

THE MAGAZINE OF TULANE UNIVERSITY / SPRING 2021

# TULANIAN



## MOMENTUM

*Mike Fitts Leads in an Unprecedented Era*



## ***CHECKMATE***

Sandy Ryan, an A. B. Freeman School of Business student from Los Angeles, left, and Miles Kealing, a School of Liberal Arts student from Pasadena, California, right, face off (wearing masks, of course!) for a game of chess. They played the socially distanced game with a large-scale board and pieces set up for “Game Day” in Pocket Park.



PHOTO BY SALLY ASHER







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## Want to know more?

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# Yeah, You Write

## From the editor

In this *Tulanian*, we take a look at the extraordinary leadership of President Michael Fitts. He has been at the helm of Tulane for seven years. He's led with a steady hand, guided by the principle of bringing people — and disciplines — together to collaborate and make the world a better place. Read "Come Together" to learn more about Fitts' accomplishments and plans for the university's future. Data, as we've seen throughout the coronavirus pandemic, is an essential public health tool for understanding and combatting COVID-19. In "Algorithms Run the World," we learn about the data explosion in all realms of computer science. In "Where Y'at, Dawlin'?" Tulane linguists describe their research trying to pin down what it is about the way native New Orleanians talk. In "Gentilly Days," Thomas Beller, English and creative writing professor, road-trips to discover meaning in the iconic 1960s Southern novels *The Moviegoer* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

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*Tulanian* (ISSN 21619255) is published quarterly by the Tulane University Office of Communications and Marketing, 31 McAllister Drive, Drawer 1, New Orleans, La. 70118-5624. Business and Editorial Offices: 200 Broadway, Suite. 219, New Orleans, La. 70118-3543. Send editorial and subscription correspondence to Tulane University Office of Communications and Marketing, 31 McAllister Drive, Drawer 1, New Orleans, La. 70118-5624 or email [tulanemag@tulane.edu](mailto:tulanemag@tulane.edu). Periodicals postage is paid at New Orleans, La. 70113-9651 and additional mailing offices.

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Send address changes to:  
*Tulanian* magazine, Tulane Office of University Communications and Marketing,  
31 McAllister Drive, Drawer 1,  
New Orleans, LA 70118-5624.

*Tulanian* magazine is online at  
[tulanian.tulane.edu](http://tulanian.tulane.edu)



## To the Editor

[Email letters to [tulanemag@tulane.edu](mailto:tulanemag@tulane.edu)]

### DIVERSITY IN ALL RESPECTS

I was glad to read in the article "Racial Reckoning" that Tulane is working to increase equity for racial minorities. I would like Tulane to publish more about what they are doing to increase equity among another minority group — people with disabilities (whether physical or intellectual).

**Lory Cenac Lewis, B '06**  
*New Orleans*

### GOOD STUFF

I love, love and love your magazine. It never fails to enlighten me. ... In this latest issue I enjoyed a piece ["Health Equity"] about the Dean of Public Health and Tropical Medicine as we urgently need to address healthcare disparity. Thank you very much for keeping us informed and engaged. Good stuff!

**Yuri Silver, Parent**  
*Salem, Oregon*

### THANKS!

Thank you SO much for the great magazine.

**Mark W. Lehner (A&S '80)**  
*Greer, South Carolina*

## WHERE ARE THE MEN?

As one who attended a segregated Newcomb College, it is wonderful to see these 15 Black Tulane medical students ["Resilience Is in Our DNA," *Tulanian*, fall 2020]. At Newcomb, we learned women are often smarter than the men. However my question is: where are the men? Only two out of 15.

**Judith Kazer Lamet, NC '65**  
*Pittsfield, Massachusetts*

## MISINFORMATION

The article on Mónica Lebrón ["Green Wave Justice," *Tulanian*, fall 2020] contains misinformation. It refers to "the murder of George Floyd by White police officers." Of the four officers involved, two are White, one is Black, and one is Asian (Hmong).

**Carl Bankston, Tulane Professor of**  
*Sociology*  
*New Orleans*

## 50-YEAR CLUB

My Mom graduated from Newcomb in 1943 and attended her 50th reunion. My sister graduated in '67 and attended her 50th, and I will attend my 50th this year. We all have my Mom's tassel that she wore when she graduated.

**Alice Couvillon, NC '71, G '72**  
*Covington, Louisiana*

# In Brief

## ON CAMPUS

### TESTING, TESTING, TRACING

The rigorous schedule for testing for the novel coronavirus continues on the Tulane campuses this spring. Students are required to participate in ongoing surveillance testing throughout the semester regardless of vaccine status or the presence of antibodies from a previous COVID-19 infection. Masking and social distancing guidelines are also still in effect. The COVID-19 Dashboard on the Tulane website tracks the results of the testing, both positive and negative, for students, faculty and staff. Active cases, including students in isolation in Paterson Hall and the Jung Hotel and in quarantine at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, are also documented in real time. Throughout the pandemic, Tulane's positivity rate has remained substantially lower than the city's and state's.

[tulane.it/testing-testing-tracing](https://tulane.it/testing-testing-tracing)



## QUOTED

“This event promises to be an exciting and engaging literary gathering for our local, national and Tulane communities. **We can’t wait to welcome authors and book lovers to campus.**”

**CHERYL LANDRIEU**, co-chair and executive director of the New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane University, announcing new dates — Oct. 21–23 — for the 2021 in-person event that will adhere to city, state and national COVID-19 protocols. The festival will also host virtual events during the spring and summer heading into the fall festival.

[tulane.it/cheryl-landrieu-book-fest-2021](https://tulane.it/cheryl-landrieu-book-fest-2021)

## ACADEMICS

### JUDGE A. LEON HIGGINBOTHAM SCHOLARSHIPS

Five students will receive a total of \$100,000 for their work in promoting racial equity, justice or diversity initiatives as the first recipients of the Judge A. Leon Higginbotham Scholarship. The scholarship, a part of Tulane's A Plan for Now, was established through a personal donation of President Michael A. Fitts and his wife, Renée J. Sobel, Esq. The recipients will receive funds between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per year through the scholarship, which will be renewed each semester.

[tulane.it/higginbotham-2021](https://tulane.it/higginbotham-2021)

## ACADEMICS

### LOUISIANA PROMISE

President Michael A. Fitts announced Louisiana Promise, a new initiative that will make a Tulane undergraduate degree more accessible and affordable for Louisiana residents from low- and middle-income families and increase access to higher education for all students in New Orleans. New programs associated with the initiative include debt-free financial awards, a pre-college summer program and a new college preparatory center.

[tulane.it/louisiana-promise](https://tulane.it/louisiana-promise)



## FROM CAMPUS

### PODCAST STREAMS ON

*On Good Authority*, Tulane's official podcast, launched by the Office of University Communications and Marketing, is adding more episodes with fresh perspectives and lively discussions. Among the latest episodes is “The 15 White Coats,” on the meaning of being a Black physician and the photo that went viral. Other topics cover COVID-19's impact on New Orleans musicians, health advice, conspiracy theories and much more.

[tulane.it/on-good-authority](https://tulane.it/on-good-authority)

#### ATHLETICS

### SUPERBOWL TEAMS

Two former Green Wave football players — Ryan Griffin and Thakarius “BoPete” Keyes — were on teams that made it to the NFL Super Bowl championship in February. Former Tulane quarterback Griffin, in his sixth year in the NFL, was part of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers Super Bowl LV team, serving as third-string backup quarterback to Tom Brady. Griffin spent his first two professional seasons on the New Orleans Saints’ practice squad. In his rookie season in the NFL, cornerback Keyes is on the Kansas City Chiefs team.

[tulane.it/superbowl-teams](https://tulane.it/superbowl-teams)



#### SOCIOLOGY

### UNITED NATIONS DELEGATE

Andrea Boyles, associate professor of sociology and Africana studies at the School of Liberal Arts, has been appointed as a delegate to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, providing expertise on such issues as reproductive health and violence against women. Boyles is serving on the council in her capacity as secretary for Sociologists for Women in Society, an organization that supports cutting-edge feminist research and promotes social justice through local, national and international activism.

[tulane.it/united-nations-delegate-2021](https://tulane.it/united-nations-delegate-2021)

#### ACADEMICS

### MARSHALL SCHOLAR

Kendall Gardner, a graduate of the Class of 2020, won a George C. Marshall Scholarship, becoming the second Tulanian in two consecutive years to be honored with the award. (Praveena Fernes, featured in the fall 2020 *Tulanian*, won the award last year.) Marshall Scholarships are awarded annually to 40 recipients or fewer and provide support for young Americans to study for a graduate degree in the United Kingdom. Like Fernes, Gardner is going to London, where she will pursue master’s degrees in political theory and international social and public policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

[tulane.it/marshall-scholar-2021](https://tulane.it/marshall-scholar-2021)

# A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP

A Tulane study found that adults with the healthiest sleep patterns had a 42 percent lower risk of heart failure regardless of other risk factors compared to adults with unhealthy sleep patterns. Researchers analyzed sleep quality as well as overall sleep patterns.

Healthy sleep patterns are rising in the morning, sleeping 7-8 hours a day and having no insomnia, snoring or excessive daytime sleepiness. Heart failure affects more than 26 million people, and emerging evidence indicates sleep problems may play a role in its development.

“The healthy sleep score we created was based on the scoring of these five sleep behaviors,” said corresponding author Dr. Lu Qi, epidemiology professor and director of the Obesity Research Center at the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. “Our findings highlight the importance of improving overall sleep patterns to help prevent heart failure.”

[tulane.it/a-good-nights-sleep](https://tulane.it/a-good-nights-sleep)





# COVID-19

## RESEARCH

### SALIVA TEST

Tulane researchers developed a 15-minute saliva-based COVID-19 test that is read by a smartphone. The assay platform developed by Tony Hu, Weatherhead Presidential Chair in Biotechnology Innovation at the School of Medicine, and associates can detect very small amounts of SARS-CoV-2 virus RNA in saliva by leveraging CRISPR, the revolutionary gene editing technology.

 [tulane.it/saliva-test](https://tulane.it/saliva-test)


### IMMUNE RESPONSE

A study led by Monica Vaccari, associate professor of microbiology and immunology at Tulane National Primate Research Center, suggests that in the early weeks of post-infection of COVID-19, the stronger the initial host immune response, the worse the disease outcome. While the body mounts a pro-inflammatory “innate” immune response as a first line of defense to protect against the spread of infection and heal damaged tissue, it is a dysregulated or over-reactive immune response that can cause severe damage, Vaccari’s study explains.

 [tulane.it/immune-response](https://tulane.it/immune-response)

### REOPENING K-12 SCHOOLS

According to a new study by the National Center for Research on Education Access and Choice at Tulane, reopening K-12 schools in the U.S. did not result in an increase in hospitalizations due to COVID-19. Co-authors Douglas Harris, chair of the Department of Economics, and Engy Ziedan, assistant professor of economics, found no evidence that reopening schools in-person or in a hybrid form increased COVID-19 hospitalizations in the 75 percent of counties that had low hospitalization rates during the summer prior to reopening schools.

 [tulane.it/reopening-k-12-schools](https://tulane.it/reopening-k-12-schools)


### HARDEST HIT

Tulane will launch an outreach initiative to reach ethnic and racial minority communities in Louisiana that are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Louisiana Community Engagement Alliance, of which Tulane is a part, is working with residents, community leaders, health centers, faith-based organizations, pharmacies and the Louisiana Department of Health. The work is being funded by a \$1 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

 [tulane.it/hardest-hit](https://tulane.it/hardest-hit)

### DRUG TREATMENT BOOST

Work on a new COVID-19 drug by a Tulane researcher is getting fast-tracked. Dr. Jay Kolls, a professor of medicine and pediatrics, the John W. Deming Endowed Chair in Internal Medicine, and director of the Center for Translational Research in Infection and Inflammation, has received a \$100,000 Fast Grant for his research to create a drug that prevents the COVID-19 virus from entering healthy cells.

 [tulane.it/drug-treatment-boost](https://tulane.it/drug-treatment-boost)

### SUPERSPREADERS

Researchers at Tulane, Harvard, MIT and Massachusetts General Hospital have learned that subjects who were older with higher body mass indexes and an increasing degree of COVID-19 infection had three times the number of exhaled respiratory droplets — key spreaders of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 — as others in the study groups. The increase in exhaled aerosols occurred even among those with asymptomatic cases of COVID-19, said Chad Roy, corresponding author and director of infectious disease aerobiology at the Tulane National Primate Research Center.

 [tulane.it/superspreaders](https://tulane.it/superspreaders)

#### COMMUNITY-MINDED

### DINING SERVICES DONATES TO FOOD BANK

Tulane Dining Services donated \$8,000 in nutritious bars, cookies and snacks to Second Harvest, a food bank that fights hunger in South Louisiana. During the last hurricane season, Tulane Dining had purchased these shelf-stable foods for students so they could shelter in place during the storms. Second Harvest provides food and support to over 700 community partners and programs across 23 parishes. Its staff and volunteers distribute the equivalent of more than 32 million meals to over 210,000 people a year.

 [tulane.it/dining-services-donates](https://tulane.it/dining-services-donates)

#### MEDICINE

### VETERANS’ BRAIN HEALTH

The Tulane University Center for Brain Health is a new program created to address the unique medical needs of members of the armed forces. The center, housed in the Tulane Medical Center, will specialize in the care of military veterans of any discharge status and specialize in the treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.


 [tulane.it/veterans-brain-health](https://tulane.it/veterans-brain-health)

#### RESEARCH

### CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH DISPARITIES

Tulane will recruit and train community health workers to implement a comprehensive health and lifestyle coaching program for congregants in predominantly African American churches in New Orleans and Bogalusa, Louisiana, to help eliminate cardiovascular health disparities among African Americans. This work will be funded by a \$8.7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. The program will focus on healthy eating, exercise, weight loss, improving cholesterol numbers, addressing high blood pressure and controlling other risk factors.

 [tulane.it/cardiovascular-health-program](https://tulane.it/cardiovascular-health-program)

Visit  [tulane.it/tulanian-now](https://tulane.it/tulanian-now) for more COVID-19 research news.



“I completely understand the mistrust. But you have to consider the risk of COVID versus the risk of the vaccine. This is a devastating disease and it has disproportionately impacted Black Americans. That is what we do know.”

**THOMAS LAVEIST**, dean of the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Tulane University, in AP News. LaVeist is recruiting notable Black Americans to help promote vaccination through his campaign, “The Skin You’re In.”

[tulane.it/thomas-laveist-ap-news-2020](https://tulane.it/thomas-laveist-ap-news-2020)

#### HISTORY

##### BOOK OF THE YEAR

*Katrina: A History, 1915-2015*, written by Andy Horowitz, an assistant professor of history at the School of Liberal Arts, was named the Humanities Book of the Year by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.



[tulane.it/leh-book-of-the-year](https://tulane.it/leh-book-of-the-year)

#### IN THE NEWS

##### WALTER ISAACSON TIME COVER STORY

Leonard Lauder Professor of American History and Values Walter Isaacson wrote the cover story, “The Vaccine Revolution,” for *TIME Magazine*’s Jan. 18 issue. In his story, Isaacson writes about his experience being in a clinical trial for the COVID-19 vaccine, how the COVID-19 vaccines by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech were developed and the role of mRNA. “The plague year of 2020 will be remembered as the time when these traditional vaccines were supplanted by something fundamentally new: genetic vaccines, which deliver a gene or piece of genetic code into human cells,” he wrote.

[tulane.it/walter-isaacson-time-2021](https://tulane.it/walter-isaacson-time-2021)



#### LIBRARIES

##### MARDI GRAS NOT CANCELLED, JUST DIFFERENT

During the very different Mardi Gras 2021 season — with no parades or large gatherings — Tulane University Libraries asked community members, students, faculty, staff, alumni and parents to submit photos of how they celebrated Mardi Gras this year. In every neighborhood, New Orleanians like Claudia Baumgarten (NC '75) (pictured above in her “house float”) kept the spirit of Carnival alive. Tulane Libraries Special Collections’ Carnival collection includes Mardi Gras memorabilia dating back to 1857.

#### ECONOMICS

##### MURPHY INSTITUTE DIRECTOR

Gary “Hoov” Hoover, scholar and nationally renowned economist in the study of economic policy and its impact on wealth and income inequality, is the new director of Tulane’s Murphy Institute and full professor in economics. Hoover, who stepped into his role as director in January, said at the time of his appointment, “The opportunity to have discussions about the most challenging economic, moral and political problems of our time is an honor that I cannot wait to begin.”



[tulane.it/murphy-institute-director](https://tulane.it/murphy-institute-director)

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# Up First

93%

More than **93 percent** of students enrolled in fall 2020 arrived back on campus this spring 2021.

45,000

There were 45,000 undergraduate student **applications** for the **Class of 2025**.

4,000

Of the 45,000 applicants, **4,000** indicated **Tulane as their first choice** by participating in the **Early Decision program**. The Early Decision program allows prospective students to indicate Tulane as their first-choice school and agree to enroll if admitted and withdraw applications from other universities.

