

Top faculty awarded during Tulane SoPA convocation

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This year's honorees include: Top row, from left, Kristie Aylett, Leah Peterson, Kayla Jutzi, Jacqueline Epstein, and Reine Bouton. Bottom row, from left, Sukari Ivester, Bill Rials, Suri Duitch, Ilianna Kwaske, and Tihara Sommers. Not pictured are Justin Schaeffer, Ted Vicky, Richard Mihans, Tamzen Jenkins, James DeMeo, and Demetrius Rogers. (Photo from Tulane SoPA)

The Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) honored 14 exceptional individuals for their teaching excellence and commitment to the school's mission

during the annual Faculty Convocation on Friday, April 12, at the 1834 Club. Each honoree was introduced by the nominating student, creating an unexpected and emotional moment for the faculty.

One student presenter expressed, “You played a pivotal role in what it means to be a graduate student. You actively engaged in my work and stood out as someone who truly cares whether I succeed or fail.”

Among the honorees was Suri Duitch, former Tulane SoPA dean and interim president of Kingsborough Community College in New York, who received the highest honor of the evening, the Emily H. Vokes Faculty Service Award. This award recognizes lifetime service to the School of Professional Advancement across various areas, including teaching, advising, administration, advocacy, and leadership.

In her acceptance speech, Duitch said, “The belief that all students can be successful without lowering the bar is what this school is all about. We created a school culture that is rigorous, demanding, and relevant, and it’s been a privilege for which I will forever be grateful.”

The event was broadcast for out-of-town guests and honorees unable to attend in person. Bill Rials, interim associate dean for academic affairs, used the evening to highlight SoPA’s achievements over the past year, emphasizing its role as a catalyst for change.

“I love what we do here at SoPA and I love how we do it,” said Rials. “Change is part of our DNA.”

Tulane SoPA presents three categories of awards during Faculty Convocation — the Emily H. Vokes Faculty Service Award, John Percy Dyer Awards, and Distinguished Faculty Awards for Excellence in Teaching. The John Percy Dyer Award, named after the founding dean of University College (now the School of Professional Advancement), is the highest teaching honor bestowed by SoPA.

Ilianna Kwaske, interim dean of Tulane SoPA, noted, “We received over 50 nominations this year, and some people received multiple nominations. This is a true testament to the work you all are doing and your effect on the students you teach.”

The full list of honorees for the 2024 Faculty Convocation award recipients includes:

Emily Vokes Award

Suri Duitch, Interim President, Kingsborough Community College

John Percy Dyer Award

Justin Schaffer, Business and Leadership Studies

Leah Peterson, Education

Distinguished Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching

Ted Vickey, Kinesiology

Jacqueline Epstein, General Legal Studies

Reine Bouton, Business and Leadership Studies

Sukari Ivester, Humanities and Social Sciences

Richard Mihans, Education

Tamzen Jenkins, Media + Design

Kristie Aylett, Media + Design

Tihara Sommers, Public Administration

James DeMeo, Emergency and Security Studies

Demetrice Rogers, Information Technology

Kayla Jutzi, Learning Experience Design

Hover over the image below to view the photo gallery.

