



XAVIER
UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA

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Award-winning *New York Times* Journalist to Headline Xavier University Commencement

New Orleans LA - Award-winning [The New York Times](#) investigative journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones will deliver the commencement address at [Xavier University of Louisiana's](#) (XULA) 91st annual graduation ceremony Saturday, May 12, at 10:00 a.m. in the University's Convocation Center.

Hannah-Jones is expected to address some 550 undergraduate, graduate, and pre-professional students and their families at the commencement. She will join Xavier University of Louisiana President Reynold Verret in honoring Dr. Norman C. Francis, President Emeritus of the University, who will be awarded an honorary degree from his alma mater.

Other scheduled commencement-related events include the Division of Education and Counseling's Graduate School hooding ceremony Thursday, May 10, at 6:00 p.m. in the University Center Ballroom; the College of Pharmacy Hooding Ceremony Friday, May 11, at noon in the Convocation Center, and the Baccalaureate Mass/Honors Convocation Friday, May 11 at 5:00 p.m., in the Convocation Center.

The commencement is a ticketed event. All others are open to the public.

Nikole Hannah-Jones

Hannah-Jones, who has been a staff writer for *The New York Times* since 2015, is known for her long-form writing style and her investigative coverage of civil rights, education, fair housing, school segregation, and discrimination in the United States.

During her career, which spans five newspapers and magazines in New York, Oregon, and North Carolina, she has accumulated 26 awards for journalism, writing, and radio reporting. Her article in *The New York Times* magazine documenting school segregation won a National Magazine Award last year, and before that she received a Peabody and a George Polk Award for work on the same topic. She was named Journalist of the Year in 2015 by National Association of Black Journalists.

Founder and president of the [Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting](#), a news trade organization dedicated to increasing the ranks of investigative reporters of color, in 2017 Hannah-Jones was named one of 24 MacArthur Fellows by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which annually awards grants to "exceptionally creative people". Often referred to as the "genius grant," it comes with a cash award of \$625,000, no strings attached.

Hannah-Jones has a Xavier connection, having penned a landmark piece for *The New York Times* magazine on Xavier's premed program, "A Prescription for More Black Doctors," which appeared in September 2015. She also helped to edit a new book by one of the Xavier-educated physicians featured in that that piece (Dr. Pierre Johnson '02) and two of his associates, "Pulse of Perseverance," which was published earlier this year.

She is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Dr. Norman C. Francis

During his long tenure as president, Dr. Norman C. Francis and Xavier University of Louisiana were virtually synonymous.

As the leader of the nation's only historically Black and Catholic university, Francis guided Xavier's growth both in size and dimension. During his presidency, the University more than doubled its enrollment, broadened its curriculum, expanded its campus, and strengthened its financial base. Its tradition of academic excellence was further enhanced.

Francis, himself a Xavier graduate (1952), was at one time the longest-sitting university president in the U.S. He served at Xavier for more than five decades as an administrator, 46 of those as President. Francis was named Xavier "President Emeritus" in 2015.

Through his leadership, the University instituted a core curriculum and mandatory comprehensives, and become recognized nationally as a leader in minority education, particularly in the STEM areas. Among the major accomplishments of Francis' tenure was the successful completion of several capital campaigns. Giving by alumni also increased dramatically. He is credited with being the catalyst for nearly every building constructed on the campus during a period of four decades,

Francis also enjoyed a prestigious personal reputation. He served in an advisory role to eight U.S. presidential administrations – not only on education issues, but civil rights as well – in addition to serving on 54 boards and commissions. In 2006 then-President George W. Bush presented him with the nation's highest civil award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2009 he was named one of "America's Best Leaders" by U.S. News Media Group and the Center for Public Leadership (CPL) at Harvard Kennedy's School of Government.

About Xavier University of Louisiana

XULA students *Leave Ready* to serve, care, and lead their communities. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. Take a moment to learn more about how Xavier is preparing students for the future at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD4mb-jYZC8>.

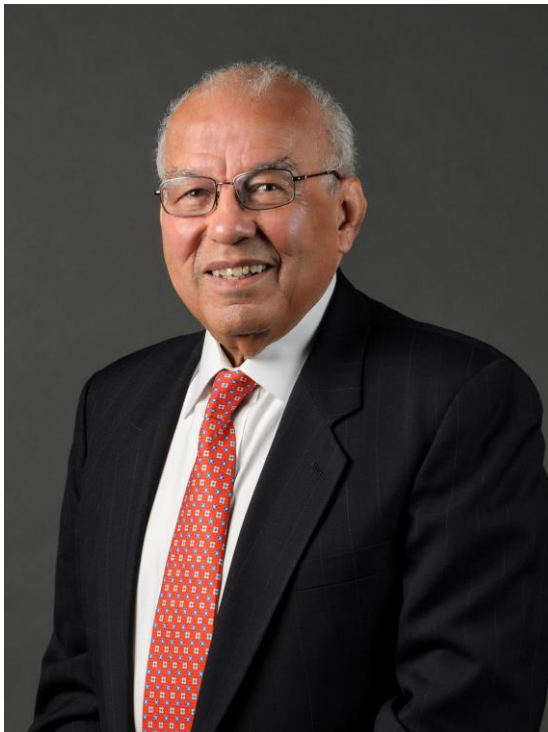
Once again, Xavier University of Louisiana received national accolades as one of the best universities in the country. Most notably, XULA is ranked as the best value among southern regional colleges and universities in the 2018 edition of "Best Colleges" by the U.S. News Media Group. Xavier also ranked No.1 in its grouping, heading the list of only 15 schools that qualified for the Southern Region category listed under "Great Schools, Great Prices."

To book interviews about our recent accomplishments and or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications and the arts, contact contact Diana Matero-Hernandez at (504) 520-5120) or dhernan1@xula.edu.

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Nikole Hannah-Jones



Dr. Norman C. Francis