1/2

$\frac{1}{2}$  of the students in the entering class in fall 2021 will be **Early Decision applicants**.





## SONG OF INCLUSIVENESS

BY FAITH DAWSON

**W**hen COVID-19 disrupted university life in March last year, C. Leonard Raybon, associate professor of music, director of choirs and The Virginia Beer Professor in Singing in the Newcomb Department of Music, was left wondering how to wrap up a semester that otherwise focused on group choral performance.

The answer lay in a virtual choir, an artistic feat of technology that calls for multiple people to make solo, a cappella videos. Raybon later compiled the videos into a composite video with the voices mixed as a chorus, the videos tiled so that all of the participants can be seen, and graphics and lyrics added for visual interest and clarity.

That effort, “Good Night, Dear Heart,” sung by the Tulane-Newcomb Choir and dedicated to the lives lost to COVID-19, amassed more than 10,000 views on YouTube.

But it wasn’t till George Floyd died in police custody in Minneapolis in May that Raybon conceived an original song and then set to work having it performed, also by a virtual choir. The result, called “Build a Song,” brought together scores of singers, some of them Tulane students and many of them volunteers whom Raybon knew outside of Tulane. It also ended up being the culminating project for the Tulane-Newcomb Choir’s fall 2020 class.

“I don’t feel presumptuous enough to make these big, sweeping pronouncements about Black Lives Matter — but I wanted to write something to recognize privilege, speak as an ally, and encourage other White people to do the same,” said Raybon.

“In my world great griefs are swarming: Hurt, injustice, damage, pain,” the song opens. “In my heart a song is forming: Hopeful verses, bright refrain.”

“Build a Song” recognizes the healing and unifying power of music and employs lyrics that call for inclusiveness. The refrain asks listeners to “sing to draw each other in.”

Raybon used three separate programs to create the final product: audio mixing software, video editing software and a graphics illustrator. The new initiative is now part of the curriculum, for the time being, anyway. Raybon is using virtual choirs to teach practical vocal skills this spring. 🎵

## VACCINE ROLLOUT

BY FAITH DAWSON

**I**n January, Tulane University began administering the first doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to faculty, staff and students eligible under Louisiana Department of Health guidelines.

About 50 Tulanians were vaccinated on the first day at the J. Bennett Johnston Building, said Joe Esneault, chief clinical data officer for Tulane University Medical Group. In the upcoming days, hundreds more were vaccinated, with second doses following in three weeks.

The first dose went to physician Marius Commodore, MD, whose work as the medical director of Tulane Campus Health puts him in close contact with infected students.

“It has a little bit of a historic feel because so many people had a terrible year,” Commodore said of being in the first wave of vaccinations.

Physicians, nurses and other frontline healthcare workers who work at Tulane hospitals received the Pfizer vaccine starting in December. In January, the state expanded eligibility for faculty, staff and students of allied health schools who work with others in the New Orleans community. Based on those guidelines, Tulane initially vaccinated faculty, staff and students of the schools of Medicine, Public Health and Tropical Medicine, and Social Work; Campus Health staff; and frontline food service and custodial/operations staff, as well as employees over 70 years of age.

“As the largest private employer in New Orleans, allowing us to participate in the distribution of the vaccine helps to make the entire community safer,” said Tulane President Michael Fitts. 🎵

**“It has a little bit of a historic feel because so many people had a terrible year.”**

**DR. MARIUS COMMODORE,**  
Campus Health medical director

# SOMETHING TO PROVE

BY BARRI BRONSTON

**G**reen Wave baseball was enjoying one of its finest seasons in years. With a record of 15-2 and a ranking of 20th in the nation, Coach Travis Jewett's 2020 team was thrilling fans and shocking skeptics.

Then the unimaginable happened. On March 12, following a two-game sweep of Lamar, the American Athletic Conference announced the suspension of all spring competition due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A few days later, it was cancelled altogether.

Pitcher Braden Olthoff and his teammates were devastated. With such dominant play, they were envisioning moving up in the polls, advancing to the college baseball playoffs and maybe, just maybe, earning a coveted spot in the College World Series.

"It was very tough for all of us," said Olthoff, who learned of the initial suspension on his 21st birthday. "There were a lot of emotions in the locker room. A lot of players were crying. We were really starting to get the respect we deserve. We couldn't help but wonder, 'How far could we have gone?'"

Just two weeks earlier, Olthoff pitched Tulane's first no-hitter since 2005, a 2-0 victory over Middle Tennessee. For two consecutive weeks he was named the AAC's Pitcher of the Week. A junior, he was looking ahead to the Major League Baseball draft.

Instead, he returned home to San Diego, where he continued classes virtually and began training for the draft with a group of other college players. Several teams showed interest in him but they

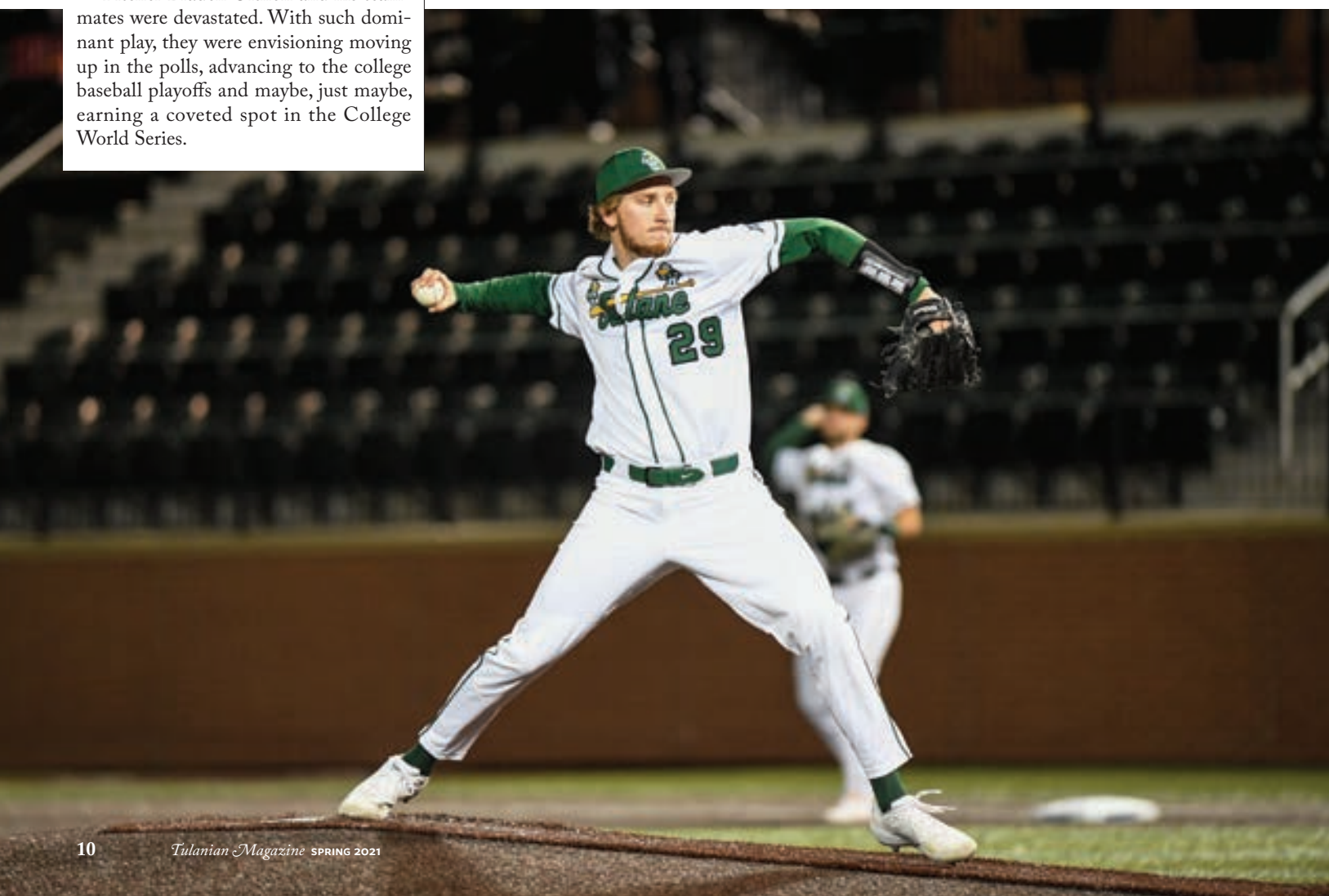
were looking at him as a possible fourth or fifth round pick.

Olthoff knew he could do better than that and decided to return to Tulane to try to improve his draft stock. He also had some unfinished business — proving that the success of last season wasn't a fluke.

Before the start of the season Feb. 19, Olthoff had amassed a number of preseason accolades — Third-Team All-America by D-1 Baseball, AAC Pitcher of the Year, Third Team All-America by Perfect Game, Second Team Preseason All-America by Collegiate Baseball and the Golden Spikes Award Preseason Watch List by USA Baseball.

"I enjoy the recognition," Olthoff said. "It makes me want to work harder. It makes me want to perform even better." 🏆

Green Wave pitcher Braden Olthoff is ready to show his stuff during this spring season.







## FEMINIST APPROACH

BY KATIE SMALL

The sudden switch to remote learning in March 2020 forced Tulane students and faculty to quickly adapt to an online classroom environment, while the limitations of technology presented unique challenges in forging meaningful classroom connections.

The abrupt change inspired Jacquelyne Thoni Howard, administrative assistant professor of technology and women's history, and Clare Daniel, administrative assistant professor of women's leadership, at the Newcomb Institute to create "Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online," an interactive guide and resource for applying feminist principles to distance learning. The guide offers a collection of articles, resources, assignment examples, and teaching aids to integrate equity-minded instruction in the online classroom.

"Today's students are experiencing more online teaching than ever before and many faculty must climb a steep learning curve to deliver courses effectively in the digital

format," Daniel said. "Feminist pedagogy provides an excellent set of guiding principles and strategies that faculty can use to humanize the online learning environment, keep students meaningfully engaged and develop an inclusive course structure."

Drawing from feminist theory, the guide recognizes the gendered roots of traditional education models and investigates how knowledge is socially constructed. According to Howard, the goal is to build dynamic and active classroom communities that help students and faculty "make meaningful connections, build mutual respect and trust, and provide opportunities for reflection and self-care."

Since its publication in September 2020, the guide has garnered more than 10,000 views, briefly "went viral" on Twitter, and has been promoted by educators internationally who find its student-centered approach especially useful in online classrooms but also of value for on-ground, in-person learning settings. 📖

**The goal is to build dynamic and active classroom communities that help students and faculty "make meaningful connections, build mutual respect and trust, and provide opportunities for reflection and self-care."**

JACQUELYNE THONI HOWARD

Through social media, alumni, parents and friends post comments on goings-on related to Tulane.

This is SO GOOD! Thank you, Tulane! **Always an advocate for public health and community!** Roll wave! 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸

Crystal Joy Allison,  
on public safety  
messaging

Maybe it's because we have 2 kids  
@Tulane and a 2020 Grad ...

but I must admit, **I do love this saying!** 🍀🍀🍀 @TUFitts @

TulaneAdmission

Henry DelAngelo @keytocollege,  
about "Mask up y'all!"

**Stay safe. You've all done a great job so far.**

Amy Pfannenstiel Bunszel

So proud and happy for these **incredible individuals!**

Lesley McCall Grossberg,  
on the announcement of Biden-Harris  
administration alumni appointees

**We are proud to have been a part of the @Tulane installation for this Carnival Season.** Special thanks to our

fellow partners

@JohnGeorges2010 with

@theadvocaten0 President

@TUFitts with @Tulane and

@barrykern with

@KernStudiosNola #Greenwave

#MorrisBart

Morris Bart @MorrisBartLLC,  
on the "Yardi Gras" installation at No. 2  
Audubon Place



## MORGUS IS MISSED

BY ANGUS LIND, A&S '66

Of all the talented, learned, likable celebrities and public figures we lost in 2020, locally one will be severely missed because of all the laughter he brought into our lives: Dr. Momus Alexander Morgus, the host of TV's "The House of Shock."

**S**idney Noel Rideau, who created and starred as the mad scientist Morgus the Magnificent for more than six decades, died at 90. The show aired on late Saturday night TV and his experiments took place during breaks from the Grade C horror movies that were shown. Few cared about the movies — it was all about Morgus and his mute sidekick, Chopsley.

So much of what he said still rings true today. He strove for recognition by "those of the university who ostracize me." Green Wave students who worshipped the show had no doubt "the university" was Tulane. He liked to remind viewers of the great books he had written, including "Brain Surgery: Self Taught," "Protons I Have Known" and "New Hope for the Dead."

He constantly criticized *The Times-Picayune* and the mayor. The Master, as his faithful talking skull, Eric, called him, was miffed that none of the city's landmarks were named after him. He suggested that the 17th Street Canal be renamed for him. "So what if it's a drainage canal? It carries the sweat of my labors."

Morgus was complicated and witty. Innuendos, potshots at society and double entendres were as big a part of his game as neutrons and gamma rays. His real name, Momus Alexander Morgus, was carefully thought out: Momus, the god of ridicule; Alexander, for Alexander the Great, the biggest egomaniac in history; and Morgus, a

merging of morgue and disgusting. "We are all a bunch of Morguses anyway, faking it, fooling everybody, with self-serving egos," he said in 1981.

His lab was above the Old City Ice House in the French Quarter, his lab coat was filthy, his teeth crooked, his eyes crazy and his hair disheveled. Chopsley was always the guinea pig for his experiments. "I promise you, Chopsley, you won't feel a thing" was a constant refrain.

When Chopsley screwed up, Morgus would say, "How can you be around me so much and know so little? Ah, fools can only get by so long, Chopsley, you idiot." Morgus constantly pondered such topics as "Is the speed of dark faster than the speed of light?"

Locals will recall the hilarious weather show Morgus did on WWL-TV in which he gave current weather conditions by wringing out a "humidity rag" that had been sitting in a bucket of water.

In almost 40 years at *The Times-Picayune*, I wrote many columns about Morgus. One day Sid and I ate lunch and he presented me with a framed degree from the University of Morgus. It said that I had completed the prescribed course of study for the degree of "Doctor of Science and Medicine."

It has a treasured place in my office near where my A&S degree from Tulane University resides. 🍷



# FAMILY PAPERS

BY AMANDA MORLAS

The Latin American Library at Tulane has acquired by donation the Chamorro Barrios Family Papers (1767–1997), one of Latin America’s most influential families and key players in the national life of Nicaragua since the 18th century.

“**T**he collection is rich in previously unexplored documents which will add new insights on the history of Nicaragua from all periods, including such topics as freedom of the press and civil liberties, political parties and elections, civil society, economic development and border issues with neighboring countries among many others,” said Hortensia Calvo, the Doris Stone Librarian and director of the Latin American Library.

The archive includes the papers of four prominent members of the Chamorro family: Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Zelaya, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro and Antonio Lacayo Oyanguren.


The papers of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Zelaya, a distinguished journalist and historian whose life spanned the first half of the 20th century, are especially rich in the documentation on earlier periods of Nicaraguan history. He acquired Nicaragua’s leading newspaper *La Prensa* in the 1930s, which has been led by successive generations of the Chamorro family and served as a key organ of dissent against the repressive regimes of the Somoza family earlier in the century, as well as the current government led by Daniel Ortega.

Also included in the collection is the Chamorro family archive containing family documents, political writings and other papers from 1767 through the 20th century.

The papers of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal contain personal correspondence and thoroughly document events surrounding his 1978 assassination. The papers of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, the first elected woman president of the Americas, cover her presidential campaign in the late 1980s and the years she served as head of state as documented in nongovernmental, private papers and correspondence and thousands of photographs. The papers of Antonio Lacayo Oyanguren, a key adviser to Mrs. Chamorro, cover her years as a presidential candidate and later as head of state, as well as his own political activity. The family’s personal files relating to the newspaper *La Prensa* hold extensive documentation of government censorship from the 1930s into the 1980s.

Cristiana Chamorro Barrios, journalist and daughter of Pedro Joaquín and Violeta Chamorro, said, “History is not written with propaganda speeches but rather with evidence gathered in the archives of its protagonists. These documents should be put at the service of new generations so they can learn from history’s lessons and mistakes.”

Barrios added, “The Chamorro Barrios family considers The Latin American Library at Tulane University the best place to preserve and make accessible to the public the documentary legacy of Joaquín and Violeta Chamorro and, in general, of those who have been important actors in the modern history of Nicaragua. We are grateful to Tulane for serving as the guardian of this historical collection.”

The Chamorro Barrios Family Papers will be available for consultation to the public upon completion of cataloging and preservation measures in late 2021. 

**“This collection substantially enhances Tulane’s historical role as a center for Central American scholarship.”**

HORTENSIA CALVO, the Doris Stone Librarian and director of the Latin American Library



Hortensia Calvo is the Doris Stone Librarian and director of the Latin American Library. The library has recently acquired the Chamorro Barrios Family Papers and will make these documents of a prominent Nicaraguan family available to scholars later this year.

# MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH ON THE FRONT LINES

BY ANTHONY ARMSTRONG

Tulane's MD/MPH joint degree program has trained physician leaders for 50 years — and counting.

# 50 years





**T**ulane University was founded in 1834 by physicians committed to fighting the public health crisis facing New Orleans at the time. That dedication to the interface between public health and medicine continues today in the prestigious MD/MPH joint degree program, committed to preparing the next generation of physician leaders to effectively address medical and public health challenges of the 21st century and beyond.

The MD/MPH program celebrates its 50th anniversary this year and has grown to be one of the most popular of its kind. The program is open to students who have been accepted to Tulane School of Medicine with a goal to pursue an MD with an MPH from the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine simultaneously.

Nearly 1,200 students have graduated from the program since its inception. The first five joint degree students graduated in 1972. Today, between 30 to 40 students graduate from the program each year, with about 140 students currently enrolled at any one time, according to Dr. M. “Tonette” Krousel-Wood (PHTM ’91), professor of medicine and epidemiology and associate dean for public health and medical education.

“This program is training physician leaders who will practice at the critical interface between medicine and public health, where they not only are able to treat individuals with acute and chronic diseases, but they also have a skill set to assess the impact of these diseases and implement solutions at the population level,” said Krousel-Wood.

When the joint degree was established in 1971, it was one of the first of its kind in higher education and was novel because it allowed students to meet all requirements for both degrees within the four-year medical school curriculum. The Tulane program serves as a model for MD/MPH combined degree programs nationwide.

Krousel-Wood, who also serves as the associate provost for the health sciences, said

*“Tulane strives to empower our future physicians with the knowledge and skills to engage their patients and their communities for improved health, addressing the social determinants of health and building health resilience for all.”*

**DR. M. “TONETTE” KROUSEL-WOOD**, leader of the MD/MPH program

the joint degree appeals to the altruistic nature of Tulane medical students who want to change the world and set themselves apart.

Tulane offers several public health concentration tracks for students to pursue — epidemiology, community health sciences, environmental health science, health policy and management, biostatistics and data science, and tropical medicine.

Tulane offers merit-based scholarships plus research scholarships that acknowledge excellence and support advancement of science. The research awards pair MD/MPH candidates with mentors, which helps build a cadre of talented physician-scientists. Krousel-Wood, a successful physician-scientist herself, is a Tulane-trained MPH and said the degree “was a game changer for me.” In addition to her role leading the MD/MPH program, she is currently principal and co-investigator on several National Institutes of Health-funded studies. Her main research focus has been in chronic disease management, primarily in hypertension and cardiovascular disease. With the current pandemic, she has expanded her work to lead the statewide Louisiana Community Engagement Alliance against COVID-19 disparities in vulnerable populations.

Joint degree graduates pursue a broad array of careers in medicine and public health. Krousel-Wood and other Tulane co-authors published an article in 2012 that followed graduates over 10 to 20 years, comparing their career pathways with other graduates who only pursued an MD. The study found that MD/MPH graduates, compared to MD-only graduates, were more likely to practice primary care, work at an academic institution or government agency, conduct public health research, receive NIH or other federal research grants, and advance medical knowledge through peer-reviewed publications.

An unexpected trend that Krousel-Wood has noted over the last 10 years is an increased number of joint degree graduates pursuing medical subspecialties, including surgery. She said public health education adds value to medical training across the spectrum. “Understanding the broader population perspective that goes beyond the individual patient is important when you’re looking at your treatment outcomes, infection rates and success rates of procedures in pursuit of providing the highest quality medical care, regardless of your specialty.”

Tulane students who pursue the joint degree often go on to make a real impact in the communities they serve. Pairing a degree focused primarily on the individual patient with one that considers the population is creating tomorrow’s physician leaders who see health through a broader lens, making it clear that integrating medical and public health education strengthens both elements for students in the program.

Dr. Jerry Zifodya (M ’13, PHTM ’13), a Tulane assistant professor in pulmonary/critical care, is on the front lines taking care of COVID-19 patients in New Orleans, investigating the impact of the disease on vulnerable groups and disseminating his findings through peer-reviewed publications. Zifodya took part in a study that found patients hospitalized with COVID-19 who had a combination of high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes were over three times more likely to die from the disease.

Another graduate of the program, Dr. Joseph Kanter (M ’10, PHTM ’10), is Louisiana’s assistant secretary for the Office of Public Health. Kanter is regularly in the headlines informing the community about COVID-19 prevention strategies and translating COVID-19 statistics into actionable public communications.

“They’re making a difference,” Krousel-Wood said of graduates like Zifodya and Kanter.

If it wasn’t clear before the COVID-19 pandemic, the current health crisis has made it apparent how vitally important it is to not only take care of individuals who are acutely and chronically ill but also simultaneously implement population-based preventive measures to ensure a healthy community, particularly among the most vulnerable. 🍷

Since 1972 (left) to today’s COVID-19 crisis (right), Tulane’s MD/MPH joint degree program has had an impact on organized medicine and the quality of health care in communities around the world. Graduates of the program treat individuals with disease and also assess the impact of — and find solutions for — disease at the population level.







# “Come Together.”

THE SECRET OF PRESIDENT  
MICHAEL FITTS’ SEVEN  
STRONG YEARS AT TULANE

BY MIKE STRECKER

**M**ike Fitts likes to bring people together. Much of the success Tulane has experienced, the milestones it has reached, the records it has shattered, as well as the challenges it has overcome since Fitts' arrival on campus in 2014, can be traced back to this tendency.

"We're all in this together" — the mantra of the pandemic era — could also be the theme of Fitts' presidency. Throughout his leadership at Tulane, Fitts has brought people, disciplines and ideas together to confront natural disasters, financial crises, racial injustices and more. His overarching goal is to move the university ever forward as a force for good.

A prime example is Tulane's response to COVID-19. The university's interdisciplinary, collaborative and coordinated approach to problem solving is perfectly suited to confront such global threats.

As the race for vaccines, better tests, care and treatments began, Fitts turned to university scientists, encouraging partnerships among researchers at the School of Medicine, the National Primate Research Center, the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, as well as the School of Science and Engineering. The School of Social Work explored new approaches to the emotional toll of the pandemic while experts in the Schools of Architecture, Business, Law, Liberal Arts, Professional Advancement and Newcomb-Tulane College addressed its impact on schools, businesses and society. Meanwhile, administrators throughout campus enacted a bold return-to-campus plan that included one of the nation's most extensive surveillance testing, contact tracing and isolation/quarantine programs. As a result, Tulane was able to hold in-person classes throughout the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021, while maintaining a positivity rate substantially lower than the city and state.

"Pick a problem — environmental degradation, racial inequities, failing public schools or public health threats like COVID-19 — the sources of these challenges are multifaceted and often interrelated. So, it follows that the best way to help solve these problems is by having experts from diverse fields working together on their solutions," Fitts said.

Such collaboration, he added, is also the best way to educate today's students, whom he calls "the leaders, creators and global citizens who will shape the future."

"When I was in college, students burrowed down in one major or specialty, such as engineering or English or business, and usually pursued 'single-focus' careers throughout their lives," Fitts said. "Today, a graduate may change careers a dozen times and is more likely to create a startup than work for a single company or institution for 30 or 40 years. So, we need to prepare graduates to be more nimble, adaptive and open to other approaches in everything from solving problems to creating art, music and literature."

Delivering the best university education "requires a laser focus on creating a truly interdisciplinary learning experience that educates the whole student — intellectually, emotionally and socially," he said.

But Fitts' leadership is not composed entirely of interdisciplinarity and strategic vision. His warm and affable personality is also central to his success.

"I think something President Fitts has done really well is demystify the role of the president on college campuses," said Lela Scully, a junior in the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. "He is approachable and accessible to the student body, a friendly face on campus, at games, or even walking down McAlister. He's connected himself to students when he shows up to smile and shake hands. Because of that, he's made his role of president feel less like a figurehead, which I think is an excellent evolution."

## Cross-Disciplinary Opportunities

Fitts loves the one-on-one interactions Scully describes.

"I deeply regret how the pandemic and requirements of social distancing over the last year have made it very difficult to be with and connect with students in the way I was able to before, and plan to in the coming years when the pandemic is behind us," Fitts said.

Such interpersonal connections are possible because Tulane is "right-sized" in terms of population, according to Fitts, and because of its unique academic structure.

"While students at most universities enroll in the school that contains their major — whether it's liberal arts, business, architecture, et cetera — we offer a single undergraduate portal, Newcomb-Tulane College, through which students can select a major from the five undergraduate schools after they have been here for a year or two."

Given such expansive choices, more and more students are opting for double and even triple majors in far-flung subjects ranging from neuroscience and dance to music and math.

"At Tulane our neuroscience majors can dance, too. Then again, it's New Orleans, everyone seems to dance," Fitts likes to quip.

But he is serious about the value of such an education to students. This is one reason why, in 2019, he was glad to welcome Lee Skinner, a leading scholar of Latin American literature and proponent of multidiscipline education, as dean of Newcomb-Tulane College.



“If you’re a scientist you still need to understand what the humanists are thinking and how they experience their lives. You’re a history major — well, it’s important to have a sense of what scientific reasoning is. We get scientific information all the time. How do you make sense out of it?” said Skinner, who served as associate dean at Claremont McKenna College in California before coming to Tulane.

Skinner is one of many top national university administrators who have arrived at Tulane in recent years, bringing new leadership to more than half of Tulane’s nine schools. There have also been new faculty hires, cabinet appointments and the establishment of major research centers such as the Brain Institute and the ByWater Institute. In keeping with Fitts’ philosophy, the cohort of new leaders has forged strong personal and professional bonds across their disparate disciplines.

“We learn from each other and commiserate with each other. I hope I’m speaking for my colleagues. I think it’s making all of us a little bit better that we have each other,” said Thomas LaVeist, who spent 25 years at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health before becoming dean of Tulane’s School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in 2018.

LaVeist also holds the position of Weatherhead Presidential Chair in Health Equity. The newly endowed presidential chairs were created specifically to support Fitts’ top priority of attracting internationally recognized scholars whose work bridges wide-ranging fields.

In addition to LaVeist and Skinner, new deans recently brought on by Fitts and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Robin Forman include School of Science and Engineering Dean Kimberly Foster, from the University of California–Santa Barbara; School of Architecture Dean Iñaki Alday, from the University of Virginia; and School of Liberal Arts Dean Brian Edwards, from Northwestern University.

Fitts also appointed Jay Rappaport, a leading HIV/AIDS researcher from Temple University, to head Tulane’s National Primate Research Center and helped recruit Dr. Giovanni Piedimonte from the Cleveland Clinic as Tulane’s new vice president for research. Both are multidiscipline-minded to the core.

“Pick a problem — environmental degradation, health inequities, failing public schools or public health threats like COVID-19 — the sources of these challenges are multifaceted and often interrelated. So, it follows that the best way to address these problems is by having experts from multiple fields working together on their solutions.”

MIKE FITTS, president



**Leadership**

Clockwise, from top: Robin Forman, senior vice president for academic affairs and provost; Dr. Giovanni Piedimonte, vice president for research; Anneliese Singh, associate provost for faculty development and diversity and chief diversity officer; Lee Skinner, dean of Newcomb-Tulane College; Brian Edwards, dean of the School of Liberal Arts; Thomas LaVeist, dean of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine; Iñaki Alday, dean of the School of Architecture; Kimberly Foster, dean of the School of Science and Engineering; and Jay Rappaport, director and chief academic officer of Tulane National Primate Research Center.

Piedimonte lauds Fitts' goal of "promoting scientific productivity across Tulane's many disciplines and areas of expertise." Cross-disciplinary partnerships are also a goal of Rappaport's.

"Our plan is to increase collaborations with other Tulane investigators including the Center for Aging, the Brain Institute, the Department of Microbiology and Immunology within the School of Medicine, as well as the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine," said Rappaport.

The interdisciplinary model, coupled with the opportunity to engage in meaningful research as undergraduates, has attracted incoming classes that have set records each year of Fitts' tenure in terms of their academic quality, diversity and community engagement.

## An Anchor Institution

As a firm believer that the country's top students, researchers, faculty and staff need the best campus facilities to truly flourish, Fitts is working hard to enhance and expand the university's physical presence.

Creating a built environment to support excellence is one of the pillars of *Only the Audacious: the campaign for a bolder Tulane*. The fundraising campaign has set records both in the amount raised, and in the number of alumni, parents, friends and first-time donors Fitts has inspired to contribute toward its \$1.3 billion goal.

"Supporting lifesaving research, groundbreaking scholarship in the humanities, innovative education and community service are things everyone wants to contribute to," Fitts said. "This isn't just about raising a lot of money for money's sake. It's about supporting and advancing an institution that transforms our students, the city and society."

This page: President Fitts at the dedication of Mussafer Hall, home to academic advising, career programming and success services at Newcomb-Tulane College, on Sept. 28, 2018. Facing page: An architectural rendering of the proposed downtown Charity Hospital development shows a view of the courtyard.

 Visit [tulanian.tulane.edu](https://tulanian.tulane.edu)  
for additional content

The campaign will also help support a major construction effort that will be directed by Patrick Norton, senior vice president and chief operating officer. Fitts points to Norton, Forman and others as members of a "long list of great and ambitious people who have made Tulane's success possible."

Tulane's success is gaining national attention, too. A recent *Forbes* article touted Tulane's financial and academic strength and "approaching Ivy League" acceptance rate, declaring, "Among top-tier colleges, few have improved in financial strength as much as New Orleans' Tulane University."

Tulane's ongoing and upcoming building efforts include additional student residential learning communities in the space formerly occupied by Bruff Commons and a new home for the School of Science and Engineering on the uptown campus — Steven and Jann Paul Hall.

Fitts also oversaw construction of The Commons, which opened in 2019 to provide a dining, meeting, studying and gathering place for students, and a new home for the Newcomb Institute.

Fitts sees Tulane's downtown campus, which already includes 17 buildings, as a prime opportunity to exponentially expand the university's physical size and research mission, while also helping to jump-start the revitalization of downtown New Orleans.

Tulane plans to be an anchor tenant in the redevelopment of the iconic Charity Hospital, filling up a minimum of 300,000 square feet of it with laboratories, clinical space, classrooms, student housing and more. The rebirth of the Charity Hospital building and the conversion of the former Warwick Hotel to housing for graduate students, researchers, physicians, faculty and other affiliates, will place a sizable portion of Tulane's research enterprise in close proximity to the city's burgeoning biomedical research corridor. This will increase the likelihood that Tulane discoveries will find their way to market as Tulane biomedical research creates jobs and stimulates the COVID-19-battered local economy. Locating more Tulane students, scientists, faculty and over half of its staff downtown also promises to grow a neighborhood of retail shops, entertainment venues and ancillary businesses.







## Economic Impact

“Cities everywhere have been renewed and transformed by local universities, especially those located near their downtowns,” Fitts said. “This is Tulane and New Orleans’ shared future.”

Local business leaders couldn’t agree more.

“The fate and future of Tulane and New Orleans are inextricably linked. This is why I am so excited about President Fitts’ vision and direction for Tulane: a world-class, interdisciplinary teaching and research university, with renewed commitment to the city of New Orleans, including massive investment in downtown,” said Michael Hecht, president and CEO of Greater New Orleans Inc., the economic development organization for the New Orleans region.

“As Tulane rises to new levels of quality, prestige and external impact, so will the entire New Orleans community,” Hecht

“The fate and future of Tulane and New Orleans are inextricably linked. This is why I am so excited about President Fitts’ vision and direction for Tulane: a world-class, interdisciplinary teaching and research university, with renewed commitment to the city of New Orleans, including massive investment in downtown.”

**MICHAEL HECHT**, president and CEO  
of Greater New Orleans Inc.

said. He emphasized that New Orleans cannot realize its potential absent Tulane's ingenuity and economic power, especially as the city recovers from the economic disruption brought on by COVID-19.

"From an economic development perspective, the success of Tulane is a non-negotiable: So much of our human and intellectual capital comes from the university. With Mike Fitts at the helm of Tulane, the economic prospects of the entire New Orleans region are greatly enhanced," Hecht said.

Construction projects are among the numerous Tulane operations, capital investments and other activities that contribute \$3.14 billion to the Louisiana economy each year and are responsible for supporting nearly 20,000 jobs statewide, according to a recent economic report. (President.tulane.edu/impact). Tulane serves a dual role, the report notes, as both a vital local institution and a global force. For instance, in addition to attracting more than \$193 million in infectious disease research and other innovations that impact the world, the university has an outsized role in the social fabric of New Orleans, including its investment in pre-kindergarten to 12th-grade education, the health care it provides with more than 500 physicians, and the more than 200,000 hours of community service performed by its students, faculty and staff.

As Fitts is fond of saying, "Tulane would not be the university it is without New Orleans and New Orleans is a more vibrant city with greater promise and potential than ever before because of Tulane."

## Challenges Faced


As much success as Tulane has enjoyed in recent years, it has also faced many of the same challenges encountered by universities throughout the country.

