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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Xavier University of Louisiana celebrates graduates and honorary degree recipients with two commencement ceremonies

New Orleans, La - On Saturday, May 7, 2022, Xavier University of Louisiana will host its official 95th commencement ceremony in person at the University Convocation Center. There will be two separate graduation ceremonies, the first at 10 a.m. for the College of Pharmacy and the second at 2 p.m. for those graduating from the College of Arts and Sciences. Four individuals will receive honorary degrees. The Rev. Dr. Starsky Wilson ('99), president and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) and CDF Action Council; Jerome "Big Duck" Smith, the director of the New Orleans' Tremé Center and a stalwart of the Civil Rights movement in New Orleans and nationally; Malcolm J. Broussard ('78), RPh, executive director of the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy; and United States Senator Dr. Bill Cassidy, co-founder of the Greater Baton Rouge Community Clinic. Graduates of the class of 2020, who were recognized during a virtual commencement ceremony, are also invited to participate in the in-person commencement events.

Dr. Wilson and Dr. Smith will be presented at the College of Arts and Sciences ceremony, with Dr. Wilson serving as commencement speaker. Broussard and Senator Cassidy will be presented at the College of Pharmacy ceremony, with Senator Cassidy serving as commencement speaker.

Beyond his leadership of the CDF, Dr. Wilson is also the board chair for the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) and the Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE). After earning his bachelor's degree in political science at Xavier University of Louisiana in 1999, Dr. Wilson received a Master of Divinity from Eden Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from Duke University. Previously, Dr. Wilson was president & CEO of Deaconess Foundation, a faith-based philanthropy for child well-being and racial justice in St. Louis. In 2015, Dr. Wilson was appointed co-chair of the Ferguson Commission, which released the 'Forward Through Ferguson: A Path Toward Racial Equity' Report, calling for sweeping changes in policing, the courts, child well-being and economic mobility. He currently serves on the boards for Duke Divinity School, the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Smith, a life-long resident of New Orleans, Louisiana, has been involved with the Civil Rights Movement dating back to the late 1950s when he joined the New Orleans chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) while still a teenage student at Southern University of New Orleans. From boycotting stores that refused to hire or serve Blacks to sit-ins along Canal Street, CORE's substantial contributions were

integral to the Civil Rights Movement from 1960 onward. Thereafter, Smith challenged Federal desegregation laws across the South as a member of the Freedom Riders. On May 24, 1963, Smith met with Attorney General Robert Kennedy and a host of celebrities and civil rights leaders in New York City to discuss the state of civil rights in the United States. In 1968, Smith founded Tambourine and Fan to instill important culture, history, and tradition in New Orleans youth. His decades-old nickname of “Big Duck” comes from the children of the Tremé neighborhood following behind him as if he were a big duck. Smith has mentored countless individuals across the city over the years.

Broussard has been a forerunner in leading groundbreaking pharmacy initiatives. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in pharmacy in 1978 from Xavier University of Louisiana’s College of Pharmacy and in 1999, was appointed to the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy as executive director. He concurrently served as the president, president-elect, and treasurer for three years as an executive committee member of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy® (NABP®). He developed NABP®’s relationship with foreign pharmacy regulators internationally through his participation in the Fédération Internationale Pharmaceutique. He is a member of the House of Delegates of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) and the Louisiana Pharmacists Association (LPA), serving on the board of directors and as president. During his career, he has received several awards and accolades, including the NABP® President’s Award in recognition of his service; the 2018 Lester E. Hosto Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of Pharmacy; and the 1985 and 2006 Pharmacist of the Year Awards from the LPA.

Senator Cassidy’s distinguished career has long included efforts to improve and transform the lives of Louisiana families. Cassidy attended Louisiana State University (LSU) for undergraduate and medical school. In 1990, he joined the faculty of LSU Medical School, teaching medical students and residents at Earl K. Long Hospital, a hospital for the uninsured located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In 2006, Senator Cassidy was elected to the Louisiana State Senate and in 2008, was elected to the United States House of Representatives to represent Louisiana’s Sixth Congressional District. In 2020, he was re-elected to his second term in the U.S. Senate following successful efforts to lower the cost of healthcare, secure coastal restoration projects to protect Louisiana families from natural disasters, reform the nation’s mental health system, and secure many legislative accomplishments.

The Baccalaureate Mass will be held at 4 p.m. on Friday, May 6, 2022; the University Honors and Awards Ceremony follows the Baccalaureate Mass. To get more information about the scheduling of these events, visit www.xula.edu/commencement. Xavier’s Spring 2022 commencement ceremonies are ticketed events that will allow 10 guests per graduate and will be [livestreamed](#). Masks are required.



Reverend Dr. Starsky Wilson
President and CEO of the Children’s Defense Fund
(CDF) and CDF Action Council



Jerome Smith
Director
New Orleans’ Tremé Center Director



Dr. Bill Cassidy
United States Congressional Senator



Malcolm J. Broussard
Executive Director
Louisiana Board of Pharmacy

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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier University of Louisiana, America's only historically Black and Catholic University, is ranked among the top three HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier produces more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Additionally, Xavier's College of Pharmacy is also among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the country.

Established in 1925, by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African American and Native Americans to receive quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in art, business, education, biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy and political science. More recent additions in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience and genetics, in addition to new STEM-based master's programs, have provided Xavier students (2,749 undergraduates and 849 graduates) an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty, who are experts in their fields, to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula is to provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls, thereby facilitating a more just and humane society for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at www.xula.edu or contact Regi Reyes at (504) 520-5425 or rreyes@xula.edu.