



MARK ANDRESEN

Family Ties

by Mike Fitts

The following is an excerpt from President Mike Fitts' commencement speech on May 14, 2016. A transcript of the entire speech is available online at tulane.edu/president. (See "Life Lessons" on page 14.)

To the class of 2016, there is no more appropriate place to celebrate what you have accomplished than here in the Superdome. This place has been home to great championships: from the Final Four to the Super Bowl to Wrestlemania.

This is your championship moment and you should revel in it. But no headlocks or diving elbow drops, please.

You've worked incredibly hard. You have learned so much. You have grown as people. And you've done it all with the tremendous support of all of those sitting behind you cheering you on.

I can feel their pride washing down from the stands. So graduates, I want you to remember everything your parents, families and friends have done to help you reach this milestone.

Our graduates today range in age from 19 years old to 68 years young.

No matter how old you were when you arrived at Tulane, you became part of a lifelong community. Your experiences have bound you together forever.

You and I have fallen in love with New Orleans and Tulane together. In my first two years here, I have learned some wonderful and sometimes humbling lessons of my own.

Most of all, I learned that New Orleans and Tulane are like no other places in the world. Both are full of brilliance and joy.

Let me sum that up for you by talking about the music we've heard already today and will hear from Michael G. White (G '79, '83). Clearly it represents joy—music that makes it impossible to stand still, as many of you have already demonstrated today.

CHAMPIONSHIP MOMENT

Poised, prepared and purposeful, Tulane graduates can solve problems all over the world.

But it also represents brilliance. You are hearing great complexity—a single theme sometimes played backward or upside-down like a Bach fugue. And extraordinary creativity, as each musician improvises, literally composing in front of you.

Tulane also represents both head and heart. We revel in science and in music, in history and in culture. We have stunning brainpower, and something I'm used to calling chutzpah. No other place makes such powerful learning so much fun.

When people learn you are a Tulane graduate, expect them to treat you differently. Whether you launch your career from Mali or Metairie, people will know that the education you received was like no other, in a city like no other. They will know that you did not simply learn in a classroom in a city, they will know that you learned in a city that was your classroom.

They will know that no matter what you majored in, your courses spanned the breadth and depth of human knowledge and experience. They will know the lessons you learned to help rebuild New Orleans are the very ones you will use to help change the world. They will know you are poised, prepared and purposeful. They will know you are a Tulanian.

Finally graduates, while Tulane has molded you, I want you to know that you have also forever shaped Tulane. In the face of tragedies that affected your fellow students these last few years, you gathered us together in a fierce community and proved that we are a family.

Whenever we fell short in living up to our values, you pushed us to be better, to be more inclusive, more diverse, more welcoming and more just.

While students here, many of you invented ideas that will change the world.

And you inspired us with your public service, contributing hundreds of thousands of hours to the community. And in return, the people that you served taught you as much as any of us have in the classroom.

I am so grateful to each of you for everything you have done for Tulane.

My hope is that in your years at Tulane, you have learned how to lead, but also how to collaborate. That you have gained self-confidence and also humility. That you will bring the best of Tulane to solve problems all over the world.

What I know is that you have become part of Tulane, forever.

Welcome to the family.