FOUNDERS’ DAY
CONVOCATION

SUNDAY, THE SEVENTEETH OF OCTOBER
TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-ONE
AT THREE O’CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

THE ROSA FREEMAN KELLER AVENUE OF THE OAKS
A Brief History of Dillard University

In 1869, with support from the American Missionary Association of the Congregational Church (now the United Church of Christ) and the Freedmen’s Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (now the United Methodist Church), Straight University and the Union Normal School were founded, later to be named Straight College and New Orleans University, respectively. A noted unit of New Orleans University was Gilbert Academy.

In 1889, New Orleans University opened a medical department which included a school of pharmacy and a school of nursing. The medical department became known as Flint Medical College with the affiliated facility becoming known as Sarah Goodridge Hospital and Nurse Training School. The medical college was discontinued in 1911. The hospital and the nursing school continued as Flint-Goodridge Hospital. From 1874 to 1886, Straight College operated a law department which produced Louisiana’s first African American governor, P.B.S. Pinchback, as well as social justice stalwarts Louis A. Martinet and Rudolph Desdunnes.

From the legacy begun by Straight College and New Orleans University was born Dillard University in 1935. The University was named for James Hardy Dillard, a distinguished academician dedicated to educating African Americans. The trustees of Dillard called for the implementation of a coeducational, interracial school, which would primarily serve the African American community through Christian principles and values.

Dillard continued to serve New Orleans’ African American community with the operation of Flint-Goodridge Hospital until 1983. Gilbert Academy, however, continued as a separate institution under the sponsorship of the Board of Education of the Methodist Church until 1949.

Dillard’s first president was Will W. Alexander who served as the acting leader of the University until 1936. At the time of his appointment, Alexander was the director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), which actively campaigned against lynching and conducted research studies of issues pertaining to “Negro welfare” and other Southern “problems.”

During Alexander’s tenure, one of his most significant contributions was recruiting outstanding faculty. Drawing from a pool of noted scholars, Alexander assembled a stellar group of educators: Horace Mann Bond, University dean and psychology and education faculty; Charles Wesley Buggs, biology; Byrd Dewey Crudup, physical education; S. Randolph Edmonds, drama; Frederick Douglass Hall, music; Rudolph Moses, English; Lawrence D. Reddick, history; and J.G. St. Clair Drake, sociology and anthropology.

A new era in Dillard’s distinguished history began with the appointment of Dillard’s first full-time president, William Stuart Nelson, in 1936. A noted higher education administrator and educator, Nelson became the first African American to lead Dillard. During his four-year tenure, from 1936 to 1940, Nelson took to heart the missionary ideal of a liberal arts education in a manner that would leave a lasting impression on the University’s curriculum. He was instrumental in the implementation of a major arts festival. The gathering created a venue for local artists and national figures to enjoy and debate the nature of African American art, past, present and future. Nelson sought to foster a sense of “cultural enlightenment and participation.” His dedication to the arts laid the foundation for a tradition at Dillard that extends to the present day.

In 1941, Albert W. Dent was named Dillard’s second president. Although he had not earned an advanced degree, Dent served as the University’s hospital administrator and proved to be a remarkable president and effective international health administration leader during his 28-year tenure. Dent guided Dillard through the challenging decades of World War II, the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power movement. During his presidency, Dillard became the first and only university with an accredited nursing program in Louisiana.

The appointment of Broadus N. Butler, a Southern intellectual, as Dillard’s third president marked a renewed commitment to the liberal arts. Butler’s most important contribution to the University’s intellectual life was the implementation of the Scholars-Statesman Lecture Series, housed in the Division of Social Sciences. The lecture series
brought to the campus key figures in education, the arts and law, including educator and scholar Benjamin Elijah Mays, actress Etta Moten Barnett, artist Aaron Douglas, Harlem Renaissance writer Arna Bontemps, and Pennsylvania jurist A. Leon Higginbotham Jr. With the board’s desire to transform the University's curriculum to meet the changing student body, Butler made the decision to resign in November 1973. After Myron F. Wicke served as acting president, Samuel DuBois Cook became Dillard University's fourth president in 1974.

Under the leadership of Samuel DuBois Cook, Dillard's curriculum strengthened and expanded; and the percentage of faculty members holding doctoral degrees increased. During his tenure, Cook raised the requirements for admission and increased student enrollment by 50 percent. His leadership also led to an increase in fundraising to improve the campus and facilities, and Cook expanded student services. In 1989, he created the Dillard University National Conference on Black-Jewish Relations from which sprang the Dillard University National Center for Black-Jewish Relations. With a desire to expand students' global view, the University added a Japanese studies program in 1990.

In 1997, Michael L. Lomax became Dillard University’s fifth president. A noted scholar, administrator, political leader and entrepreneur, Lomax undertook the challenge to transform the University into one of the finest liberal arts colleges in the nation. He led an aggressive campaign to renovate and modernize campus facilities. One of the projects completed under Lomax's administration was the Dillard University International Center for Economic Freedom, also known as DUICEF.

