

# Driftwood

*The Community Newspaper of the University of New Orleans*

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## Navigating the Bursar's Office: A Glimpse into Student Life Amid Financial Struggles

**BY JALAYAH ALBERT**

Social Media Manager

The Bursar's Office at UNO, a place where students either find relief or face the unfortunate discovery of outstanding balances, has been busier than ever. Amid ongoing financial challenges at the university, students are flocking to the Bursar's Office to resolve issues related to tuition, financial aid, and payments.

Kamille Isom, a junior majoring in Political Science and Sociology, has been working in the Bursar's Office since February 2023. After a brief hiatus, she returned in January 2025 to assist with the increasing number of students seeking help. Kamille shared her insights on the growing pressures the office is facing, particularly in relation to the issues surrounding financial aid and the recent transition to Workday.

According to Kamille, one of the most common problems students encounter is difficulty making their first payment. "A lot of students are struggling because their financial aid hasn't been dispersed in time, leaving them with an outstanding balance on their Workday account," she explained. This issue has left many uncertain about their next steps, adding to the financial anxiety many students already face.

The transition to Workday has only compounded these challenges. Kamille described how the new system has impacted day to day operations in the Bursar's Office. "For one, sometimes student payments made from home devices don't automatically go through, so someone from our office has to manually enter each payment," she said. "This takes time away from other important tasks and causes delays. Additionally, the Bursar no longer accepts payments for parking decals, which is a new change students may not be aware of."

Despite these challenges, Kamille remains optimistic about the future. She emphasized the importance of patience and understanding during these trying times, noting that the Bursar's Office is working with a limited staff and the support of volunteers to keep operations running smoothly. "We're doing our best," Kamille said. "Things are taking a little longer than we would like, but we're committed to helping students navigate these difficulties."

Kamille also shared her perspective on working at the Bursar's Office, "It's a great opportunity to gain valuable experience," she said. "I have no career goals in working in finance or accounting, but I recognized the need for support in the Bursar's office, so I am happy to help in any way I can to ease students' frustration."

While the financial state of the school continues to put a strain on both students and staff, Kamille's words remind us that resilience and community are key in overcoming these obstacles. As the Bursar's Office works to resolve issues and streamline processes, the UNO community must continue to support one another through these difficult times.

As Kamille put it, "I'm hopeful that things will get better, and I appreciate everyone's patience as we work through these challenges together."

The road ahead may be uncertain, but with persistence and understanding, UNO students, staff, and the entire campus community can navigate these financial hurdles and emerge stronger.



*-Photo courtesy of Kamille Isom*

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## Dancing With the Starlettes

BY KAMILLE ISOM

Staff Financial Manager

The Stellar Starlettes are UNO's official majorette dance team, known for their high-energy performances and a strong sense of community. The Starlettes were first introduced to campus in 1969 when the university was still LSUNO. Unfortunately, due to leadership changes, the team has been inactive but they have made their triumphant return in 2022. Since then, the Starlettes have been reclaiming their legacy, showcasing their talent and passion for dance.

For Starlettes Captain Klynn, dancing has been life changing. "Being a dancer has put me in higher positions, given me less anxiety, and provided a space where I can truly be myself," she shared. Klynn has been dancing since the 5th grade, dedicating 10 years to perfecting her craft. She joined the Starlettes in 2023 when the team was revived, eager to continue her love for dance at the collegiate level.

Being part of the Starlettes is more than just performing it is also about pride, community, and personal

growth. "The team is very welcoming and patient," shared Kayla, a sophomore sociology major attending her second *Dancing with the Starlettes* event. "I had minimal dance experience, but they made me feel included and supported."

The Starlettes will be performing in upcoming parades, including Nyx and Zulu, bringing their signature moves to one of the year's biggest celebrations!

For aspiring dancers, Klynn offers this advice: "Start with the basics, stay committed, and keep trying. As long as you're putting in the effort, we're happy to work with you."

For more information and updates, check out @uno\_starlettes on Instagram!



