Dillard University
Founders' Day
Convocation

Friday, the Sixteenth of October
Two Thousand Twenty
Ten Thirty O'Clock in the Morning
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 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 "Negro welfare" and other Southern "problems."

During Alexander’s tenure, one of his most significant contributions was to recruit 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 Hall, 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 Pennslyvania 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.

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 every and is positioned for success throughout the 21st and beyond.
Councilman Jay H. Banks is a native New Orleanian and a lifetime District B resident. Councilman Banks is a proud product of the Orleans Parish Public School System having graduated from Henry W. Allen Elementary School and McMain Magnet Secondary School. He received his bachelor’s degree in business administration from Dillard University and his master’s degree in organizational management from Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Councilman Banks’ public service record is noted locally and beyond. He was elected as the District 91 representative of the Louisiana Democratic State Central Committee, is a member of the Orleans Parish Democratic Executive Committee and as is the co-chair of the Louisiana Democratic 2nd Congressional District Executive Committee. Councilman Banks had the honor of being publicly elected as Louisiana’s 2nd Congressional District delegate for President Barack Obama for both the 2008 and 2012 Democratic National Conventions. He was also the chief of staff for two former New Orleans City Council presidents, the late Dorothy Mae Taylor and his mentor James “Jim” Singleton. He is a graduate of the Democratic National Committee Training Institute and the New Orleans Regional Leadership Institute. Councilman Banks was also the political director for the Black Organization for Leadership Development (BOLD).

A committed servant leader, Councilman Banks is extensively involved in the community. He serves on both the Energy, Environment and Natural Resources and the Human Development committees for the National League of Cities. At home, Councilman Banks is currently the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club, Inc. and had the honor of reigning as King Zulu in 2016. He is a member of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation Board of Directors as well as the former director of the Dryades YMCA School of Commerce, a former board member of New Orleans Public Facilities Management, Inc., a former commissioner of the Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority and a former member of the WWOZ Radio Board of Directors. Additionally, he is a former board member of the Dryades YMCA, the Cox Cable Minority Advisory Committee, the Neighborhood Housing Services, Louisiana Hurricane Katrina Memorial Commission and the City of New Orleans Alcohol Beverage Control Board. Councilman Banks is a lifelong member of the New Zion Baptist Church, an active Shriner in Platta Temple #15, an active Prince Hall Mason in Acacia Lodge #248 and a Life Member of both the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

In his private time, Councilman Banks is an avid reader, gardener, cook, fantasy football fanatic and card player. He is the eldest son of Gloria Bryant-Banks and the late J. Herbert Banks, Ill. Councilman Banks is married to his beautiful wife Artelia Bennett Banks whom he started dating when they were 13 and 12 years old, respectively. Councilman Banks is the father two of sons, Ryan J. Banks and Garland A. Thomas as well as the proud “PawPa” of Miss Dakota Elizabeth Thomas and Master Logan Anthony Thomas. Councilman Banks’ personal philosophy is “God gave us all very unique talents. Use whatever your talents are to try to help somebody.”
ORDER OF CONVOCATION

Yolanda W. Page ’91, Ph.D.
Vice President, Academic Affairs
PRESIDING

PROCESSIONAL
“Eternal Father, Strong to Save”
S. Carver Davenport, Organist

INVOCATION
Rev. Herbert Brisbon, III
University Chaplain

CHOIR SELECTION
“Let There Be Peace”
Dillard University Female Ensemble

arr. Barbara Murray ’68

GREETING
Shirley J. Williams-Kane ’97
President, Dillard University
National Alumni Association

THE OCCASION
Traelon Rodgers ’21
Student Government Association President

CHOIR SELECTION
“Elijah Rock”
Dillard University Female Ensemble

arr. Hairston/Davenport

DRAMATIC SELECTION
Walter Dixson ’22 and Iman Wells ’22
Dillard University Theatre

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER
Toiya Smith ’21
Senior Class Representative

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Jay H. Banks ’82
New Orleans City Council, District B

Walter M. Kimbrough, Ph.D.
President

CLOSING REMARKS
William Stuart Nelson
Frederick D. Hall

ALMA MATER
“Fair Dillard”
Jolisa Singletary ’06, D.M.A., Soprano

Benediction
Reverend Herbert Brisbon, III

RECESSINAL
“God of Our Fathers”
S. Carver Davenport, Organist

DILLARD UNIVERSITY FEMALE ENSEMBLE
Jolisa Singletary ’06, D.M.A., Director

Arianna Randall ’22
Avianna Barquet ’23
Caira McGhee ’21
Dominique Buddington ’21
Jeanique Billingsly ’20 (Assisting the Director)
Kayla Love ’22
Lauren Rhodes ’22
Leah Paige ’22
Rachael Green ’22
Shailan Allen ’21
Sharandall Lewis ’21
Tate Robertson ’22
Taylor Bosie ’21
Zaria Ivory ’21

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Dorothy V. Smith, Ph.D.

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UNIVERSITY MARSHAL

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Mona Lisa Saloy, Ph.D., Professor of English

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