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The Gayle and Tom Benson Charitable Foundation Donates \$1.5 million to Xavier University of Louisiana

New Orleans LA – [Xavier University of Louisiana](http://www.xavier.edu) has received a \$1.5 million gift from the Gayle and Tom Benson Charitable Foundation. The gift will both name the Sanctuary of the University's St. Katharine Drexel Chapel the Gayle and Tom Benson Sanctuary and establish the Gayle and Tom Benson Scholarship Fund.

The Sanctuary – the area of the Chapel immediately around the Altar – will be officially named during a special public ceremony Thursday, Sept. 06, at 2:00 p.m. in the Chapel, with a private reception to follow. The funds will provide operational and maintenance for the campus Chapel, which was opened in 2012.

The St. Katharine Drexel Chapel, named for Xavier's founder, serves as a central location where Xavier community members of all faiths celebrate and remember Mother Katharine's deep love of God and belief that through evangelization and education Xavier would train students to become servant leaders in the world.

The scholarship fund will provide yearly scholarship awards to New Orleans area students up to \$5,000 per semester, for a maximum of eight semesters per student. Scholarship recipients will be selected on the basis of their academic standing and documented financial need.

"Through their generosity, the Bensons are establishing a partnership with Xavier, the only historically Black and Catholic University in America, that allows us to continue our noble mission to help create a just and humane society. With this gift, the Bensons have invested in a brighter future for generations of our students to come," said Xavier University of Louisiana President Reynold Verret. "Gayle and Tom Benson are dedicated members of the community who exemplify Xavier's mission and vision of service to the world."

"This commitment to Xavier ensures that our campus remains viable for our students, faculty, and staff as we further our mission of forming young men and women who leave ready to lead, serve, and care for their communities. We are grateful to the Bensons for their investment," said Xavier University of Louisiana Board of Trustees President Sonia Perez.

"Tom and I have always tried to give back to the local community and have been committed to investing into our city and region, said New Orleans Saints and Pelicans Owner Gayle Benson. "This donation will serve as a platform for many generations to prosper at Xavier University of Louisiana and I am proud, humbled and honored to be a part of their continuing success."

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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier was recently ranked as the nation's #2 HBCU (Historically Black College and University) by [College Consensus](#), a unique college ratings website that aggregates publisher rankings and student reviews, in its newly released publication, *Best HBCUs for 2018*. Xavier was also among the four colleges selected by Beyonce and her [BeyGood Foundation](#) as the recipient of a Homecoming Scholars Scholarship Award announced after her much lauded performance at Coachella, while actor and comedian Kevin Hart has joined forces with UNCF and KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) to help 18 more KIPP students earn a college degree – three of whom were Xavier students.

That's just the latest in national accolades Xavier has received 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."

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