In the first few months of Fitts' presidency, Tulane suffered the loss of three students by suicide. In response, Fitts hosted a day of mental health awareness that included a mental health fair, candle-light memorial, webinars and discussions through which, Fitts said, he "gained much insight and perspective ... and witnessed, once again, the depth of compassion and true character of the Tulane community."

The discussions spawned by the student deaths also led Fitts to order an overhaul of the university's mental health services, vastly expanding its staff, resources and hours of operation.

Not long after this crisis, a series of racist incidents on campus and around the country prompted Fitts to establish the Presidential Commission on Race and Tulane Values. Since renamed the President's Commission on Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, its goal is to build a university in which the values of "respect, inclusion, equality, compassion and fundamental human dignity" are embraced by all members of the community.

The death of George Floyd at the hands of police — and the national reckoning it sparked — added urgency to this effort. In the fall of 2020, Fitts enacted A Plan for Now, the foundation of which recognizes diversity as central to advancing intellectual rigor, learning and community. In addition to building Tulane's diversity, the plan includes a large number of initiatives across the university, including a Leadership Institute to create future leaders among a diverse community of faculty and staff, while enhancing the understanding of current leaders on matters of race, equity and inclusion. The university also hired Anneliese Singh, a native New Orleanian, as its new chief diversity officer.



“Among top-tier colleges, few have improved in financial strength as much as New Orleans’ Tulane University.”

**FORBES**, on Tulane's financial and academic strength and "approaching Ivy League" acceptance rate

"I am very much looking forward to collaborating with faculty, as well as the entire Tulane community and its many local, regional, national and international partners to develop innovative and courageous diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives that support Tulane's vision of building a more just and equitable world," Singh said.

Late last year, Fitts announced Louisiana Promise, a program that will make Tulane more accessible and affordable for Louisiana residents from low- and middle-income families and increase access to higher education for all students in New Orleans and throughout Louisiana.

In February, the administration engaged an outside consultant "to deepen our understanding of the lived experiences of our residents, faculty, staff, and other students relative to racism and sexism." The firm will develop targeted recommendations to help build a more equitable, diverse and inclusive (EDI) academic community. Tulane is also expanding support, coordination and the sharing of best practices regarding EDI across all schools and will conduct a comprehensive, universitywide EDI climate survey in fall 2021.





Above: Incoming students cheer at an Orientation pep rally in Yulman Stadium on Aug. 23, 2018. Below: President Fitts listens intently to a student at the 2019 Center for Academic Equity IDEA Symposium.

“We have to get this right,” Fitts said. “Equity, diversity and inclusion are the hallmarks of a great university. They have got to remain our top priorities.”

Another societal problem Tulane faced was sexual assault. A 2018 climate survey revealed that 41 percent of undergraduate women respondents reported experiencing sexual assault since enrolling at Tulane.

Fitts called the results “heartbreaking and disturbing.” They were perplexing, as well, given that the university had long prided itself on following the country’s best practices in sexual assault prevention.

Since the Climate Survey’s release Tulane required more sexual violence programming for all incoming students, including topics of sexual education and communication. It also produced guides for parents and faculty on sexual assault prevention and hired professional staff to work closely with victims.

Fitts is quick to acknowledge that much more work needs to be done in all of these challenging areas, especially with regard to racial equity.

“We have made some real progress, but have so much further to go to build the Tulane we all want and deserve,” he said.

## Momentum

Fitts often uses the words “momentum” and “teamwork” in describing the university’s successes, pointing to a critical mass of achievement and growth — from a boost in national academic rankings and student achievement to an expanding research mission and a student body that reports high levels of happiness.

“When a company or a university is on a run of success you can sense the passion, the excitement, on the part of everyone involved,” said Carol Lavin Bernick, CEO of Polished Nickel Capital Management and chair of the Board of Tulane. “President Fitts has built on and burnished that environment at Tulane. His leadership skills, his great team, his articulation of the mission and direction of Tulane have energized the students, the faculty, the staff, the enrollments, the endowments, the new programs and all the elements that drive success and create enthusiasm for both today’s and tomorrow’s Tulane.”



# AI WORLD

As artificial intelligence grows by leaps and bounds, Tulane computer scientists are there, in the thick of Big Data and its influence on decisions in all aspects of life.

**BY MARY ANN TRAVIS**





**T**hese days, it's all about the data," said Carola Wenk, professor of computer science at Tulane. "Lately, there's been a data explosion." In every field you can name, data has proliferated in recent decades. Computer scientists — and everyone working with data — can gather, manipulate and store it in larger quantities than ever before.

Computer scientists at Tulane are exploring and discovering new roles for data in everything from GPS technology, to cancer diagnoses to fake news — even to taking the dog for a walk. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, data about coronavirus testing, cases and deaths has been essential to public health efforts to combat and understand the disease.

"Everybody has data and wants to do something with it," said Wenk. "And we now have processing power to deal with a lot of data."

Computer scientists like Wenk and other colleagues at Tulane such as Jihun Hamm, associate professor of computer science, and Nicholas Mattei, assistant professor of computer science, are diving deep into artificial intelligence.

They are exploring deep neural networks and deep learning to address all kinds of problems.

## Computational Problem Solving

By training, Wenk is a mathematician. She earned a PhD from the Free University of Berlin in 2002 and has received numerous research grants and awards from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). She works in computational geometry in the area of algorithms.

Algorithms are step-by-step instructions. It's how "you tell a computer what to do," Wenk said. And you do that by feeding it data. Like a recipe for a tasty dish depends on fresh ingredients, algorithms rely on new data.

Wenk is interested in the potential of computer science beyond machine learning, per se. What drives her is interdisciplinary work and collaboration.

"It's all about computational problem solving," she said. "You want to solve the problem, and there are different tools out there. The computer scientist needs to work with domain experts on developing solutions together."

Wenk has collaborated with domain experts such as physicians, geoscientists, ecological biologists and social scientists.

Much of her work is in imaging data, and she's contributed to tracking and understanding the movement of cars and seagulls.

Her breakthrough research includes the refined definition and measurement of the Fréchet Distance, which is used to compare shapes of curves. An everyday explanation of the Fréchet Distance includes man's best friend. If a man is traveling on a curved path while his dog is on a leash traveling a separate curve, the Fréchet distance between the two curves is the length of the shortest leash sufficient for both man and dog to travel their separate paths.

Utilizing data from satellites, the Fréchet Distance is useful for analyzing Global Positioning System trajectories of cars on roads.

Wenk is also collaborating on a project with J. Quincy Brown, associate professor of biomedical engineering, and Brian Summa, assistant professor of computer science, that is far removed from cars or birds or walking dogs. Brown, the Paul H. and Donna D. Flower Early Career Professor in Engineering, is developing new diagnostic procedures for prostate cancer. With her data imaging expertise, Wenk and Summa are helping to evaluate the visual patterns of the biopsies of men with prostate cancer, detecting whether they have fast- or slow-growing cancer.

"You want to decide between, is this person healthy, or is this person sick?" Does the patient need invasive surgery, or will less intrusive treatment be effective?

Wenk has also branched out to working with social scientists on a DARPA "ground truth" project to understand movement patterns of humans and social networks. "With more computational power, it's feasible to have the computer learn a bit more similar to what a human does," said Wenk.

## The Renaissance of AI

Jihun Hamm, associate professor of computer science, agrees that, with increased power, computers are learning more and more in the same ways that humans learn.

"A lot of the human brain is devoted to the vision process," said Hamm. "And now computers are able to recognize, or are getting very close, to human-level visual recognition."

Hamm received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in 2008. His specialty is machine learning, a subfield of computer science. "I'm teaching machines



to learn,” he said. “And I can teach people to learn how to make machines learn.”

Artificial intelligence (AI) had stalled since the 1980s and entered a period of dormancy. “It was the winter of AI,” said Hamm. “People had high expectations of what AI can do, and the reality couldn’t catch up with the expectations.”

But in the 21st century, especially during the past five or six years, artificial intelligence is experiencing a renaissance, said Hamm.

“Machine learning became a new savior for AI,” Hamm said. “With progress in machine learning, combined with progress in hardware development, big strides in AI were possible.”

Among the latest developments and pitfalls are algorithms that can be used to generate data that looks real to the human eye but is actually synthesized. “It can be difficult for a human to distinguish synthesized images from real images,” said Hamm. As a result of this new technology, fake videos and audio may be produced.

“It’s hard to know where we will go from here,” said Hamm. “But the level of realism in the data generated by machines, such as images, photos and all this, is quite astonishing.”

A core principle of machine learning is learning theory, which involves mathematical proofs. “I believe computer science is a branch of applied mathematics,” said Hamm. “And I don’t feel comfortable claiming something without proof.”

Exploring concepts of adversarial learning in which two or more agents compete with each other to generate realistic data to find an optimal state of an algorithm “is

my way of trying to make this machine learning problem concrete and rigorous,” said Hamm, who is bringing on board postdoctoral and doctoral researchers to his lab.

“I want to have something that is clearly explainable, why something works and why something doesn’t work.”

## Ethical Issues in AI

Access to data is “arguably what computer science people have wanted since the beginning,” said Nicholas Mattei, assistant professor of computer science, “because data is the thing that drives how we build and test these systems.”

Mattei teaches data science and artificial intelligence at Tulane. He earned his PhD in computer science from the University of Kentucky in 2012.

Systems are built, using data, to predict human behavior, whether it’s what a person will want to watch next on Netflix or purchase from Amazon, or how they will act in more complicated ways.

“The way we collect all this data now is so easy and almost transparent to most people,” said Mattei. “Technology intermediates many, many things we do.”

For example, Google Maps can conveniently alert drivers to congestion on the road ahead. That’s possible because other drivers have given up data about slowdowns they are encountering when they are connected to Google Maps, too.

“We all sort of gain,” said Mattei. But “sometimes, I think a big problem is that people are giving up their data in ways they’re not sure of. We have trouble understanding the scope of data collected and how that data can be used.”

Mattei is writing a book, *Understanding Technology Ethics Through Science Fiction*, under contract with MIT Press, with four co-authors. It’s about technology’s impact on our lives.

“A lot of the impacts that people talk about as being AI or computer science are a confluence of many different advances in multiple fields of technology,” he said.

The goal of the book, which is geared toward computer science students and others interested in broader technology issues, is to get readers “to think about these

“Computers are able to recognize, or are getting very close, to human-level visual recognition.”

*Jihun Hamm, associate professor of computer science*

things — not in prescriptive terms but to give them the tools and language of ethical theory and descriptive ethics.”

Topics addressed in the book are technology’s “ramifications for privacy and how we look at interpersonal relationships and knowledge.”

The notion of legal privacy as “information about you” to be protected is relatively new in human history, said Mattei.

It came about in the early 1900s after new technologies, such as the phonograph, microphone and telephone, were invented and came into widespread use. These advances allowed people to be recorded and for those recordings to be moved and reproduced without their knowledge.

Mattei’s book will offer essays by computer scientists and religious studies and ethics scholars. To spice up the book, science fiction stories also will be included.





One story is “Here-And-Now” by Ken Liu. It explores privacy issues as a young man navigating the gig economy inadvertently discovers information about his parents’ marriage when he connects with a work-for-hire app to earn extra money. Stories like this add to the conversation about the influence of technology on society.

“There’s lots of room for creativity in computer science,” said Mattei. And computer science is a place with great opportunity for new graduates.

## Not a Typical Program

At Tulane, computer science is a coordinate major, which means students study in other disciplines such as business, public health and liberal arts as well as science and engineering.

In a typical engineering program — actually “in all of the technology space, writ large in engineering” said Mattei — “you learn how to do things. But maybe they don’t teach you how to think about what you can do.”

At Tulane, sociological, philosophical and economic issues are not separate from computer science because it is a cross-disciplinary program.

Hamm is teaching machine learning, a “hot” course with students eager to enroll. He said the undergraduate and graduate students he has taught at Tulane are “frank and open-minded on discussing their problems and discussing their progress on the projects. I find interacting with the students very engaging.”

Wenk has taught and advised students with primary majors in business, biomedical engineering, engineering physics, mathematics, linguistics and even a music major who worked on a computational musical art installation as his computer science capstone project.

Wenk has been at Tulane since 2012, when the computer science department was reestablished. “We built this department around this collaborative, interdisciplinary theme,” she said.

Another unusual aspect of the department is “we have more female undergraduates in our program. We have 30 to 40% women, which is unheard of for computer science.

“We have a different atmosphere in class,” she said. “The students have a different mindset.”

With all the precautions in place to slow the spread of the coronavirus, “We have embraced technology to collaborate and teach online, such as using collaborative coding platforms or collaborative whiteboards to solve problems together in groups or whole classes,” Wenk said.

Wenk even presented lectures for her algorithms graduate course outdoors on campus under a tree and in Audubon Park.

“Computer science students and faculty have done a remarkable job adapting to the new socially distanced teaching and research environments.”

## Additional Data Science Programs at Tulane

### Master of Business Analytics at the A. B. Freeman School of Business

The mission of the Master of Business Analytics program is to prepare its graduates for careers that allow them to manage and make data-driven decisions. The program is a STEM-designated, 10-month full-time graduate program designed for recent graduates and those with 1-2 years of work experience.

### Master’s Degree in Computational Science at the School of Science and Engineering

The Center for Computational Science offers a master’s degree in computational science in combination with a student’s B.S. degree in science or engineering. This is known as a “4+1” program. Tulane undergraduate students can earn the master’s degree along with their bachelor’s degree in just one extra year at reduced tuition. All engineering and science majors can apply.

### Master of Science in Biomedical Informatics at the School of Medicine


The goal of this two-year (four-semester) thesis program is to train new Biomedical Informatics (BMI) specialists. These uniquely trained master’s graduates will be critical to existing efforts to improve health outcomes. The program prepares graduates to participate in research programs in academia, health care, public health and industry, as well as to apply the knowledge in clinical, government and industry settings.

# Where Y'at, Dawlin'

Linguists Katie Carmichael and Nathalie Dajko are studying the New Orleans dialect. Deterred for a while by the pandemic, they plan to continue their quest to document, analyze — and share — what they've discovered about post-Katrina language variations.

**BY ALICIA SERRANO**





**“N**ew Orleanians are storytellers above all,” said Katie Carmichael (SLA ’07, ’08). “Everyone has a fascinating ... and a particular story to share, so it’s a privilege to be the person who gets to be privy to all of these different experiences in the city.”

Carmichael and Nathalie Dajko (SLA ’05, ’09) are leading a National Science Foundation-funded project to explore the evolution of New Orleanians’ speech patterns.

Carmichael earned a BA with a double major in French and linguistics and a MA in linguistics from Tulane. Dajko received a MA and PhD in anthropology. Carmichael also went to The Ohio State University, where she obtained a PhD in linguistics. They met as students while conducting research projects on Louisiana French.

Carmichael is now an associate professor of English at Virginia Tech, and Dajko is associate professor of anthropology at Tulane. They have been studying post-Hurricane Katrina sociolinguistics in New Orleans together for several years.

Since this New Orleans language project began in fall 2018, Carmichael and Dajko have interviewed about 100 people, with the goal of interviewing more than 200. The gathering of research data is suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, several preliminary findings have emerged from the data that has already been analyzed.

### **“How’s Ya Momma N’ Dem?”**

Pre-pandemic, Dajko and Carmichael recruited participants any way they could: at festivals, at the store, at cultural centers and other venues where they could easily interact with community members.

Early analyses show that some of the traditional features of the New Orleans dialect are on the decline in everyday speech.

“Some of those iconic features that, for example, you can see on T-shirts in the city: ‘makin’ groceries,’ ‘How’s ya momma n’ dem?’ and other pronunciations as well, are starting to be used less and less,” Carmichael said.

The term often used to describe these features is “Yat,” a label for the White-working class accent that sounds to many like a Brooklyn, New York, accent.

An example of this can be heard in the word “darling.” Someone with a Yat accent pronounces the word “daw-lin,” essentially dropping the “r.” Linguists call this pronunciation non-rhoticity, or r-lessness.

Dajko said that from hourlong interviews with participants, she can generate hundreds, if not thousands, of contexts in which the “r” might be dropped. To hear these features, Carmichael and Dajko audio record interviews. Participants are asked about their lives and about living in the city. The researchers will also ask participants to read a passage with a targeted list of words and to take a survey about phrases and words they may use.

Some examples of targeted words and phrases are “Neutral ground” and “banquette” and “Does the store open *for* 8 o’clock or *at* 8 o’clock?”

Carmichael said that many younger participants don’t seem to speak with traditional “Yat” features.

It’s a normal process for some speech features to be used less over time, since language is always changing. Interestingly, in New Orleans the change may be happening at an accelerated rate.

One of the main possible factors for this accelerated rate is, of course, Hurricane Katrina, although it is not a sole catalyst, the researchers said.

“In our data, we see that the change was already in progress before Katrina, so people already were starting to shift away from these linguistic features,” Carmichael said.

Another possibility is that individuals became more aware of the language features while they were displaced because of the storm.

“We have a lot of stories of people saying things like, ‘I never knew I had an accent until the storm.’ ‘I never realized I talked a specific way until I came in contact with somebody who pointed it out to me,’” Carmichael said.

