

For med students, scholarship support can unlock lifelong dreams

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School of Medicine students experience a real-life environment at the Tulane Center for Advanced Medical Simulation and Team Training. Access to scholarship support is important to many medical students as the majority of them will incur debt to cover their tuition. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Committing to medical school is always a choice rooted in selfless compassion for helping others. Making that decision amidst a global pandemic elevates that selflessness to an inspiring level. And the individuals who make up Tulane University School of Medicine's Class of 2024 are just as inspiring as their choice might suggest.

Out of a pool of nearly 13,000 hopeful applicants, the School of Medicine selected just 190 students for the Class of 2024. This year's class offers a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives to the Tulane medical community. The students range in age from 20 to 36, and consist of 15 percent non-science majors, 51 percent women and 18 first-generation college students. And they bring a range of experiences and passions as well. Among the 190 are members of the military; Gold Awards/Eagle Scouts; athletes; culinary, visual and musical artists; and aspiring future innovators and entrepreneurs.

With the total cost of attendance at \$94,000 this year, a full three-quarters of the class will incur debt to cover their tuition. For many of these students, access to scholarship support is the "magic key" that allows them to unlock lifelong dreams. As the School of Medicine endeavors to recruit more diverse classes made up from students from a wide range of backgrounds, scholarship support becomes even more important.

Across the medical school, students are combining their passion for helping others with personal perseverance. In August, the Association of American Medical Colleges awarded third-year medical student Russell Ledet, PhD, a [Herbert W. Nickens Medical Student Scholarship](#) for his leadership in working to eliminate inequities in medical education and health care. Ledet, who once worked as a security guard at Baton Rouge General Medical Center, posted an emotional video reflecting on his journey as he began his first day of clinical training for surgery at the hospital. The video went viral, and his inspiring story caught the attention of national and international news organizations.

"Even some of the people I used to work with who were security guards used to laugh at me when I would tell them, 'One day, I will be a doctor,'" he said in the video. "When I was growing up, I didn't even know of a Black doctor — I didn't know of any. So for this moment to come full circle is priceless."

The perseverance found among Tulane medical students stems from their commitment to helping others, and their belief in the importance of education to do so. These hardworking and talented students often need to take out substantial loans just to make their dream of helping others come true.

As the Class of 2024 begins their journey, resources such as [Tulane's Adopt-a-Student Scholarship Fund](#), which provides immediate support for students facing financial struggles due to their education, become more important than ever.