

New medical students put their best faces forward

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Members of the School of Medicine Class of 2024 received lanyards with their photos affixed so that they can get to know each other while wearing face coverings. (Photo by Mike Woodson / School of Medicine)

Orientation for medical students is typically a whirlwind of learning the new spaces and faces that will be an important part of their four-year journey to becoming physicians.

Yet, recognizing new faces can be a challenge when everyone is wearing a mask as part of COVID-19 safety measures. That's why this year's incoming class, the Class of 2024, will be sporting a new kind of identity badge in the halls of the medical school — large lanyards with photos, names and hometowns big enough to read so they can get to know their colleagues from behind their face coverings.

"We wanted a system that made it easy to recognize a face with a name. Students will be wearing these just for the first week to help everyone get to know each other," said Mike Woodson, director of admissions at the School of Medicine.

This is the first class to matriculate during the pandemic, and their arrival at Tulane included staggered and socially distanced orientations, COVID testing and other precautions.

"The class of 2024 is taking their first step to join the medical profession at a time when the world has never needed them more," said Dr. Lee Hamm, School of Medicine dean and senior vice president.

The new class includes 190 students from a pool of nearly 13,000 hopeful applicants.

The Class of 2024 brings a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives to the Tulane community. The students range in age from 20-36, and consist of 15% non-science majors, 51% women and 18 first-generation college students. They include members of the military; Gold Awards/Eagle Scouts; athletes; culinary, visual and musical artists; and aspiring future innovators and entrepreneurs.

Before they begin their clinical rotations, the Class of 2024 will still receive a key symbol of their profession — the white coat — at a re-envisioned White Coat Ceremony in January 2021.

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At the first-year orientation for the Class of 2024 at Tulane School of Medicine, "Who Dat" themed footballs were awarded to the individuals who had traveled the farthest to attend Tulane. (Photo by Mike Woodson / School of Medicine)