long view.

“I’ve been at this business in Washington for 35 years,” he says. “I get up every morning looking forward to going to work. You have to take the long view if you’re looking to make the planet a better place to live. Your work is never finished. You have to get comfortable with the infinite pursuit of the better life.”

Mary Sparacello is a communications specialist in the Office of Development Communications.

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David Berteau, TU alumnus