

# Returning the favor: Alumni nominations help recognize transformative teachers

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Long after alumni leave Tulane, with its vibrant city, beautiful campus and lifelong friendships, the life-changing influence of their education continues to shape how they think and engage with the world. At the heart of that experience are individual faculty members who mentor and inspire students to be their best selves. Each year, Tulane honors those educators through two prestigious, university-wide teaching awards, inviting alumni to reflect on the lasting impact of exceptional teaching.

“Alumni perspectives matter,” says Jerry Gabrielatos (TC '04).

Last year, Gabrielatos submitted a nomination for Dr. Randy Sparks for the Tulane President’s Graduate and Professional Teaching Award. Sparks, who holds the Clement Chambers Benenson Professorship in American Colonial History, went on to win the award due, in large part, to Gabrielatos’ insights.

Current students routinely praise Sparks’ extensive knowledge and insight, but for the awards committee, alumni nominations carry a special weight.

“We’re uniquely positioned to see how great teaching carries forward long after we walk across the stage at graduation. Writing a nomination is a meaningful way to honor that lasting influence.”

Nominations for the 2025-2026 university teaching awards are open now. The [President’s Award for Excellence in Graduate and Professional Teaching](#) and the [Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Presidential Fellowship for Undergraduate Education](#) recognize four outstanding faculty members who are formally honored for their exemplary service to the Tulane community at the spring Unified Commencement. **The last day to submit nominations for both awards is Monday, February 9, 2026.**

Executive Director of Classroom Engagement and Lawrence M.v.D. Schloss Senior Professor of Practice Toni Weiss notes that alumni bring a valuable and unique perspective to the nomination process.

“Alumni have the gifts of reflection and experience,” says Weiss.

“As graduates, they have particular insight into their educational experience as a whole and how individual faculty members may have influenced their achievements and perspective far beyond their years at Tulane.

“It’s a special relationship, and there is no better way to honor such distinctive professors than by nominating them for a prestigious university teaching award.”

All full-time faculty members who hold the titles of assistant professor, associate professor, professor, professor of practice or senior professor of practice are eligible for the award.

Nomination letters should demonstrate how faculty members achieved success in making distinctive contributions to teaching, including through their innovation, adaptability and availability to students. Further considerations include how professors helped students and influenced them beyond their formal role.

Alumni are encouraged to seize the moment to celebrate faculty excellence and submit their nominations by Monday, February 9, 2026. The nomination form for the President’s Award for Excellence in Graduate and Professional Teaching can be found [here](#) and the nomination for the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Presidential Fellowship for Undergraduate Education can be found [here](#).