

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fall 2016

TULANE RISES IN RANKINGS

Tulane University rose to No. 39 in the 2017 *U.S. News & World Report* Best Colleges rankings released in September. The university was No. 41 in 2016 and was ranked 54 in 2015.



October 15, 2016

Dear alumni, parents, faculty, staff and friends:

We're now, once again, in the peak of student recruitment season, and Satyajit Dattagupta, our new vice president of enrollment management and dean of undergraduate admission, has brought in fresh faces and perspectives to the team that is recruiting the next generation of Tulane students.

His charge to these new recruiters is simple—continue to increase the quality of Tulane's student population, with a special emphasis on making it more racially, ethnically and economically diverse.

"Every student should have the experience of working with a group that is different from themselves. Not having that can limit a student's success," he says.

"It's important that our class is more reflective of the world," he adds. "If you have not been in a university like that, you are at a disadvantage. I believe diversity enhances the way people think in the classroom. Besides, increasing diversity is the right thing to do."

Tulane is well positioned to make progress in increasing the diversity of its students as it continues to attract students who are "brave, adventurous and creative" and situated as it is in the global city of New Orleans, where many cultures mingle.

That culture and the very land of New Orleans, of course, would not exist without the Mississippi River. The river created the delta in which we live and is the reason that New Orleans is where it is. This has connected the city to the world for centuries, bringing in goods and people to add to and foster the city's vibrant economy and richness of culture.



SERVING OTHERS

Tulane students are the most engaged in community service, according to a student survey conducted by *The Princeton Review* and published in its book *The Best 381 Colleges 2017 Edition*.

The Tulane Center for Public Service celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. CPS coordinates service learning projects, helping our students find avenues for making a difference in the world.

(Top, left) President Mike Fitts presides at the dedication of the Tulane River and Coastal Center on Sept. 14. (Above) Tulane students join together for public service through Outreach Tulane each fall.



SARAH GRAY

GRANT TO STUDY YOUNG LIVES

Sarah Gray, assistant professor of psychology, received a NARSAD Young Investigator Grant through the Brain and Behavior Research Foundation for her project that investigates how potentially traumatic events like violence affect the development of young children.

A NARSAD grant is one of the highest distinctions in the field of mental health research. Fewer than 200 researchers receive the prestigious grant each year.

Gray's study will examine biology, behavior and the environment—and how they work together. Her team includes collaborators from psychiatry and public health.

ANCIENT FINDS

"In Search of the Lost Empire of the Maya," a story in the September *National Geographic*, presents the work of **Marcello Canuto**, director of the Tulane Middle American Research Institute (MARI), and **Francisco Estrada-Belli**, a research assistant professor of anthropology in the Tulane School of Liberal Arts. The story examines the Kaan, or Snake, Kingdom among the Classic Period Maya and features research and discoveries from the sites of La Corona and Holmul, excavated by Canuto and Estrada-Belli, respectively.

And now Tulane is connected more than ever to the "father of waters" with the recent opening of the 5,500-square-foot Tulane River and Coastal Center on the banks of the Mississippi River. This new campus, located downtown between the Port of New Orleans and Mardi Gras World, offers stunning views of the glorious, powerful and constantly changing river along with labs, offices and classrooms for researchers and scholars devoted to studying the world's coasts and waterways.

The River and Coastal Center, a component of the newly established ByWater Institute, brings faculty from ecology and evolutionary biology, law, geology, and other disciplines together to address the problems of coastal erosion, rising sea levels and sinking land. It also connects faculty to our partners in the community from government and business to address some of these same issues.

The interdisciplinary work that occurs through the ByWater Institute will have an impact far beyond our city. The institute will serve as a hub for researchers in port cities from Tokyo to London facing similar problems. It will create a network of scientists searching for entrepreneurial ways to extract energy and other resources, while also ensuring that we preserve the environment. We all know that the survival of this region depends on negotiating our relationship with water. What better place and what better university than Tulane to address these problems of sustainability and resiliency.





Students celebrate after the President's Convocation for New Students on Aug. 27. The incoming class is the largest in Tulane's history—and the most academically qualified.

We launched another new interdisciplinary institute this fall—the Brain Institute. Building on more than 30 years' success of the Tulane Neuroscience Program, the universitywide Brain Institute is a transdisciplinary entity designed to coordinate and oversee neuroscience-related endeavors at Tulane. It brings together faculty from all over the university—the uptown campus, the health sciences campus and the Tulane National Primate Research Center.

New research facilities for the Brain Institute are currently being built in the Donna and Paul Flower Hall for Research and Innovation on the uptown campus and in the newly renovated J. Bennett Johnston Building on our downtown health sciences campus.

Tulane brain researchers collaborate in a matrix of research groups that includes faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, PhD graduate students, master's students and undergraduates—all exploring the brain in one way or another.

(continued on next page)



JONATHAN RIZNER

CREATIVE EDUCATION

Jonathan Rizner is a senior majoring in Spanish and music—and his long-term goal is to attend medical school. Through Tulane's Creative Premedical Scholars program, he has already been accepted into the Tulane School of Medicine.

Pre-med students at Tulane have the opportunity to broaden their horizons beyond the undergraduate coursework that future doctors have traditionally pursued. Through this innovative program, undergraduates can major in the liberal arts while still focusing on medical school; during a scholar's first two years of study, they meet all pre-med requirements. Later they complete a senior honors thesis.

Rizner's research for his honors thesis focuses on music and musicians of the 1920s.

The Crescent City Connection Bridge and boats along the Mississippi River are the backdrop for the new Tulane River and Coastal Center.



The Tulane Brain Institute brings together researchers—from faculty to undergraduates, uptown and downtown—to explore the mysteries of the brain.

STADIUM STAR

After the **Angry Wave** made its return to Green Wave Athletics this year, alumnus Barry Kern and a team of artists at Kern Studios engineered a two-story version of the throwback mascot. Using 3-D robotic technology, Kern Studios digitally sculpted the giant wave, which will sit atop the scoreboard in Yulman Stadium. During home football games, the wave will come alive, engaging the crowds with interactive features.



The pillars of the Tulane Brain Institute are research, education and training, and community outreach and engagement.

The vision is to create a new era of discovery, learning and public influence in the brain sciences at Tulane.

At the launch of the Brain Institute this fall, neuroscience graduates—PhDs and MDs from 1979 to 2009—came back to campus for an alumni symposium. They reconnected with their former faculty mentors and inspired the current generation of neuroscience students.

Homecoming/Reunion/Family Weekend, Oct. 27–30, offers a great time for you to reconnect with Tulane as well. I hope to see you there—wearing your Angry Wave game face.

Mike

Mike Fitts