Carmichael said that some New Orleanians may have become more aware of how they speak because of others’ judgments, sometimes negative, when their accent was heard.



Katie Carmichael, left, and Nathalie Dajko, right, find it a privilege to hear the stories of New Orleanians.

“Well, I don’t want someone to think that way about me. I don’t want someone to listen harder to *how* I say something than *what* I’m saying.’ That’s what one of our participants said.”

## Creole No More

In one task used to assess local perceptions about the distribution of certain accents across the city, participants are asked to circle areas on a map of the city where they think people have accents. There is much agreement that people in Chalmette have an accent, said Carmichael, as well as consensus that people Uptown talk “fancy.”

Often perceptions correspond to social factors.

“People will say things about how different neighborhoods speak differently from each other, and when you look up the demographics of those neighborhoods, you see they’re stratified according to social class or according to ethnicity,” Carmichael said.

To take a (recently famous) example, the speech of Metairie, Louisiana, native Amy Coney Barrett was challenged by listeners during her confirmation hearing for appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court. One New York podcaster asked on social media, “Why does Amy Coney Barrett have a faint, low-key Long Island accent?”

Since many traditional New Orleans English features are shared with the English spoken in New York City, it is perhaps unsurprising that those unfamiliar with the way New Orleanians speak would accuse Coney Barrett of affecting a “Long Island accent.” But as Carmichael and Dajko pointed out, social factors may intersect to play a role here.

Carmichael did not detect any specific features in Coney Barrett’s way of speaking when she listened to recordings of the confirmation hearing. “She’s White. She’s suburban. We know from our previous work that these factors can predict retention of traditional ‘New Yorky’ sounding features within Greater New Orleans. So it’s likely that this is what listeners are keying into, even if I am not hearing it.”

Dajko added, “She’s well-educated, so in most contexts in which we’re going to find her recorded, we’re going to hear something very standard.” That is, in more formal contexts speakers may minimize their use of nonstandard linguistic features, meaning that Coney Barrett’s use of local features could be quite subtle. What listeners might be tuning in to, Dajko noted, would require extensive analysis, but it’s just this kind of thing that the researchers are hoping to learn from the project.

Part of the researchers’ data collection process is that participants are asked to identify themselves ethnically. Participants in the study have



primarily identified themselves with either White or Black ethnic groups, and results are showing that some aspects of their speech vary among the two groups.

“If you think about the communities that people interact with, and the individuals who are talking to each other, this may not be that surprising that you’re going to find a difference,” Carmichael said.

The Creole ethnic group that is specific to South Louisiana is of special interest to the researchers.

While the term has many definitions, Creole is often defined as someone who is multiracial, especially people who have French, Indigenous, African, Spanish, Portuguese or other diverse backgrounds in their family history. The descendants of free people of color in New Orleans have also been defined historically as Creole.

“People very often tell us, ‘I was Creole growing up, but not anymore,’” Dajko said, clarifying that they now identify as Black.

Dajko said that the reason some respondents are moving away from the term Creole may be because of the unwanted association of divisions within the Black community.

Along with shifts in ethnic identification, the researchers’ data indicate that Creoles are shifting linguistically, too. According to Carmichael and Dajko, younger individuals who identify as Creole speak similarly to individuals who identify primarily as Black.

These distinctions could in part be a way to hold on to one’s identity, particularly in a city where there have been seismic changes, for example, in both the school system — shifting to an all-charter system — and the neighborhoods post-Katrina.

“You see masses of people being replaced, leaving, not coming back, but also new people coming in,” Dajko said. “There’s reorganization of the social structure. So how do you express that you are from here? How do you express that this is who you are?”

## Community Trust

The researchers face the challenge of research-fatigue in the city post-Katrina.

“There’s been so many studies in New Orleans that people do not want to talk to a researcher,” Carmichael said. “We’ve had to build trust in these communities. We’re not just swooping in and stealing your

# “There’s a reorganization of the social structure. So how do you express that you are from here? How do you express that this is who you are?”

NATHALIE DAJKO, associate professor of anthropology

stories and making money off of it; we genuinely care about the people in these communities.”

Carmichael and Dajko plan to present data in a way that can be accessed, not just by other researchers, but anyone who is interested in New Orleans.

“We want to create more knowledge about New Orleans and New Orleans English,” Carmichael said.

They are creating an online database, including audio recordings and video clips of participants, as well as a list of lexical terms used in New Orleans and their meanings.

Beyond that, the researchers are still exploring possible methods to disseminate their data. The idea of giving presentations at local schools has come up.

“(We can) teach kids about linguistic diversity and ... that not speaking standard is not bad, that you don’t have to give up the way you speak to be a valuable person,” Dajko said. “The way you speak is a part of yourself, and you shouldn’t have to give that up to succeed in life.”

More interviews and data analysis are ahead for the two researchers once the COVID-19 pandemic ends. They did consider conducting interviews via Zoom (video conferencing technology) with recording equipment delivered to the participants.

“The problem with that is we have no idea how that might affect the way people talk. We don’t know if people talk differently over Zoom than in person,” Carmichael said.

As the COVID-19 vaccine rolls out to the community, Carmichael and Dajko are hopeful they will be able to return to in-person interviews soon.

For now, the researchers will continue processing the data with the help of undergraduate students at the Tulane Sociolinguistics Lab and the Virginia Tech Speech Lab, creating in the process a new generation of scholars of Louisiana’s rich linguistic diversity. 📖

📺 Visit [tulanian.tulane.edu](http://tulanian.tulane.edu) for additional content





New Yorker, New York Times contributor and creative writing professor Thomas Beller embarks on a road trip to pursue the meaning of class and the truth about the iconic 1960s Southern novels *The Moviegoer* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

BY THOMAS BELLER

My interest in Walker Percy's novel, *The Moviegoer*, began, indirectly, on a road trip, which is appropriate, as *The Moviegoer* is, in a way, a road trip novel. I had travelled to the town of Monroeville, Alabama, in pursuit of some elusive truth about Harper Lee, the famous one-hit wonder, until, late in life, she published a second novel that upended all the assumptions, already fragile, about *To Kill a Mockingbird*, under circumstances that seemed suspicious. *Esquire* magazine sent me to see what there was to see and write about it. But beneath this broad mandate there was an unstated directive to get to the bottom of the convoluted story about how *Go Set a Watchman* was published, and in order to do that I had to talk to the person at the story's center — Tonja Carter. And so I went to Monroeville to see the town's amateur production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, in the spring of 2016. Afterwards Ms. Carter, who declined to be interviewed, saw me peering through the window of the restaurant on the town square where the cast party was taking place, and waved me in.

I sat in the back at the bar, looking around, and at one point asked the person next to me if he had any idea where the line dividing the Eastern Time Zone from the Central Time Zone lay in relation to the town. He did not, but summoned a nearby waiter, a fresh-faced young man dressed in black pants, a black shirt, and a red bow tie, like all the waiters. He didn't know, either. But he sat beside me trying to puzzle it out. Somehow, we began to talk about books. This was appropriate, because there may be no other town in America more devoted to a single book than Monroeville is devoted to *To Kill a Mockingbird* — murals

of mockingbirds are painted onto the sides of buildings, a Mockingbird-themed museum and gift shop are located in the town square, and every spring a play based on the book has a two-week run in the very courthouse that was the book's inspiration.

The aura of theft and malfeasance has hovered over Harper Lee for a long time, and not just because her one book is about crime and punishment. Alice Lee, Harper's older sister — a surrogate mother in youth, a surrogate father in their adulthood and old age — had joined and then took over their father's law practice. She remarked to a BBC researcher in 1982 that the manuscript for her sister's second novel was stolen by a burglar. Whether or not this remark was facetious at the time, it would prove to be prophetic.

At the time of my arrival in May 2016, the town was adjusting itself in the aftermath of Harper Lee's death that February. A few years earlier, a new Harper Lee novel had been found. The person who found it, Tonja Carter, did not have a consistent story about how and when she found it. But she was the estate's executor. She had persuaded Harper Lee that it was a good idea to publish the manuscript, *Go Set a Watchman*. This was news in itself. When it was revealed that the book featured the same characters that appeared in her first, Atticus Finch in particular, it caused an uproar. The uproar became considerably louder when it became apparent that the Atticus Finch of that second novel was a much different character than the calm, paternal, attentive and just man that inspired love in so many people. If I wasn't among the cult of Atticus, it wasn't out of any considered dissent; I read the book in eighth grade, liked it OK, but I grew up in New York City. For me, the South was an abstraction.

The courthouse where the play is staged is the courthouse that Harper Lee used to visit as a child, where she would sometimes watch her father argue a case. Just down the street from the restaurant where I sat at the bar was a bank, and on the second floor of the bank was her father's law office, the same one taken over by her older sister Alice, who practiced until she was 100 years old and lived until she was 103. Downstairs from the law office, in the bank vault, is where Tonja Carter found the manuscript for *Go Set a Watchman* in 2011 or 2014, depending on who you believe.

Which is why I was sitting at the back of the restaurant chatting with a young man in a black shirt with a red bow tie talking about literature. He was a Flannery O'Connor fan, he told me. The story that interested him most was called "Parker's Back." A fiercely religious woman dominates that story. The male character, her husband, seems to cower in front of her. Later, pondering Tonja Carter from a distance, this would seem significant.

I asked him how he came to his Flannery O'Connor enthusiasm, and he told me that he had a wonderful literature professor at the seminary he attended. It turned out he had recently graduated and was now in an interim period where he was debating whether to pursue his studies and become a priest or do something else.

"Where was the seminary?" I asked.

"Covington, Louisiana," he said.

"What was the professor's name?"

"Sister Jeanne d'Arc."

## 2.

There's a sort of perfection in the enclosed world of Depression-era Monroeville seen from the viewpoint of a young girl, Scout. It's part of what makes *To Kill a Mockingbird* so enchanting, the world untouched by outside forces, the world unto itself with its own villains and heroes.

Lee's novel came out in 1960. Another Southern story was published a year later, *The Moviegoer* by Walker Percy. The setting is New Orleans, a metropolis and a highly permeable world, but also enclosed, a small town, especially the world of Uptown, from which the book's main character, Binx Bolling, has escaped. He lives in the magically bland suburb of Gentilly. Uptown is the mother ship. The newly developed

suburbs of Gentilly and Lakeview are a fresh new landscape of anonymity and possibility.

Binx works as a stockbroker and his idea of a good time is to take his secretaries to movies, or on road trips, "spinning" up the coast in his red MG, a "miserable vehicle, actually, with not a single virtue except for one: It is immune to the malaise." The story is set in the run-up to Mardi Gras. If there's a genius to the book — it did win the National Book Award, after all, and has its champions — it's in the remarkably detached tone. Detachment is a kind of theme. Binx, the movie enthusiast, is a watcher of screens, a watcher of women, a kind of spiritual scamp. He experiences life as a kind of screen; if he were a contemporary character you might say he's living through his phone.

*He experiences life as a kind of screen; if he were a contemporary character you might say he's living through his phone.*

Percy spends a lot of energy describing landscapes, and he's very good at it. Here is Gentilly in the early 1960s:

*"Evening is the best time in Gentilly. There are not so many trees and the buildings are low and the world is all sky. The sky is a deep bright ocean full of light and life. ... Station wagons and Greyhounds and diesel rigs rumble toward the Gulf Coast, their fabulous tail-lights glowing like rubies in the darkening east. Most of the commercial buildings are empty except the filling stations where attendants hose down the concrete under the glowing discs and shells and stars."*

There is much about "the search," and "the malaise," the former a quest for meaning, the latter an affliction of spirit that he writes about in terms redolent of addiction: The malaise is cured by a road trip with a

girl, or a visit to the movie theater, but it always comes back worse, and one wonders if the malaise is an existential condition, which is the implication — the book's epigram is a quote from Kierkegaard — or a function of the sugary pleasures of modern life, highs that famously crash, not an unfamiliar theme in New Orleans.

The one love interest that stands apart from the others is Kate, who is his aunt's stepdaughter and a prisoner of the Uptown world from which he is a happy refugee.

Some of the book's tension comes from watching Binx wander right up to the edge of caddishness — he is an affable guy, but his observations are tinged with malevolent wit — followed by his retreat into good manners and his sense of ethics. All the sin and grace stuff, and the Southern gentleman stuff, didn't really appeal to me. But the sentences were often remarkable. I recently read a line, "The English cult of the Mid-century American sentence," and it leaped out at me; I share that obsession.

Salinger, Cheever, Yates, O'Connor, too, and others. Percy falls into that category. *The Moviegoer* is episodic, almost like a collection of notes. It reminded me of Joan Didion's travelogue of driving the Gulf Coast, *South and West*, recently published but written in 1970. It begins with a visit to a large Uptown home whose owner utters some despicably racist stuff, and then goes spinning down the coast. I thought it was an antique set piece and then I met someone present in that very scene at a party.

## 3.

I looked up Jeanne d'Arc Kernion, teacher of literature at St. Joseph Seminary near Covington, and wrote her about my encounter with her former student in Monroeville, and what a strong impression she had made.

My desire to connect with her was an attempt to wring some souvenir out of the whole experience in Monroeville, which had otherwise come to nothing. We had several interesting chats and I invited her to lunch and later to speak to my creative writing class at Tulane about O'Connor. Sometime after that, I visited her at the St. Joseph Seminary, technically in St. Benedict. It turns out I had been driving right by her for years as I took my daughter to ride horses in a nearby barn across the lake. One day I stopped in on the way back with Evangeline, so named before my wife and I had even the faintest idea that we would be moving to the one state in the country where such a name was, if not common, then not that unusual. The three of us had lunch and then walked the grounds. Sister Jeanne said she would be retiring soon and moving to the seminary in Kansas City.

At the end of our walk she mentioned that Walker Percy was buried here. "A wonderful man and a wonderful writer," she said. Would I like to see the grave? I thought my 10-year-old daughter had been sporting enough about the whole tour without being subjected to a grave site of someone she didn't know. And maybe I didn't want to see it, either. At the time, I had not read anything by Percy,





Binx Bollinger in *The Moviegoer* habituated places like the Fox Theater at 4127 Elysian Fields Ave., near Gentilly Boulevard. (Photo is from 1955.) The theater opened in 1945 and closed in 1971. Binx took public transportation, riding streetcars on Canal Street. He tries to escape Uptown society exemplified by this mansion with a filigreed balcony and porch.

but had been determined to do so for some time. I didn't want to finally read a guy at whose grave I had already stood. So, I passed. A couple of years went by before I read the book. By which time Sister Jeanne had retired and decamped to Kansas City. The seminary had been closed. She was the last one to leave.

#### 4.

Jeanne d'Arc Kernion was born in New Orleans and spent the first 10 years of her life at Broad Street near Esplanade Avenue. Then her family moved to Metairie. She is one of seven children; her siblings include a urologist at UCLA. She speaks with that miraculously faint accent that so resembles the accents one would find in Brooklyn or Hoboken once upon a time. I recently called her on the phone to talk about *The Moviegoer* and get her two cents.

"The first thing I like, as a New Orleanian," she said, "is the setting of New Orleans. And I like his underlying Kierkegaardian philosophy. Binx is lost. That's what you hear about the search. And this is just me, but I think perhaps not as much now, but there was a time when young people really could relate to that. Perhaps they still can. Binx is just fooling around. One thing after another. One woman after another. He is in Kierkegaard's first state of the aesthetic. After Binx takes Kate to Chicago, having grown up at that time in New Orleans, she gives this big thing about class, she lights into him about how he is not doing anything right."

Sister Jeanne went on: "I remember the day my father — I'm up in years, remember — greeted at our door a boy who had come to pick up

my sister for a date. My father opened the front door and the boy was smoking a cigarette. My father sent him away. He told my sister, 'That boy didn't have any class. You don't show up at someone's door smoking a cigarette.'

"I could just hear my father and grandparents saying, 'You can't do that, we have class and you don't do that.'

"The way you dress, the way you act, the way you talk to people. 'Oh no, you wouldn't do that.'"

She was relishing the novel's connection to New Orleans, something that opened a window into a particular way of thinking that comes most into view around Carnival season — the balls and the beads, with which I have problems. I asked if she'd like to come and talk to my class about it. She said she will be in town visiting relatives in the fall. We have a tentative date. <sup>10</sup>

*Thomas Beller is an associate professor of English and director of creative writing at Tulane. He is the author of Seduction Theory, a collection of stories; The Sleep-Over Artist, a novel that was a New York Times Notable Book and Los Angeles Times Best Book of 2000; How To Be a Man: Scenes From a Protracted Boyhood, an essay collection; and J.D. Salinger: The Escape Artist, a biography that won the New York City Book Award for Biography/Memoir. He is a frequent contributor to The New Yorker's Culture Desk, and The New York Times and is at work on a book about basketball.*

# Wavemakers

## YULMAN FAMILY EXPANDS SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH \$5 MILLION MATCHING-CHALLENGE GIFT

**T**he family who led the charge to build Tulane's Yulman Stadium has contributed a \$5 million matching-challenge gift to increase scholarship opportunities.