Lomax transitioned from the presidency in 2004, and Dr. Bettye Parker Smith, provost/vice president for academic affairs at the time, was unanimously appointed by the Board of Trustees to serve as interim president.

In 2005, history was made at Dillard University when Marvalene Hughes became the first woman to serve as president of the University. Dillard’s sixth president, however, was faced with an unprecedented challenge when Hurricane Katrina ravaged the campus along with the rest of the New Orleans community only a month after she began her tenure. Weathering the storm with dignity and grace, Hughes guided Dillard through its transformation to new heights. She facilitated the recovery and rebuilding of Dillard’s historic 55-acre campus. With damage worth more than $400 million, Dillard began the road to recovery by raising more than $34 million in public and private gifts and grants in Hughes' first year, far exceeding any previous annual total in the University’s history.

In 2007, Dillard devised a comprehensive strategic plan to hasten recovery and guide the University’s future. The Advantage Dillard! capital campaign was launched and exceeded its $70 million goal. In addition, two new buildings were added to the campus: the Professional Schools and Sciences Building and the Student Union and Health and Wellness Center, both of which are LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified.

With tremendous service having been rendered to Dillard University, Hughes transitioned from the presidency in 2011 and James Lyons stepped in to serve as interim president. Lyons' leadership was marked by a reaffirmed commitment to education, community, excellence, and heritage.

In 2012, Walter M. Kimbrough became the seventh president of Dillard University. Having quickly established a track record as one of the nation’s youngest and most dynamic higher education leaders, Kimbrough continued rebuilding “The Jewel of Gentilly.” Under his leadership, the Straight, Camphor and Hartzell residence halls were renovated and restored, and the historic halls opened for the first time since Hurricane Katrina. Dillard also experienced major milestones in fundraising, including “Fair Dillard’s” first million-dollar alumni donor. In 2018, Dillard reached a new record for alumni giving at 23 percent. In 2019, after impressive increases in Giving Tuesday fundraising, Dillard again exceeded its goal by raising more than $550,000 with the help of David Dillard, a descendant of James Hardy Dillard.

Keeping with Dillard’s tradition of hosting intellectually stimulating lecturers, Kimbrough introduced the Brain Food lecture series. The series brought an array of thought-provoking speakers to campus including Michael Eric Dyson, Tavis Smiley, Cornel West, Issa Rae, Misty Copeland, Benjamin Crump, Iyanla Vazant, Malcolm Nance and eventual Pulitzer Prize winner Jericho Brown who graduated from Dillard in 1998.

Rooted in heritage and invested in excellence, Dillard University celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2019. The University remains a premier private undergraduate institution of higher learning. With signature academic programs in nursing, the arts, sciences and business, Dillard continues to make its mark among in the world of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. True to its motto Ex Fide Fortis, which means “strength from faith,” Dillard is stronger than ever and is positioned for success throughout the 21st and beyond.
MONA LISA SALOY, PH.D.
LOUISIANA POET LAUREATE

Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy has made a career of being a literary ambassador. The Conrad N. Hilton endowed professor of English at Dillard University consistently looks for ways to "give hope in verse" and that has been realized with her selection as the Louisiana Poet Laureate, a role that she will fill through 2023. Dr. Saloy is an award-winning author, folklorist, educator and scholar who has is beloved for her work about Black Creole culture. She has documented Creole culture in sidewalk songs, jump-rope rhymes, and clap-hand games to discuss the importance of play. Her first book, Red Beans & Ricely Yours, won the T.S. Eliot Prize and the PEN/Oakland Josephine Miles Award. Her collection of poems, Second Line Home, captures day-to-day New Orleans speech, family dynamics and gives insight into the unique culture the world loves.

Dr. Saloy has also expanded her work to the screen. Her screenplay for the documentary Easter Rock premiered in Paris at the Ethnograph Film Festival and at the national Black museum. Her documentary, Bleu Orleans, focuses on Black Creole culture. She has lectured on Black Creole culture at Poets House in New York City, The Smithsonian, Purdue University, the University of Washington and Woodland Pattern Book Center in Milwaukee. In 2020, Dr. Saloy was named an editorial reviewer for Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism, a peer-reviewed journal. She also accepted a similar role in the Editorial Board and Review Team for Social Sciences, a peer-reviewed academic journal. Dr. Saloy’s vast portfolio also includes: “New Orleans, a Neighborhood Nation” on versedaily.org, “I Am New Orleans” (University of New Orleans Press, 2021), “Louisiana Poets: A Literary Guide” (University Press of Mississippi, 2019) and Chicago Quarterly Review Vol. 33: An Anthology of Black American Literature. Her verse on the Black Arts Movement appears in the Journal of Pan African Studies. Dr. Saloy also writes about the significance of the Black Beat poets, especially Bob Kaufman, on the African American Toasting Tradition, Black talk and on keeping Creole to today.

