

NASA engineer inspires classmates as SoPA student speaker

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Tulane SoPA student speaker Indigo Emanuel is the recipient of the Tulane 34 Award, an honor given to thirty-four of Tulane's most exceptional graduates.

Indigo Emanuel, Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) graduate, [Tulane 34 honoree](#) and 2024 student speaker, discovered coding at the age of 12. That discovery guided her future career path to the world of information technology.

Standing before her graduating class during SoPA's diploma ceremony held Saturday, May 18, she reflected on the collective journey of resilience and

consistency that had brought them all together on that momentous day.

Emanuel's interest in tech started in the seventh grade when she began participating in events organized by Black Data Processing Associates (BDPA), an organization dedicated to increasing minority representation in STEM fields.

“Over seven years—from middle school to high school—I was honing my coding and presentation skills every Saturday,” said Emanuel. “This experience didn’t just introduce me to my passion for Information Technology. My fails and successes during that program embedded in me the vital principle of perseverance.”

What sets Emanuel apart is not just her academic prowess, but also her unwavering commitment to excellence. She enrolled in the Information Technology program as an undergraduate student at Tulane SoPA and completed her [bachelor’s degree in information technology](#) in three years.

After graduating, she began working full-time as a contracted software engineer for NASA, but continued her studies and completed her [master’s degree in information technology management](#) just one year later in May 2024.

Emanuel's accomplishments are nothing short of remarkable. Her dual roles as a student and a professional at NASA exemplify the drive and persistence she referenced during her commencement speech.

“We all have faced, or will face, unfamiliar challenges, grief, and loss—and yet, here we all are today,” Emanuel said. “We persevered. We did not quit. These challenges that we all might have encountered during our educational careers were not roadblocks but stepping stones shaping us into capable, resilient individuals ready to tackle any of life’s obstacles.”

Emanuel's selection by the dean as the commencement speaker is a testament to her hard work and the inspiration she provides to her peers. By taking the stage, she not only represented her graduating class but embodied the spirit of determination and excellence that SoPA aims to instill in its students.