Board of Tulane member Richard Yulman and his daughter and son-in-law, Katy (NC '05) and Greg Williamson, are sponsoring the Next Wave Scholarship Challenge, which will match new endowed scholarship donations of \$100,000 to \$500,000. This initiative seeks to increase the overall endowment dedicated to scholarship support.

Yulman, the retired co-chairman and owner of mattress manufacturing giant Serta International, serves as a campaign co-chair of *Only the Audacious*, *The campaign for an ever bolder Tulane*, the most ambitious and comprehensive fundraising effort in Tulane's history. Katy Williamson is a co-chair of the National Campaign Council for the Tri-State area.

"No hardworking, high-achieving high school student should have to cross Tulane off their list because of the cost or the fear of lifelong loans — that would be a shame," Yulman said. "We want talented students to be able to come to Tulane regardless of their financial backgrounds, and they ought to be able to make career choices unencumbered by debt."

Yulman became convinced of the need to increase scholarship availability after accompanying a Tulane admissions counselor to a Miami high school, pre-pandemic, and talking face-to-face with capable students eager to apply but lacking the financial means.



"My dad told me how much that high school visit touched him personally and inspired him to want to do something significant to make a Tulane education more accessible," said Katy Yulman-Williamson.

"Endowed scholarships allow extraordinary students to attend Tulane who otherwise could not afford to and to graduate without overwhelming student loans, so that they can pursue their dreams without the constraint of having to pay off a huge debt," Tulane Provost Robin Forman said. "This makes a scholarship a gift not only for our students, but also for every community our graduates enter where they can make the sort of contributions that they are meant to make."

Through the Yulman family's philanthropy and leadership, Yulman Stadium was born in 2014, serving not only as Tulane's first on-campus football stadium in almost 40 years, but also as a prominent symbol of the university's post-Katrina renaissance.

Katy and Greg Williamson, a co-founder of UpperWest Music Group and a real-estate broker in New York, married in 2012 and have two children. The Williamsons are members of Tulane's President's Council.

Above: The gift of Richard Yulman and his daughter, Katy Yulman-Williamson, expands scholarships and provides a matching challenge. Near right: Charlotte Beyer Hubbell has established a chair in the River-Coastal Science and Engineering Department. Far right: Col. Jennifer N. Pritzker established an endowed fund for Tulane's Jewish studies department.



## River-Coastal Science and Engineering Department Receives \$3 Million Hubbell Gift

**T**he School of Science and Engineering has received a \$2 million gift to establish and endow the Charlotte Beyer Hubbell Chair in River-Coastal Science and Engineering. Hubbell has also contributed \$1 million to create the River-Coastal Science and Engineering Excellence Fund.

The Charlotte Beyer Hubbell Chair will fund salary and other expenses directly associated with the chair-holder's academic work and research.

The River-Coastal Science and Engineering Excellence Fund will support equipment, student-linked conference attendance and travel for research, as well as the expansion of a network of Lower Mississippi River Experimental Stations, which will collect data parameters from the Mississippi River and its main tributaries that are key to ecosystem health and sustainability.

In honor of Hubbell's generosity in supporting the excellence fund and community involvement initiatives, Tulane will create the annual Charlotte Beyer Hubbell Forum on the State of River-Coastal Issues. The fund will highlight Tulane faculty through a public lecture on Tulane's campus about river-coastal issues.

"I want to do something for Tulane/Newcomb in appreciation of the excellent education I received there," said Hubbell (NC '71). "Working together with President Fitts and Kimberly Foster, the dean of the School of Science and Engineering, I was able to narrow my focus on the concerns I have for the future of New Orleans, namely coastal erosion, rising sea levels, a changing climate, floods and other severe weather impacts. I hope the department can communicate the urgency of these issues to decision-makers and engage the local community to participate in possible solutions."

Hubbell is currently a member of the Environmental Law and Policy Center's advisory board in Chicago and serves on the Dean's Advisory Council for Tulane's School of Liberal Arts. She served on the board of the Iowa Nature Conservancy from 1994-98 and was one of the founders of the Iowa Environmental Council.



## PRITZKER DONATES \$1 MILLION GIFT AND \$1 MILLION MATCHING CHALLENGE

**T**ulane has received a \$1 million gift — and an additional matching-challenge grant of up to \$1 million — from the TAWANI Foundation, led by Col. (IL) Jennifer N. Pritzker, IL ARNG (Retired). The gift will establish the Audrey G. Ratner Excellence Endowed Fund for American Jewry and Jewish Culture in the School of Liberal Arts.

Named in honor of Pritzker's mother, the fund will support action-oriented programming, innovative student engagement activities and cutting-edge research, primarily through the Audrey G. Ratner Jewish Leadership Course and the Audrey G. Ratner Speaker Series.

"Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic, Tulane University continues to do impressive work and prioritizes focusing on its students," Pritzker said. "Education is such an important tool, and I'm proud to know this contribution will help others grow their understanding of American Jewish history and culture."

"This gift greatly enhances Tulane's capacity in a vital area of scholarship, allowing us to engage in a deeper and broader study of the Jewish experience and how it has shaped the history of our nation and world. We are most grateful to the TAWANI Foundation and Col. Pritzker for this generous support of our academic mission and students," said President Michael A. Fitts.

A decorated paratrooper who retired from the Army as a lieutenant colonel, Pritzker also served in the U.S. Army Reserve and the Illinois Army National Guard. In 1994, Pritzker founded TAWANI Enterprises. Its primary philanthropic arm, the TAWANI Foundation, supports the areas of education, gender and human sexuality, cultural and historic preservation, environmentalism, and health and human services.



## DON AND LORA PETERS MAKE A \$1 MILLION GIFT TO TULANE ATHLETICS

**D**on and Lora Peters gave a \$1 million gift in support of an expansion and renovation of Tulane Athletics' academic center. Since the beginning of Tulane University's *Only the Audacious* campaign, the couple has given over \$4 million in support of Tulane Athletics. The state-of-the-art facility will be named the Don and Lora Peters Academic Center.

The gift kickstarts a \$2.2 million fundraising campaign to address a substantial infrastructure enhancement to the academic services center, which has not received a significant renovation in two decades, with a planned opening in fall 2021.

"The most important job of the athletics department is to ensure that the students get a first-class education," Don Peters (A&S '81) said. "An additional goal is to lead its conference with the highest graduation rate and team GPAs. Tulane should also be among the best in the NCAA in these metrics. Renovating the academic center will help the university achieve these objectives and we are delighted to have played a role in getting this launched."

Once completed, the new facility, still in the James W. Wilson Jr. Center, will significantly enhance Tulane's academic departmental workspace and provide the latest learning technology for the department's 350-plus student-athletes.

"The completion of the Don and Lora Peters Academic Center is a critical piece to ensure that our student-athletes will continue their standard of academic excellence for years to come," Tulane Director of Athletics Troy Dannen said. "I would like to thank both Don and Lora Peters for their commitment to our student-athletes to get this project off the ground and to make it a reality."



## Richard Lerner Donates \$5 Million for Presidential Chair

**A** \$5 million gift from Tulane alumnus Richard M. Lerner (A&S '81, B '83) will create the university's eighth Presidential Chair, devoted to increasing the world's scientific understanding of aging and longevity.

Tulane will establish the Lawrence E. Lerner Presidential Chair Endowed Fund to support a professor in an interdisciplinary area of academic study. Lerner has requested that the initial chair-holder be a scholar whose research focuses on gerontology or related disciplines. The Presidential Chair is named for Lerner's father, a real-estate developer and bank director who died in 2019.

For Lerner, the major challenge facing gerontology today is not just adding years to life but ensuring that those years are marked by higher levels of good health, vitality and vigor. "I hope that new and innovative research in the field of aging makes it possible for our loved ones to derive some pleasure from those incremental years," Lerner said. "I'm hopeful that the establishment of a Presidential Chair in aging will contribute to the advancement of research that leads to healthier, happier and more productive lifespans."

"This gift is a testament to Rick Lerner's devotion to Tulane, his love for his father and his concern for humanity," said Michael Fitts, president of Tulane. "Rick thought very carefully about how best to honor his father and support Tulane while also addressing an issue of vital importance to the world. As our population experiences increased lifespans, understanding the science and improving the potential for healthy aging becomes more and more central to our society and to our future."

Now retired, Richard Lerner was chairman and chief executive officer of Annapolis Bancorp. A resident of Annapolis, Maryland, he is active in civic and nonprofit causes. 🐾



Left: Don Peters, with his wife, Lora, contributed to the renovation of Tulane Athletics' academic center. Top: Richard Lerner established a Presidential Chair in honor of his late father, Lawrence E. Lerner (inset).



# Tulanians



## MARDI GRAS FOR ALL Y'ALL

The Tulane University Marching Band performs a special set on Benson Field in Yulman Stadium on Feb. 8, 2021. The performance was recorded for a livestreamed, Carnival-themed program called "Mardi Gras for All Y'all."

1950  
1959

**THOMAS G. LILLY (B '55)**, Rear Adm. USN, Ret., of Mississippi has been elected an honorary member of the French "Association of the Americans and U.S. 6th Fleet in Villefranche-sur-Mer," which seeks to preserve, commemorate and educate the public about the U.S. Navy's long, unique history in Villefranche-sur-Mer.

1960  
1969

**NORMAN J. SILBER (A&S '67, L '69)** has been elected to a second term in the New Hampshire House of Representatives. He is a member of the Florida Bar and the New Hampshire Bar.

1970  
1979

**GENARO J. PÉREZ (G '73, '76)** published his sixth book of poems and his 14th book overall.

**ROBERT B. NEBLETT (A&S '75, L '78)**, a lawyer at Jackson Walker, was selected for inclusion in the 2021 *The Best Lawyers in America*. He practices in Austin, Texas.

**KRISTEN STRUEBING-BEAZLEY (G '78, '82)** of Boston commemorated the recent passing of musician Art Neville with a lithograph that she created in New Orleans in the 1970s. She studied and taught printmaking at Tulane University.

In 2020, mixed-media artist **SHERRY KARVER (G '78)** exhibited at O'Hanlon Center for the Arts in Mill Valley, California, and Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, California, and received Silver and Gallery awards from the

San Francisco Bay International Photo Awards. She resides in California.

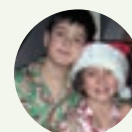
**BRUCE A. GINGRAS (PHTM '79, G '87)** retired in May 2020 from IIT Research Institute/Chicago after 33 years in infectious disease research. His departing publication was in August 2020 in *Access Microbiology*.

Great Southern Woods Holdings of Abbeville, Alabama, has announced that chief marketing officer **JAMES RILEY (A&S '79)** has become chief communications officer.

1980  
1989

**TIM FULTON (A&S '80, B '81)** has published his third book, *The Meeting*, which is business fiction and describes a one-day CEO peer group meeting. He lives in the Atlanta area.

**Did you listen to live music on campus, such as at Crawfest, TGIF, or the Rat? What are your musical memories around campus?**



The Judds played McAlister in '85-'86. Tour bus parked on Sharp quad. I went up after and asked if Wynonna wanted to see my dorm. We went to several floors of Sharp and then took her to the Rat.  
**Kimberly Willis Kreis (NC '89)**



Performed at Crawfest in 2017 with my own band (the Bummers)  
**Benjamin Shooter (SLA '18)**



Allen Ginsberg, the famous Beat poet. He was seated on the ground in the UC quad playing a hand-pumped Indian harmonium. 1971  
**Reid Farmer (A&S '74)**



## IMPRESSION

# SHAUNA CLARK

**A** Tulane Law alumna has been named Global and U.S. Chair of Norton Rose Fulbright, becoming the first woman of color to hold both positions.

Shauna Clark (L'94) also makes history as the only woman of color to lead a top 200 grossing law firm in the U.S. She started in her new roles in January.

In both roles, Clark will focus on strategic priorities, including client relationships, diversity and inclusion.

Clark praised her law firm — one of the top five largest firms in the world — for their trust and confidence in her.

"My immediate focus is to connect with our clients and grow these relationships through our world-class talent and superior service," Clark said. "I also will work with colleagues and clients to advance racial equality, diversity and inclusion throughout our firm and the legal profession. Following [last] year's traumatic events across the U.S. and in other parts of the world, making a positive change stands as even more of a priority, both at Norton Rose Fulbright and throughout our communities."

Clark comes from a Tulane Law family. Her husband, Morris Clark (L'93), is vice president and treasurer of Marathon Oil in Houston. She has extensive connections with other law alumni and has actively recruited Tulane Law graduates to her firm, and aided them in securing positions at others.

Since the announcement, Clark has been interviewed by legal journals across the globe. In one she recalled her early days in her law firm as a woman of color.

"It is a bit emotional for me because when I started...as a 23-year-old Black woman, being the only Black woman in our office, it was a very frightening and isolating experience," she said. "Being the first or one of only a few is very difficult. And I look back now on that experience and those feelings, and what I endeavor to do is to create an environment and a law firm that is so welcoming of people who are different that no one else feels that type of isolation."

Clark has been a leader in the firm she joined after graduation in 1994. She has been head of Employment and Labor, and served on its Global Executive Committee and U.S. Management Committee. She is a member of the firm's Diversity and Inclusion Committee and Racial Equality Council, which are aimed at recruiting, retaining and supporting Black attorneys and staff. 📌

**KEITH GRADY (A&S '80)** has joined Tucker Ellis LLP as a partner in the St. Louis office.

**R.J. CARDULLO'S (G '82)** memoir, *Straight Out of Brooklyn: A Critical Memoir*, was released in January, an exploration of the author's Italian American years in the New York of the 1950s. He lives in his wife's native Finland.

**BRYAN WEISS (A&S '82)** is a partner in the San Francisco office of the Murchison & Cumming law firm, specializing in insurance law, and was listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* for both 2020 and 2021.

**DAN C. PANAGIOTIS (L '84)** of Lafayette, Louisiana, has been appointed as U.S. Administrative Law Judge, Department of Labor, Longshore Division, effective Nov. 8, 2020.

**STEVEN R. JACOBS (L '87)**, a lawyer at Jackson Walker, was selected for inclusion in the 2020 Chambers USA Guide and the 2021 *The Best Lawyers in America*. He practices in San Antonio.

McGlinchey Stafford PLLC of Baton Rouge announced the firm's Intellectual Property team has received recognition in *Managing Intellectual Property* magazine's 2020 "IP Stars" ranking. "IP Stars" recognized attorney **R. ANDREW "DREW" PATTY II (A&S '87)** as a "Patent Star" and "Trademark Star." Patty also holds a leadership position in the American Intellectual Property Law Association.



## ISLAND TERROR

### EDWARD AUSTIN HALL

**(A&S '83)** published his first novel, *Dread Isle*, a science fiction work in which uninvited visitors descend on a remote oceanic research outpost. Hall previously co-edited the 2013 anthology *Mothership: Tales from Afrofuturism and Beyond*. A poet and journalist, he lives in the Atlanta area.



**STEFAN WILLIMANN (UC '88)** is CEO of SIGMA Data Insights, formerly SIGMA Marketing, which has been operating in Rochester, New York, since 1985.

**GLORIA T. LESSAN (G '88)** has retired from Florida State University's Sociology Department as Full Professor in Teaching after 19 years of dedication to a total of more than 13,000 students. All her royalties from the books she has authored are awarded to the sociology departments of Tulane and FSU to benefit their graduate students. For her dedication to her students, the Sociology Department at FSU has assigned her name to the current award to the best graduate instructor. She lives in Tallahassee, Florida, with her husband, **JUAN J. GONI (G '84, '89)**.

**SEAN MURPHY (A&S '89)** was selected as the 2020 Civilian of the Year by U.S. Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia, for his efforts as a General Schedule civilian.

**ROBERT RICHARDSON (B '89)** is an environmental economist and professor in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University. He was recently awarded a Jefferson Science Fellowship, a program of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, and has begun his term as senior advisor for environmental sustainability at the U.S. Department of State, in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Office of the Geographer and Global Issues.



**KAREN DUNN (NC '90)** is the director of business development for Wegmann Dazet & Co., a 40-year-old CPA firm in the metro New Orleans area.

**DR. REGINA BENJAMIN (B '91)** was appointed to the board of directors of PDI, an infection prevention company in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey. Benjamin, who also earned degrees from Xavier University and the University of Alabama, served as the 18th U.S. Surgeon General from 2009 to 2013.

Duke University Press announced the publication of *Bolivia in the Age of Gas* by **BRET GUSTAFSON (A&S '91)**, an associate professor of sociocultural anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis. He is also the author of *New Languages*



#### SKUNK HEROES

**JOSH POTLER (B '07)** was inspired by his children to write and illustrate his own children's books about a trio of skunks named Stinkers, Smelly and Stench, who are tasked with many magnificent adventures that require their special skills to help save the earth. *Space Skunks: A Children's Book About Saving Earth and Sea Skunks: A Children's Book About Protecting Our Seas* were released in 2020 and are geared to ages 2 through 8. Potler lives in Florida.

*of the State: Indigenous Resurgence and the Politics of Knowledge in Bolivia*, also published by Duke University Press.