-Photos courtesy of @uno\_starlettes on Instagram  
Left photo from Jingle on the Boulevard - New Orleans East Christmas Parade  
Top photo - Upcoming Bake Sale by the Starlettes

## The Dirty Truth About Mardi Gras

BY EMMA BOURGEOIS

Staff Writer



-Photos courtesy of Gerald Herbert/AP via NPR

Mardi Gras looks a lot different today than when it originated. The amount of waste produced from throws during Carnival is perhaps the most notable difference. The original Carnival celebrations were not about throws or beads, but about community and celebration. The original parade "throws" consisted of sweet treats, flour, and rotten produce. The early 1900s rolled around and Rex started throwing handmade glass beads and eventually, doubloons. Then, the 60's plastic revolution! Now we can mass produce plastic beads for cheap. As the years went on, the parades have become more about the throws. Beads are the main attraction. Most people won't see much of an issue

with this, but plastic beads pose many problems. For starters, tons of beads are accumulating in the storm drains in New Orleans. This is bad for multiple reasons:

1. Beads are heavy. In 2018, N.O. recovered 46 tons of parade throws from the drains. This extra heavy weight weighing down on the sediment below is contributing to subsidence.

2. The beads that make it out of the drains, make their way to Lake Pontchartrain, then the Gulf of Mexico and then into the open ocean. This is a huge threat to marine organisms and humans! The beads can leach harmful residue into potential drinking water.

Aside from the actual throws, people are littering their trash as well. In 2018, it was estimated that Carnival produces 900 tons of waste annually. Are there solutions?

1. Reduce: Mardi Gras was never supposed to be about how many beads you catch! What are you gonna do with all those beads, anyway?

2. Reuse: Save what you catch this year, for next year's riders. This saves money and materials! Bead drop offs are located around N.O. prepared to recycle your beads.

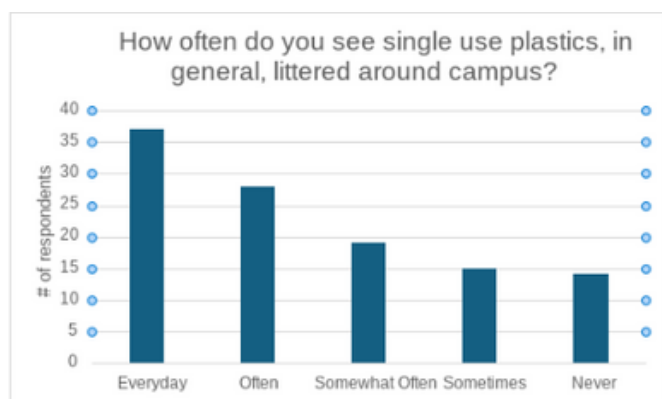
3. Investing in sustainable throws: Wouldn't you much rather go home with one of a kind throws made from local artists? Or items you can utilize in your everyday life, like dried red beans? (Groundskrewe). This can also boost our local economy.

4. Recycle- There are volunteers and organizations set up on parade routes ready to collect your aluminum and glass bottles to recycle and ensure they stay off the street!

Remember to be mindful of these things when celebrating this year. The world is bigger than plastic beads! Mardi Gras is about having a good time with your community, not flooding our city with trash. Happy Mardi Gras!



# UNO Sustainability: The Waste Reduction Resolution



Data from the SGA Sustainability Survey

**BY EMMA BOURGEOIS**

Staff Writer

At the beginning of the month, UNO's Student Government Association passed a resolution that focuses on reducing the amount of waste on campus. The resolution has passed through the Senate and is now being sent to the Office of the President for approval. The resolution includes alternatives pertaining to sustainability concerns on campus. The resolution begins by discussing why sustainability is important. The first proposed alternative is to switch the vending machines from plastic bottles to aluminum. Aluminum is infinitely recyclable and profitable. The plan is to start up an aluminum recycling program run by volunteers to collect and sell the aluminum for profit to be used for student events funded by SGA. The next proposed solutions attempt to tackle the litter problem on campus. It is proposed that



## KEEP UNO BEAUTIFUL

### KEEP LOUISIANA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE

UNO switch to a digital receipt system, ban single-use plastics (utensils, etc.) and switch to bamboo, reed, or hemp products. Not offering plastic bags in the bookstore and other locations on campus were also mentioned. It is expected that these switches will result in less litter on campus since those are the most commonly littered items on campus according to a student survey sent out by the SGA.

To-go containers in the dining hall were also of concern. The proposal is to stick with compostable containers or implement a reusable container vending machine like concept, called OZZI, that distributes reusable to-go containers students are required to return. The machine has a system in place that ensures students return them. Other Universities in LA have successfully adopted this system.

