

Tulane employee crushes obstacles, earns degree from SoPA

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Niyoka "Nikki" Payton, one of the two talent acquisition coordinators in Tulane's Office of Human Resources and Institutional Equity, received a bachelor's degree in social science from the School of Professional Advancement. (Photo from Tulane Office of Human Resources and Institutional Equity)

Thirteen years ago, Niyoka "Nikki" Payton came to Tulane University as a temporary payroll clerk. Today, she is still at the university, currently one of the two talent acquisition coordinators in Tulane's Office of Human Resources and Institutional Equity. She recently added another title to her resume when she received her

bachelor's degree in social science from the School of Professional Advancement.

"I started at Tulane on a temporary assignment with a staffing agency in 2008," said Payton. "I worked very hard, and that role landed me the opportunity to become a full-time staff member, which also afforded me the opportunity to cash in on a big perk for employees — attending school for free. It was a no-brainer."

A native New Orleanian, Payton is more than just a full-time Tulane employee and student. She is the mother of three boys (her oldest son graduated from high school and her middle son graduated from eighth grade this month), a wife and caregiver for her parents. With her husband often away with required travel for his job, she must perform the daily balancing act of managing her parents' care, fulfilling her job duties, keeping up with her studies and overseeing her children's virtual education.

"I have learned that challenges force you to tap into your creativity reservoir to get things done. Challenges make you stronger and test your resolve and commitment to your goals. In a sense, it keeps you humble, but when those challenges are overcome, you appreciate them that much more. For me, challenges amplify your success and make you value the experience and personal growth that much more," Payton said.

"Nikki's effervescent personality is infectious, bringing a smile to all she meets," said Kelly Bankston, director of talent acquisition for the Tulane Office of Human Resources and Institutional Equity. "That positivity is reflected in her drive to continually develop herself, which is shown through her commitment to complete her bachelor's degree. Nikki is forging a path and leaving footprints that reflect the values of solid work ethics, commitment and dedication. We are so proud to have her on our team in human resources."