**ASHLEY BOGGS (NC '92)**, a graduate of the Murphy Institute of Political Economy, was appointed as the new healthy lifestyles coordinator for Move Bunkie Forward, a nonprofit organization that arranges programs for residents of Bunkie, Louisiana, to develop healthy lifestyles.

**CATHERINE BENTIVEGNA ADAMI (NC '93)** published her second novel, *Oedipa Sex*, in December 2020, and is currently completing her memoir, *Cool Parents*.

**LIZ JACKSON LEHRMAN (NC '93)** married Rob Lehrman in Key West, Florida, on Dec. 12, 2020. The couple met in New York City and moved to Miami Beach, Florida, in August.

**MATT OGENS (B '95)** launched a short conceptual documentary called *The Witnesses*, a reflection of 2020 curated from user-generated submissions from around the world, their observations of what they saw from their windows during quarantine, and ultimately what brought us outside to participate in something greater.

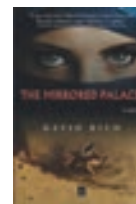
CEO and General Counsel **DAVE POSTON (L '95)** of Poston Communications in Atlanta received the Public Relations Professional of the Year by the Public Relations Society of America.

Poston's efforts helped to secure workplace rights for millions of LGBTQ and transgender workers across the U.S. Poston was honored on Oct. 2, 2020, as part of ICON 2020, PRSA's virtual international conference.

**ATHENA BESHUR (NC '96)** completed her Master of Natural Resources with an emphasis in Urban Forestry. She lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In 2019 **AMANDA BURNS MAHER (NC '97)** earned her PhD in Educational Studies (Urban Education), and in fall 2020 she joined Eastern Michigan University's history and philosophy faculty as an assistant professor of social studies methods.

*The Chiron Effect: Healing Our Core Wounds Through Astrology, Empathy, and Self Forgiveness* by **LISA TAHIR (SW '97)** has been endorsed by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, and is being translated into Chinese. It is a book on personal transformation using the tools of compassion and empathy to heal emotional wounds. Tahir lives in New Orleans.



#### PALACE INTRIGUE

**DAVID RICH (A&S '73)** published his third novel, *The Mirrored Palace*. In this historical novel set in 1852, legendary explorer and author Richard Francis Burton falls in love with a Persian woman while serving in the British Army. Author Rich teaches graduate-level fiction and screenwriting in Connecticut.

**DONNA BEAL (PHTM '98)** was elected as vice-chair to the executive board of the American Public Health Association. She is the executive director at Coast Caregiver Resource Center in Santa Barbara, California.

**TIMOTHY J. SMITH (TC '98)** and his wife, Syeda Arlina Fahmin Smith, welcomed their first child on May 18, 2020. Leonidas-Syed Ignatius Smith will begin to visit his father's hometown and alma mater in the near future to learn about

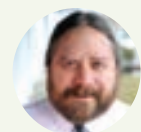
**Did you listen to live music on campus such as at Crawfest, TGIF, or the Rat? What are your musical memories around campus?**



WTUL Rock-on Survival Marathon 1995: Burnversion, Little Rascals, Royal Pendletons, Peabody, John Mooney, N.O. Klezmer All-Stars, Continental Drifters, Shepherd Band, and the Radiators  
**David Greengold (UC '97)**



Bob Dylan at McAlister Auditorium in '94-95.  
**Beatriz de Paz (A '96)**



TGIF on the Quad ... the Radiators / Neville Bros. / Meters ... But also McAlister included Stevie Ray Vaughn / REM / Zappa / Eurythmics / Squeeze ... Thinking about this response reminds me how much I miss live music.  
**Phil Eschallier (E '86)**



#### PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEES

The new administration of President Joseph Biden has among its appointees four Tulane alumni.

(Clockwise from top left) **DANIELLE CONLEY (NC '00)**, who graduated with a BA in English and African and African Diaspora Studies, has been appointed deputy counsel to the president, a senior staff appointment.

**DR. RACHEL LEVINE (M '83)**, who earned her MD from the School of Medicine, has been nominated by President Biden as assistant health secretary in the Department of Health and Human Services. Levine is currently health secretary for the state of Pennsylvania and a pediatrics and psychiatry professor at Penn State College of Medicine. If confirmed to the post at DHHS, Levine will be the first openly transgender federal official to be confirmed by the United States Senate.

**SHALANDA YOUNG (PHTM '01)**, who earned a Master of Health Administration, has been selected by President Biden to serve as deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget.

**CEDRIC RICHMOND (L '98)**, who received his JD from Tulane Law School, has been named senior advisor and director of the Office of Public Engagement by President Biden. Richmond is leaving his U.S. House seat representing Louisiana's 2nd Congressional District, which he has held for six terms since 2011.

his Louisiana-side roots. The Smiths currently live in North Carolina.

The Kentucky Association of Health Plans, the trade group representing the Commonwealth's Medicaid Managed Care Organizations and commercial health insurance providers, announced that **THOMAS B. STEPHENS (TC '98)** has been named as executive director.

**TOBEY PEARL (NC '99)** published *Terror to the Wicked* in March 2021, a historical fiction novel set in the year was 1638. She lives in Massachusetts.

**ELENI ROUMEL (L '99, B '00)** was designated chief judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims on Oct. 19, 2020.

2000  
2009

**JOCELYNE "JOSIE" FLIGER (NC '01)** was named CEO/president of Elder Care Services of Tallahassee, Florida. Fliger also serves as vice president for the National Association of Foster Grandparent Directors, is a member of the Specialty Practice Committee—Aging Section for the National Association of Social Workers, and is a board member for United Partners for Human Services.

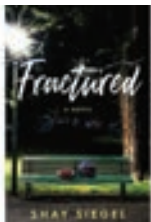
**ROSS BERKOFF (TC '02)** was appointed as general manager for The Informatics Applications Group, a cybersecurity and technology firm that provides



#### CARNIVAL ARTISTRY

New Orleans painter **ADAM HALL (TC '01)** began painting a series based on the elaborately decorated Mardi Gras house floats to celebrate the resilience of the city. "I think the house floats ... show that you cannot keep the spirit of Mardi Gras down even in the face of a pandemic," Hall said.





### 'FRACTURED' DREAMS

**SHAY SIEGEL (SLA '12)**

published her debut young adult novel, *Fractured*, about a high school athlete, in October 2020. She also has published a book of poetry. Siegel, who also earned an MFA in writing from Sarah Lawrence College, lives in Long Island, New York.

engineering support to the U.S. Government's Defense and Homeland Security Departments. He lives in Virginia.

**RYAN GALLAGHER (TC '04, G '05)** was named principal of Brother Martin High School in New Orleans.

**MICHAEL STRECKER'S (G '04)** short story, "The Woman at the Well," was selected as a finalist in the 2021 Tennessee Williams Festival's Fiction Writing Contest. Strecker's latest children's book will also be published by Scholastic later this year. He lives in the New Orleans area.

**JARED EISENBERG (SLA '07)** was named partner at Lynn Pinker Hurst & Schwegmann in Dallas. He has been recognized as one of *D Magazine's* "Best Lawyers Under 40," honored as a Texas "Rising Star" by Thomson Reuters, and was named to the Best Lawyers "Ones to Watch" list.

**AMANDA KING (L '07)** has been selected by Super Lawyers for its 2020 Florida "Rising Stars" list in the Family Law category. She is a partner with the Sarasota, Florida, law firm Syrett Meshad.

Forward Science, a Houston-based and locally operated MedTech company, successfully created its first batch of hand sanitizer to meet market demands during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Forward Science's chief executive officer is **ROBERT J. WHITMAN (SSE '07, '08)**.

**LILY FILSON (SLA '08)** published two articles in the blind peer-reviewed journals *Society and Politics* and *Ancient West & East*, which relate aspects of her research



### IMPRESSION

## ZACHARY ST. MARTIN

**I**t sounds glamorous: an office on a major studio's movie lot, a backdrop of the San Gabriel Mountains, Hollywood in the distance ... but when Zachary St. Martin (E '97, L '01) joined Sony Pictures Entertainment's (SPE) Digital and TV Distribution Group, he brought not starry eyes but instead a keen vision for closing deals and product counseling.

The Houma, Louisiana, native earned two degrees at Tulane before taking his legal practice to Southern California, first to an international law firm, Latham & Watkins, then to media and technology companies including Fox and MySpace, and then to SPE.

"My career path has taken many turns and has been an interesting ride. Stimulating, exciting and challenging subject matter is what drives me to do the work every day," he said.

As part of the digital and TV distribution team, St. Martin works to monetize SPE's content library by negotiating and closing distribution deals for Sony's feature films and TV

series across platforms and technology deals (and associated product counseling) related to Sony's wholly owned distribution platform. And while direct-to-consumer revenue is skyrocketing, St. Martin remains optimistic about the future of the theater experience.

"At Sony Pictures, we still believe in the power of the theatrical experience with our feature films," he said. "I'm looking forward to getting back to the theaters this year as soon as we can, but in the meantime, I'm doing my best to make SPE's distribution business a success."

St. Martin is enthusiastic about sharing his optimism with students who are likewise interested in crafting careers in entertainment, media and technology. He volunteers with programs such as Tulane's Career Wave, meeting and encouraging students in search of career guidance — and maybe just a little bit of excitement.

"I'm just a cog in the grand scheme of things at SPE," he said, modestly, "but still, to contribute to a little piece of it is satisfying. I'm lucky to have found this legal business pathway involving media and technology. To have accomplished a career that is meaningful to me is gratifying, and my Tulane experience was integral in each step of the way." 📖



## IMPRESSION

# MICAH COHEN

As an undergraduate at Tulane, journalist Micah Cohen (TC '05) was hopeful of writing the “great American novel.” The plan was derailed early on — an English major, he eventually had a deflating epiphany that he had nothing insightful to say, at least in terms of a bestselling book.

But an entry-level news clerk position with *The New York Times*, which he landed shortly after graduation, led to a fulfilling career, starting when he was chosen to join a crew sent down to New Orleans and Baton Rouge to cover Hurricane Katrina.

Today, Cohen works as managing editor of FiveThirtyEight.com, the data-driven website that uses that data and statistical analysis to inform its reporting. Cohen has been with the site for 10 years.

“A big part of FiveThirtyEight is that you can borrow some of the tools of science and apply them to journalism,” he said, “and so we do a lot of reporting on and collaboration with academics.”

“Trying to stand up a website from scratch, or almost from scratch, is really where I learned how to be an editor and manager,” he added. “And that came from making a ton of mistakes.” Those mistakes led to learning experiences, Cohen said.

As a college student, he worked as a doorman at Pat O’Brien’s (he even wore the famous Kelly green jacket), and at restaurants near campus. Those experiences immersed him in New Orleans’ culture.

“I think that helped shape a better appreciation for how little of the world I knew. I took that with me: the culture and [memories of] the people I worked with. The college experience at Tulane definitely forced me to kind of come to grips with what I knew and what I didn’t know.”

When all of the COVID-19 restrictions lift and people can travel freely, Cohen looks forward to returning to New Orleans.

“I just miss the neighborhoods. I miss the architecture. I miss the ‘feeling.’” He wouldn’t rule out a visit when Jazz Fest returns, he said, or Mardi Gras, but prefers to see New Orleans without any hoopla, “when the city is kind of being itself.” 🍷

conducted as an adjunct professor of art history at Tulane since 2018.

**WILLIAM GLOD (SLA '08)** wrote *Why It's OK To Make Bad Choices*, which was published in August 2020 by Routledge. He lives in Virginia.

**EVAN HANCZOR (SLA '08)** has published a food-and-literature community cookbook, *The Tables of Contents Community Cookbook*, featuring recipes from 36 contemporary poets, essayists and fiction writers to benefit food relief efforts in New York.

2010  
—  
2020

**EMILY RUSSELL (L '13)** was selected by *Virginia Lawyers Weekly* as one of its “Up and Coming Lawyers” for 2020. The designation recognizes the work and community engagement of attorneys in their first 10 years of practice. She works at the Chesterfield County Attorney’s Office, in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

After Tulane **ALEXA HAVERLAH (SLA '17)** went on to Rhodes Scholar work in Mexico, and is now attending the University of Texas School of Journalism in Austin to begin work on her master’s degree.

**SHELBY SANDERFORD (B '17)** is the founder of DOCPACE, a health-tech company based in New Orleans, which offers products such as virtual waiting rooms and automated updates to help alleviate stress and keep both patients and doctors safe during COVID-19.

Glass Half Full NOLA works to provide transparent, accessible glass recycling to the state of Louisiana. Co-founded by alumni including **MAX STEITZ (SLA '20)** and **FRANZISKA TRAUTMAN (SSE '20)**, Glass Half Full converts glass back into sand for uses like disaster-relief sandbags. This past hurricane season, they gave away hundreds of free sandbags in preparation for upcoming storms.



## Farewell

We say goodbye to Tulanians whose deaths were reported to us during the past quarter.

Harry R. Garvin (A&S '38, G '40)  
 Jewel Braai Tullier (UC '40)  
 Dora Ledgerwood Ellis (NC '42)  
 Wiley L. Mossy Jr. (E '43)  
 T.T. Reboul III (A&S '44, G '48)  
 Jerome L. Heard (A&S '45, M '48)  
 Lionel F. Currier (E '46)  
 Norman J. Haupt (B '46)  
 John A. Laurent (E '46)  
 Maia Weston Luikart (NC '46)  
 Lenore Benson Boonstra (SW '47)  
 Donald H. Dexter (A&S '47)  
 Herman H. Gray (M '47)  
 Norma Bartels Haydel (NC '47)  
 Josephine Rose Loeb (NC '47)  
 Lynn W. Cobena (A&S '48)  
 Rose La Franca Dietrich (NC '48)  
 Richard J. Garrett (A&S '48, L '53)  
 Lawrence S. McGee Jr. (A&S '48, M '51)  
 Thomas E. Perkins (E '48)  
 Selma Mexic Raphael (NC '48)  
 Ann Otto Turner (NC '48)  
 James F. Aycock (A&S '49)  
 Juanita Weil Bohn (NC '49)  
 Joyce Norman Bordlee (NC '49)  
 Norman C. Cook (E '49)  
 Maynard B. Dodge (A&S '49)  
 John W. Elder (E '49)  
 Walter J. Gagnet Jr. (E '49)  
 Clyde J. LeBlanc (E '49)  
 Richard L. Levy III (B '49)  
 John L. Mahony (B '49)  
 Albert L. Mangin Jr. (B '49)  
 Sargent P. Mellen Sr. (B '49)  
 G. K. Shaw (A&S '49, G '59)  
 Joyce Staba Sims (NC '49)  
 Georgia Fischer Talbot (NC '49)

Henry K. Threefoot (A&S '49, M '52)  
 Frank A. Vonderhaar Jr. (B '49)  
 Eloise Melton Wilson (SW '49)  
 Irwin J. Boulet Jr. (B '50)  
 Robert O. Chadwick Sr. (A&S '50, M '54)  
 Peter W. Truzzolino (A&S '54)  
 John F. Bartizal Jr. (A&S '55)  
 Rosario P. Carimi (UC '55)  
 Ruu-Kwang Chang (B '55)  
 Florence Ross Deer (NC '55)  
 Jacqueline Pugh Enochs (SW '55)  
 John B. Hunt (A&S '55)  
 Frederick E. Marsh Jr. (A&S '55)  
 John P. Mitchell Jr. (A&S '55)  
 Cynthia Braswell Nash (NC '55)  
 Eugene S. Blossman Jr. (A&S '56)  
 John C. Christian Jr. (L '56)  
 Sophia Greenberg Lepow (NC '56)  
 Elliot L. Manint Jr. (B '56)  
 Linda Landey Saliba (NC '56)  
 Leonard M. Selber (B '56)  
 Hilah McLean Skewes (NC '56)  
 Bernard J. Tanenbaum Jr. (B '56)  
 Dianne Calongne Veith (UC '56, G '61, '65)  
 Joan Gunn Bailey (NC '57)  
 John C. Brigham (M '57)  
 Esther Rosenbaum Buchsbaum (NC '57)  
 Joel Babylon Bullock (NC '57)  
 Charles J. French Sr. (B '57)  
 W. C. Holland (A&S '57, G '59, '61)  
 Charlotte Jenkins (SW '57)  
 Harvey C. Koch (A&S '57, L '60)  
 W. K. Lawson (B '57)  
 Charlotte Schmidt Overton (NC '57)  
 Teurlings J. Roy Jr. (A '57)  
 John B. Scofield (B '57, L '59)  
 Jack H. Wade Jr. (A&S '57)  
 Albert L. Welch Sr. (E '57)  
 Louis G. Cucinotta (A&S '58)  
 Mary Lee Cutolo (NC '58)  
 John P. Elliott Jr. (M '58)  
 Hugh B. Exnicios Jr. (UC '58)

