

# President Fitts rewards deserving SPHTM employees with a holiday surprise

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*Shokufeh Ramirez, assistant director of the Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health, excitedly accepts her President's Staff Excellence Award and \$1,000 check from Tulane University President Mike Fitts. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)*

With Riptide by his side and a holiday surprise in store, Tulane University President Mike Fitts made a visit to the downtown campus on Monday, December 11. Strolling into the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine's Department of Global Community Health and Behavioral Sciences, he turned it into a scene from Santa's workshop. Fitts bestowed two GCHB centers' staff with President's Staff Excellence Awards and \$1,000 checks.



The award visibly touched Revonda Darenbourg, program manager at the Tulane Prevention Research Center.

“These last couple of months have been extremely difficult, as I lost my mother,” she said. “I’m so blessed to work here at Tulane. Thank you all so much for this honor.”

“We’re not only thanking you — we’re putting our money where our mouth is.”

— *Tulane University President Mike Fitts*

“These awards are given out to the best of the best — people who are not only dedicated to the institution but who go the extra mile,” said Fitts.

Shokufeh Ramirez, assistant director of the Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health and doctoral student, also received the President's Staff Excellence Award.

"As Revonda was receiving her award, I turned to the person next to me and said 'Wow! You come to work on a Monday morning and then suddenly you get this huge surprise. What a way to start the week!'" said Ramirez. She was "pretty amazed" when President Fitts then said he had a second award to present. Amazement quickly turned into a joyful surprise when Ramirez realized she was the second recipient.

President Fitts wasn't finished presenting awards yet though! Director of Development Verna Aucoin, was the third SPHTM team member to receive a President's Staff Excellence Award.



This year, the awards were given to 12 honorees — outstanding Tulane staff members who exceeded expectations and contributed to the university by increasing productivity or cost savings within their departments.

Additional recipients of the 2017 President's Staff Excellence Awards include Marc Bady, Odessa Baham, Alysia Loshbaugh, Kathleen Maier, Lourdes Mega, Whitney Richards, Tamara Simmons, Maker Space managing team, and the Network Operations Center staff.

*Additional photos by Paula Burch-Celentano.*