The resolution wraps up with litter related statistics in Louisiana. According to Keep Louisiana Beautiful, Louisiana spends \$9.4 billion on litter abatement. By stopping the litter at the source by adopting more sustainable practices, we could put that money to better use. UNO being on Lake Pontchartrain issues our campus an important responsibility to keep it clean and green. Any litter that goes down the drains on campus goes directly into the lake causing environmental problems we could easily put a stop to if we adopt these sustainable principles. If you are interested in learning more about sustainability efforts on campus, follow @keepunobeautiful on Instagram. Let's Keep UNO Beautiful!

## Alumni Spotlight: Tom Fitzmorris



-Photo courtesy of The Times Picayune Archives

**BY SETH CHARPENTIER**

Managing Editor

On February 12th, 2025, both New Orleans and The University of New Orleans has lost an icon. Tom Fitzmorris, local food critic for decades, passed away at the age of 74 from complications due to Alzheimers. He is survived by his wife, Mary Anne and his son Jude.

From humble beginnings, his first

restaurant review was at UNO's Flambeaux Room, a white tablecloth type restaurant located in UNO's University Center. This launched him into legend ever since. For countless years, his radio show, The Food Show, served as a space and platform for his own restaurant reviews, while serving as a communal space for all things New Orleans food. He was a local icon eating around the city and giving the good, bad, and the ugly.

Like countless pillars of the New Orleans community, he went to UNO and was a student writer for the student newspaper, The Driftwood. Like previously mentioned, he wrote his very first restaurant review, and he was also one of the founding members of the Beta Xi Chapter of the Phi Kappa Sigma Fraternity, located on UNO's campus.

While he is no longer with us physically, Tom Fitzmorris will remain in our hearts. His countless radio show segments that covered everything from wine recommendations, cooking techniques, even to tiny details like tablecloths or wine glasses, his voice and his observations

brought so much joy to all. His fan base covered not only in New Orleans but in cities all over the country. While his voice will no longer be over the waves of New Orleans radio, he will remain in our hearts, memories, and in every plate of food we enjoy.

“What engages me most, in work and play, is the food of New Orleans.” - Tom Fitzmorris,  
Tom Fitzmorris's  
New Orleans Food

# Renada Collins: A Vision for the Future



-Photo courtesy of Samantha Hallenus

**BY KAMILLE ISOM**

Staff Financial Manager

New Orleans is a city known for its culture, resilience, and history, but it also faces significant challenges that require strong leadership. We had the opportunity to interview Renada Collins, a New Orleans mayoral candidate, who is stepping up to bring change and address key issues affecting residents. With pressing concerns like crime, infrastructure, and economic disparities, residents are looking for a leader who not only understands their struggles but has a plan to address them. In an exclusive interview, Collins shared her motivations, policy plans, and vision for the city.

Born and raised in New Orleans, Collins is not only running for mayor, she is running for her community. She grew up seeing the resilience of New Orleans firsthand. Though she grew up with Democratic ideologies she has decided to run with no political party affiliation.

## A Passion for Public Service

Collins' decision to run for mayor wasn't about career advancement—it was about addressing the deep inequalities she witnessed throughout the city. "My career that has led up to this, I wouldn't say it was my career that led up to it. It's my passion for the underserved of the city, the residents, the businesses of New Orleans that's led to this," she shared. Before stepping into politics, Collins owned a cosmetic and skincare line and worked on financial literacy programs. Her experiences in business and community advocacy shaped her understanding of the struggles faced by many New Orleanians.

## Restoring Trust in Local Government

Collins acknowledges the disconnect between city officials and the people they serve. She is determined to rebuild trust through transparency and accessibility. "I will ensure open communication between city officials and residents," she emphasized. "My administration will have regular public forums and satellite offices so that everyone feels included in the decision-making process."

## Tackling Crime with a Community Approach

Crime remains a top concern for residents, and Collins believes a multifaceted approach is necessary. She supports stronger community policing, youth engagement programs, and increased investments in mental health services. "We can't police our way out of crime," she asserted. "We need to provide opportunities and alternatives for young people while also ensuring that law enforcement builds positive relationships with the communities they serve." Collins also stressed the importance of addressing repeat offenders and streamlining the court system to ensure justice is served efficiently.