Edward M. Feinman Jr. (B '58, L '61)  
 Ronald A. FitzGerald (L '58)  
 Leonard H. Posnock (A&S '58)  
 Virginia Blanks Simoni (NC '58)  
 Gene A. Tarzetti (A&S '58)  
 Michael M. Wahlder (L '58)  
 Peter Weill (A&S '58)  
 Charles C. LeBourgeois (A&S '59, L '61)  
 Charles W. McNett Jr. (A&S '59, G '67)  
 Michael J. Rapier (B '59)  
 William J. Ryan III (B '59)  
 E. K. Simon (B '59, L '61)  
 Robert L. Bornhuetter (G '60)  
 Ronald F. Gregory (B '60)  
 Daniel M. Griffith IV (A&S '60)  
 Henry J. Lartigue Jr. (E '60)  
 Francis E. Laurent Jr. (E '60)  
 Toni Roberts Lee (NC '60)  
 Luther W. Richardson Jr. (M '60)  
 Susan Wilder Roddy (NC '60)  
 Robert T. Russell (M '60)  
 Louis A. Blaum (B '61)  
 Ronald C. Fiore (B '61, L '62)  
 Stephen I. Goldware (A&S '61, M '65)  
 Thomas L. Hill (E '61)  
 George J. Livermore Jr. (UC '61)  
 Robert N. Price (B '61)  
 Richard E. Rice (M '61)  
 Lawrence P. Touns Jr. (UC '61)  
 Joseph B. Vella (A&S '61)  
 John W. Wharton (A&S '61)  
 Steven J. Zier (G '61)  
 Richard J. Andrews Sr. (A&S '62)  
 Mary Romig (UC '62)  
 James H. Ward III (G '62, '67)  
 Herschel L. Abbott Jr. (A&S '63, L '66)  
 Samuel H. Altman (A&S '63)  
 Mary McGee Boggs (G '63)  
 Patricia Godfrey (SW '63)  
 Jacob D. Landry (A&S '63, L '65)  
 Donald C. Makofsky Sr. (E '63, '69)  
 B. A. Trousdale III (A '63)

Richard J. Cohen (B '64)  
 Susanne Elster Hepler (SW '64)  
 W. B. Huthwaite Sr. (G '64)  
 Clyde E. Taylor (PHTM '64)  
 J. R. Teller (G '64)  
 Barbara Barkerding Williams (NC '64)  
 Carlos J. Indest III (A&S '65)  
 Carroll Mace (NC '65, G '68)  
 Barry M. Miller (A&S '65)  
 Wallace H. Paletou (A&S '65, L '66)  
 Allan L. Ronquillo Sr. (L '65)  
 Louis J. Ulmer (UC '65)  
 Augustin C. Zeringue (UC '65)  
 George W. Blankenship Jr. (M '66)  
 Harvey G. Gleason (L '66)  
 James L. Howard (G '66, '68)  
 Edward D. Myrick (A&S '66, L '70)  
 John P. Whitman (E '66)  
 William L. Williams (A&S '66)  
 Cecilia Bono (UC '67)  
 Claremont F. Carter (A&S '67)  
 Raymond P. Cush (M '67)  
 Kenneth G. Relyea (G '67)  
 Patricia Greene Turner (NC '67)  
 Jack H. Curry Sr. (PHTM '68)  
 Don A. Darce' (UC '68)  
 Bruce W. Egger (A&S '68)  
 Joann Ratton Feltus (NC '68, G '71)  
 J. J. Haikala (UC '68)  
 Henry R. Hosman (B '68)  
 Carol Broemmelsiek O'Loughlin (G '68)  
 Robert J. Rodrigue (UC '68)  
 Hendrik Uiterwyk (A&S '68, L '70)  
 Frank P. Auderer Jr. (G '69)  
 Samuel J. Caldarera III (SW '69)  
 Dale Allee Davis (NC '69)  
 Palmour McIntire Dodd (NC '69)  
 Lucas H. Ehrensing (E '69, '72)  
 Larry R. Fout (PHTM '69)  
 Carolyn Macow Leatherwood (NC '69)  
 Monroe T. Morgan (PHTM '69)  
 Paul N. Planchet Jr. (UC '69)

Herbert H. Prizeman (G '69)  
 Jane Lynch Todd (M '69)  
 Lawrence J. Arceneaux Jr. (A '70)  
 Anatole J. Garrett Jr. (G '70)  
 Thomas P. Lief (G '70)  
 Judy Ackerman Lombard (NC '70)  
 Kathryn Venturatos Lorio (NC '70)  
 Salvador J. Mannino (UC '70)  
 Steven J. Mattoon (SW '70)  
 Alejandro D. Santiago (PHTM '70)  
 Thomas C. Hogan (G '71)  
 Kurt Lange (UC '71)  
 Ruth Falcon Meyer (G '71)  
 Margaret Norman (NC '71)  
 Juliette Aime (SW '72)  
 Bruce R. Chelikowsky (PHTM '72)  
 Jacqueline Pizzano-Moses (G '72)  
 Jacqueline Loomis Quillen (NC '72)  
 Robert L. Schneider (SW '72, '75)  
 Lawrence P. Schwartz (PHTM '72)  
 Albert W. Wilhelm Jr. (G '72)  
 Don M. Coerver (G '73)  
 Shirley Krasne Haspel (SW '73)  
 H. C. Haynes (A '73)  
 Lee Cangelosi Maloney (G '73)  
 Randall L. McDonnell Jr. (G '73)  
 Claude F. Mouney Jr. (UC '73)  
 JoAnne Berlin Sloss (NC '73)  
 Thomas D. Wagner (A&S '73)  
 Sally Archer (G '74)  
 Gary M. Bernard (A&S '74)  
 Terrence J. Gaffney (L '74)  
 Mary DeLay Jones (PHTM '74)  
 John J. Shea III (A&S '74, M '80)  
 Ronald D. Symonds (PHTM '74)  
 James R. Angel (M '75)  
 Curklin Atkins (A&S '75)  
 Cameron B. Barr (PHTM '75)  
 Brian P. Bourgeois (E '75)  
 David R. Weiner (A&S '75)  
 Erness Wright-Irvin (PHTM '75)  
 J. M. Johnston (A&S '76)

Phyllis Hamann Lala (NC '76)  
 Paul J. Oberlin (A&S '76)  
 Irvin J. Touns (UC '76)  
 Ida Vinson Butler (UC '77)  
 Alison Richards (SW '77)  
 Conrad M. Vigo (E '77)  
 Gary A. Fowler (A '78)  
 Conrad E. Francois II (B '78)  
 Miriam Howe (L '78)  
 Frank S. Mainella Jr. (A&S '78)  
 Diana Aspiazu Saunders Juliano (E '78)  
 Michael A. Henry (M '79)  
 Helen Laughlin (SW '79)  
 Herbert J. Roussel III (E '79)  
 Charles R. Salisbury (M '79)  
 C. M. Bourgeois (UC '80)  
 David K. Learned (PHTM '80)  
 David H. Zumalt (SW '80)  
 Herbert O. Brickson (L '81)  
 Joseph J. Contiguglia (PHTM '81)  
 Ruby Reed Lyons (SW '81)  
 Donna Budenski (L '82)  
 John D. Fern (A&S '82)  
 Bruce B. Ficken (A&S '82)  
 Elaine Brumer Kalka (SW '82)  
 Elizabeth Mumford (G '82)  
 Alice Murchio Rusbar (G '82)  
 Peter M. Archer (A '83)  
 Elizabeth Allen Daniel (B '83)  
 William B. Thomas (L '83)  
 Robert A. Shankerman (A&S '84, M '87)  
 Lawrence P. Gladstone (E '85)  
 David M. Kahler (M '85)  
 David S. Keim (UC '85)  
 Daniel J. Pohl (UC '85)  
 Marjory Bamforth Abbot (UC '86, G '89)  
 R. H. Davis (L '86)  
 Joseph G. Parris (B '88)  
 Rodolfo D. Pereda (UC '90)  
 Peter J. Coyne (E '90)  
 Pamela Ellender (SW '90)  
 James E. McAcy Jr. (B '90)

Stephen P. Zielonka (B '90)  
 Barbara Ney Morin (PHTM '91)  
 Robert T. Rhodes (L '92)  
 Jane Bridgers-Carlos (SW '93)  
 Darren J. Hart (G '93)  
 Robert J. Bives IV (B '94)  
 Philip S. Cohen (L '94)  
 William T. Aprill (SW '96)  
 Lois Anglin (UC '97)  
 Isabelle Petit Delafosse (NC '99)  
 Albert B. Dobbins III (TC '99)  
 Kathleen Ford Irving (SW '99)  
 Thomas C. Voss (TC '01, SCS '17)  
 Gerald H. Schonekas III (UC '02)  
 Patrick C. Snavelly (TC '03)  
 Harold A. Clay Jr. (SW '04)  
 Gwangi Richardson-Alston (PHTM '06)  
 William A. Adams (A '09)  
 Eric P. Bass (B '09)  
 John M. Miller (SCS '09)  
 Rosa Chambliss (SCS '12, '15)  
 Matthew M. May (B '14)  
 William T. Reynolds (SCS '14)  
 Sean J. Cashman (B '16, SLA '16)  
 Lauren Sobel (SLA '17)  
 Doretta Mercurio O'Connor (SoPA '18)

#### KEY TO SCHOOLS

SLA (School of Liberal Arts)  
 SSE (School of Science and Engineering)  
 A (School of Architecture)  
 B (A. B. Freeman School of Business)  
 L (Law School)  
 M (School of Medicine)  
 SW (School of Social Work)  
 PHTM (School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine)  
 SoPA (School of Professional Advancement)

A&S (College of Arts and Sciences, the men's liberal arts and sciences college that existed until 1994)  
 TC (Tulane College, the men's liberal arts and sciences college that existed from 1994 until 2006)  
 NC (Newcomb College, the women's liberal arts and sciences college that existed until 2006)  
 E (School of Engineering)  
 G (Graduate School)  
 UC (University College, the school for part-time adult learners. The college's name was changed to the School of Continuing Studies in 2006.)  
 SCS (School of Continuing Studies, which changed its name to the School of Professional Advancement in 2017.)



# TRIBUTE

## ELLIS MARSALIS JR.

For reasons both romantic and prophetic, the most evocative image of American popular music is a crossroads. That's where the mind's eye finds the blues pioneer Robert Johnson and the devil higgling in the far reaches of Mississippi near the turn of the last century. There, in the upper Delta, as the fabled story goes, they came to terms. Johnson walked away with the musical skills he craved. And the devil left with his soul. A crossroads — not a street corner, or a traffic circle, or a T — symbolizes how high the stakes are in American popular music from every conceivable angle. American music is, and has always been, a nexus of divergent histories, impulses and ideas. But the choices that a musician makes, one after another, can lead in the direction of something great — or godawful — depending on the ear.

Ellis Marsalis Jr., the pianist and paterfamilias of this century's first family of jazz, met his life-altering crossroads in Southern California in 1958. The circumstances may have seemed prosaic at the time, but in retrospect his decision pulsed with all the romance and prophecy that make Johnson's story so memorably dramatic. Upon leaving the Marines in Orange County, Marsalis had to choose where to go next: Someplace new or someplace known? New York or New Orleans? Away from his sweetheart or back to her? A life without crawfish etouffée, or plates and plates of it? He turned his car southward, New Orleans-bound.

That decision set in motion a chain of events that eventually changed the course of jazz. Ellis Jr. and his wife-to-be, Dolores (the sweetheart), could have moved to New York together. But having children there? Beginning in the 1960s? With no extended family? On a bebop musician's income? "Branford and Wynton wouldn't have happened," their son Jason said last year.

And yet, professionally speaking, New Orleans was kind of a bust. Marsalis and his friends had been inspired by post-World War II, non-local jazz performers, including Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. But, aside from a few locations on Bourbon Street, music venues in the city weren't interested.


How Ellis Jr. got by is no secret. Wherever he could, he played the forward-sounding, contemporary jazz he loved most — at late night sets, hotels and Sunday brunches. He taught jazz in the classroom and mentored young people on the side. He wrote curricula. He opened and quickly closed a jazz club. He toured in the trumpet player Al Hirt's band. He helped many of his students from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of New Orleans, get famous, really famous, including his sons. He played Christmas concerts at churches and lots of New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festivals. Then, and only then, did a middle-aged Marsalis get his first recording contract.



Wouldn't it be great to say that Ellis Jr. sold a million records? That never happened. The approbation would have to be enough. Admiring words from John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner. The vociferous gratitude of a slew of Grammy winners and of his son Wynton, the first Pulitzer Prize winner in jazz. The National Endowment for the Arts recognition of him and four sons as Jazz Masters. Honors from the U.S. Postal Service. The Ellis Marsalis Jr. Center for Music, built by his son Branford and Harry Connick Jr. in the Lower Ninth Ward. The countless standing ovations.

In 2007, Tulane University awarded Marsalis an honorary degree, in part to acknowledge his annual concerts for the Lagniappe Series of Newcomb-Tulane College. Soon after, he committed his papers to the Amistad Research Center, now housed at Tilton Memorial Hall.

Marsalis slowed down in later years, shuffling as he walked and talked, and gravitating increasingly toward ballads. In his last public appearance at the Marsalis Center, just a few weeks before he died, he sat in with a band and played the New Orleans second-line standard "Tootie Ma (Is a Big Fine Thing)," a song that has as much to do with Gillespie, or Parker, or his own compositions, as an Easter egg under a Christmas tree. But that's the kind of unlikely juxtaposition that American popular music is all about. Marsalis played it straight, as usual, through the crossroads.

Ellis Marsalis Jr. died April 1, 2020. 

—Gwen Thompkins (NC'87), is a New Orleans-based journalist and host of public radio's *Music Inside Out*. <https://musicinsideout.wwno.org>

# GREAT CITIES NEED GREAT UNIVERSITIES

BY MIKE FITTS, President

“Where y’at, dawlin’?”  
I chuckle to myself as I write that. This greet-

ing, quintessential in some New Orleans neighborhoods, does not roll easily off my tongue. As you may have read in this issue of the *Tulanian*, two professors are exploring the evolution of speech patterns in New Orleans, which are surely among the most fascinating in the world. But NOLA is not alone. My birthplace of Philadelphia is famous for its own linguistical flourishes.

But, besides idiosyncratic language styles, another thing almost all great cities have in common is the presence of a great university. Urban universities are defined by the cities they call home and cities with great universities are set apart by their vitality, innovation, originality and diversity. But like that fictional Philadelphian, Rocky Balboa, it now feels like our cities are on the ropes, hit hard by COVID-19. During this pandemic, it seems that the best things about cities — dense populations and the synergy and connections they foster — become liabilities. Practical things, like conventions, and the fun things, like festivals, became potential superspreaders.

In New Orleans, the pandemic has impacted both our creative economy — the musicians, artists and performers who make our city the lively, eclectic place we so cherish — and our food and hospitality industry that attracts visitors the world over.



Tulane medical students run a program BRACE (Business Resilience and Community Education) providing free consultations on COVID-19 safe reopening and operating procedures for restaurants and other businesses.

During crises such as COVID-19, there is a tendency to retreat inward — to focus on one’s own survival. But the fates of our cities and our universities are inextricably intertwined. Times of difficulty give us an opportunity to reevaluate this relationship and make it stronger, smarter and more resilient. It gives us the opportunity to reach out to our local businesses through efforts such as the Albert LePage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, which is connecting business owners with experienced entrepreneurs to help them minimize the economic fallout of the

pandemic. A program run by Tulane medical students is also providing free consultations on COVID-19 safe reopening and operating procedures for restaurants and other businesses. These are just two of many such examples.

Tulane is also leading our city as we join a global biomedical revolution that is changing the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Louisiana may not become a Silicon Valley but, with the help of its great universities, we might create a Biomedical Bayou. In addition to saving and improving the lives of countless patients, the unprecedented levels of biomedical research underway at Tulane has the potential spillover impact of creating jobs and stimulating the New Orleans economy with an industry less vulnerable to economic downturns.

It will also trigger major construction projects and expansions on both our uptown and downtown campuses and be a primary means by which Tulane and New Orleans thrive together and help deliver a knockout punch to COVID-19. 🍷



Urban universities are defined by the cities they call home and cities with great universities are set apart by their vitality, innovation, originality and diversity.



*Save the Date!*

# WAVE '21

**HOMECOMING • REUNION • FAMILY WEEKEND**  
**NOVEMBER 12-14 | 2021**

Our Tulane family has been through a lot in the past year. That's why it's more important than ever that we join together — on-campus and on-screen — and celebrate the many things we all love about Tulane.

**SAVE THE DATE** for **WAVE '21** Homecoming • Reunion • Family Weekend, **NOVEMBER 12-14, 2021.**

*Enjoy a fun-filled weekend when we can revel in the special bond that makes us all Tulanians.*



## **HOMECOMING GAME**

*Tulsa Golden Hurricane  
vs. Tulane Green Wave*

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13 • YULMAN STADIUM**

Tulane University will adhere to all local and state mandates due to COVID 19 restrictions. We will provide updates as available.

*More information on the weekend's events to come!*

[homecoming.tulane.edu](http://homecoming.tulane.edu)



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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



“Drove my Chevy to the Levee.” In the New Orleans Bywater Neighborhood, pastel-hued houses and a vintage truck evoke the panache of one of the city’s most eclectic areas.

