

At commencement, best teachers earn top awards

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The [Tulane Unified Commencement Ceremony](#) is the pinnacle event of the academic year but it not only recognizes graduates — it also is an opportunity to honor the university's best teachers.

During the ceremony on Saturday (May 14), two faculty members will receiving 2016 President's Awards for Graduate and Professional Teaching. They are [William Balée](#), professor, Department of Anthropology, and [Rajunor Ettarh](#), professor and vice chair for education, Department of Structural and Cellular Biology in the School of Medicine. These [honors](#) recognize faculty members with a compelling record of excellence in teaching, learning and research, and a commitment to educational excellence. Each receives a special medal and \$5,000. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)





William Balée is highly regarded by colleagues and graduate students. As Trent Holliday, chair of anthropology, writes, “He has helped [former students] secure important, meaningful employment, both inside and outside of the academy. This is no easy task for anyone mentoring anthropology PhD students ... in sum, Prof. Balée is an internationally renowned scholar who has produced top-notch PhDs who work in a variety of contexts.” Graduate students remark on how his support of their work might require him “to do a lot of stretching into unfamiliar waters” but that “great mentors do such academic acrobatics in support of their students, and in this regard, Bill was the best.”

Rajunor Ettarh has had exceptionally high ratings from the T1 medical students, and has received the T1 Professor of the Year award from the medical school’s Owl Club in 2012, 2013 and 2014. In his department he oversees courses, faculty training, student advising and the unit’s educational strategic plan. The founding director of innovative master’s programs with tracks for biomedical researchers, surgical anatomy and clinical anatomy, he also introduced new teaching approaches in Gross Anatomy and redefined how Medical Histology is taught. Students find him approachable, well-organized and engaging in his teaching.