## Infrastructure and Climate Resilience

Flooding and drainage issues have long plagued New Orleans, and Collins has a plan to tackle these challenges head-on. "We need to rethink how we approach climate resilience," she stated. "Green infrastructure, modernized drainage systems, and smarter city planning will make a huge difference in protecting our homes and businesses." Her commitment to sustainability extends beyond flooding—she also aims to improve the city's energy infrastructure and reliability, holding utility companies accountable for better service.

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## A Vision for the Future

When asked where she sees New Orleans in the next decade, Collins didn't hesitate: "In ten years, I see a city that is stronger, safer, and more inclusive. But that future depends on us working together. It takes leadership, commitment, and a willingness to listen."

Her message to voters is clear—engagement is key. "Your voice matters," she insisted. "Whether it's through voting, community organizing, or simply staying informed, we all have a role to play in shaping our city's future."

As election day approaches, New Orleanians have an important choice to make. Will Renada Collins be the leader to bring about real change? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain—her dedication to the city and its people is undeniable.

**"YOUR VOICE MATTERS. WHETHER IT'S THROUGH VOTING, COMMUNITY ORGANIZING, OR SIMPLY STAYING INFORMED, WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN SHAPING OUR CITY'S FUTURE."**



**USE YOUR VOICE AND VOTE**

**The Driftwood Staff encourages you to exercise your right to vote and research your candidates. The New Orleans mayoral election will be October 11, 2025.**



# A Refresher for UNO Spring Athletics

BY ALEX HAYDEL

Staff Writer

Another semester at UNO means another opportunity to support your favorite student-athletes by coming out and showing your Privateer Pride for the 2025 Spring Athletic Calendar. Students, Alumni, and other long-standing supporters have a chance at seeing UNO Men and Women's Division 1 Programs such as Basketball, Baseball, Volleyball, Track & Field, and plenty other amazing collegiate athletes, as they battle for the honor to call themselves the best in the nation.

A Southeast Louisiana Spring has shaped

a beautiful backdrop to attend an upcoming weekend of fun including the Men's baseball team as they travel to Tulane University to test this year's squad against the mighty Green Wave at Turchin Stadium, 6:30pm on February 18th. Not into Baseball and want to enjoy some relaxing air conditioning? That's okay; try heading to the Lakefront Arena for our Women's basketball team as they look to close out the season on a high note when the East Texas A&M Lions arrive on February 18th at 6:30pm. Then again, return this Saturday

afternoon to play Northwestern State on February 22nd at 2pm.

Another fun weekend option could be the Women's Volleyball team as they attend the Green Wave Invitational at White Sands Volleyball Courts in Elmwood, LA this Friday the 21st, starting at 12pm CT. Whatever the decision, UNO fans will be provided with plenty of entertainment this semester and we wish the best of luck to the Privateer student athletes representing to the silver and blue.

# A Perspective on the Super Bowl

BY SETH CHARPENTIER

Managing Editor

New Orleans has been chosen yet again as host city for Super Bowl LIX (59) and it still manages to pull it off despite starting the year off in tragedy. New Orleans has played the role of host city for many years. Many look to the city because of its unique brand and its ability to host such large events and crowds. After the recent terrorist attack on January 1st, security was a top priority. Large scale security check points on major streets within the French Quarter, one major one being at Bourbon Street, ground zero of the recent attack.

Within the swell of late-night revelry, having an armed military-like checkpoint did feel out of place, but there was a reason why of course.

Despite feeling like I was crossing over from East to West Berlin at times, it did not take away from the atmosphere. Thousands of people flocked to the city once again. Most host cities throw a large banquet but in true New Orleans style, there was a parade. The grand marshal of the parade being Todd Graves, founder and CEO of Raising Cane's, felt on brand.

If large crowds are not your thing, that's understandable, but this is something that should be experienced whenever possible. You never know when New Orleans will be chosen again as the host city.

While we say goodbye to Super Bowl LIX, Mardi Gras is in the city's rearview. This, I could argue, is something that is more important than the Super Bowl. It is something that only comes once a year, but it feels like a lifetime. The energy of the crowds and the atmosphere is something that locals crave. That could be the alcohol talking, but who's to say.

D W V M S P O R T S

A F O D B U R S A R

N D T F B E M O P E

C B E A D S S X I L

E L H Z S A L U M H

bursar alum

beads dance

sports vote

## Want to join the Driftwood?

Whether you are interested in being full-time staff, a contributing writer, a graphic designer or have any skills you want to share; we want to hear from YOU. Email

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