Marquis Who’s Who awarded Dr. Saloy with the prestigious Albert Nelson Marquise Lifetime Achievement Award, putting her in the 1.5 percent of 5,000,000 academics in America. Her research on Zora Neale Hurston is used for the Algiers/NOLA TriCentennial Commission. Dr. Saloy is also known for having taught Pulitzer Prize winning poet and Dillard University alumnus Jericho Brown.

A native of New Orleans, Dr. Saloy attended the University of Washington where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in English. She then moved on to San Francisco State University where she earned her Master of Fine Arts in creative writing and English. At Louisiana State University, Dr. Saloy earned another M.F.A. in creative writing as well as her Ph.D. in English.
Yolanda W. Page '91, Ph.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs

PRESIDING

PROCESIONAL
Eternal Father, Strong to Save”
S. Carver Davenport, Pianist

INIVOCATION
Rev. Herbert Brisbon, III
University Chaplain

MUSICAL SELECTION
“Lift Every Voice and Sing”
Dillard University Choral Ensemble
S. Carver Davenport, Director

arr. Roland M. Carter

GREETING
Joshua Williams Jr. '91
President, Dillard University
National Alumni Association

THE OCCASION
Mattie Harris '22
SGA President

MUSICAL SELECTION
“Lord, How Come Me Here”
Lauren Rhodes '22, Lyric Soprano

arr. S. Carver Davenport

DRAMATIC SELECTION
Dillard University Theatre

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER
DeJoan Mitchell '22
86th Miss Dillard University

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Mona Lisa Saloy, Ph.D.
Louisiana Poet Laureate

CLOSING REMARKS
Walter M. Kimbrough, Ph.D.
President

ALMA MATER
“Fair Dillard”
David Rhodes '22, Lyric Tenor

Williams Stuart Nelson and
Frederick D. Hall

BENEDICTION
Rev. Herbert Brisbon, III
University Chaplain

RECESSIONAL
“God of Our Fathers”
S. Carver Davenport, Pianist

George W. Warren
Board of Trustees

Michael D. Jones, Esq., ’82
Chairperson

Orim Graves
Michael Griffin ‘94, D.Sc.
William “Bill” Hess
Leith Hill
Vincent Hudson ‘93
Al Lee ‘80
Roland Pickens ‘85

Rochester “Rock” Anderson ’84
Kim M. Boyle, Esq.
Ronald V. Burns Sr. ‘73
Rev. Jan H. Curwick
Ayo Davis ‘98
Alvin Gentry
Dathel Georges

Trustees Emeriti

David B. Dillard
Frank Mason ‘71, L.H.D. ‘07
R. King Milling
Joyce M. Roché, ‘70, L.L.D. ‘91
Edward M. Swan, CFA

Officers of the University

Walter M. Kimbrough, Ph.D.
President

Marc A. Barnes, Ph.D., Vice President for Institutional Advancement
Roland N. Bullard Jr., Ph.D., Vice President for Student Success
Brendan M. Greene, J.D., General Counsel
Ralph A. Johnson, M.B.A., Vice President for Business and Finance
David D. Page, M.A., Vice President for Enrollment Management
Yolanda W. Page ’91, Ph.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs
University Deans

Eric Buckles, Ph.D., College of Arts and Sciences
Sharon Hutchinson, Ph.D., College of Nursing
Eartha L. Johnson ‘80, Ed.D., Faculty and Student Academic Services
Kimberly Moorehead ‘04, Ed.D., University College
Dorian Williams, Ph.D., College of Business

Professor Emeriti

Henry Lacey ’65, Ph.D., L.H.D. ’14
Dorothy V. Smith, Ph.D.

Ceremonial Marshals

University Marshal

Robert A. Collins, Ph.D.
Professor of Urban Studies and Public Policy

Platform Marshals

Lovell Agwaramgbo, Ph.D.
Professor of Chemistry
Hong Dai, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Mathematics
Abdalla Darwish, Ph.D.
Professor of Physics & Presidential Professor
Keith Alan Morris, M.F.A.
Associate Professor of Film Studies

Faculty Marshals

Steve Buddington, Ph.D.
Professor of Social Work
Charlotte Hurst ’75, Ph.D.
Professor of Nursing

Student Marshals

Courtney E. Williams, Ed.D.
Assistant Dean of Students
Director, Student Engagement & Leadership
Dawn J. Williams, Ph.D.
Academic Counselor
ALMA MATER

“Fair Dillard”

Fair Dillard,
Gleaming white and spacious green,
We love thy every blade and tree;
We love thy breathless days, thy nights serene,
Thy halls where men are men and free.
Arise, O sons and daughters, hail thy queen,
And pledge for aye thy loyalty.

Fair Dillard,
Flaming love and learning’s light,
Teach us each day, each passing hour.
A deep’ning love for beauty, truth, and right.
Source of all nobleness and pow’r.
And through the joyous day, the dreaded night,
Forever guide, Alma Mater!
Forever guide, Alma Mater!