



# Bold and Adventurous

by Mike Fitts

*The following is an excerpt from President Mike Fitts' inauguration speech on March 17, 2016. A transcript of the entire speech is available online at [tulane.edu/president](http://tulane.edu/president).*

We often say that Tulane is different. I want to explain to you why.

Our difference has deep roots. Most universities, historically, have been inward-looking. The traditional European model is of a cloistered, ecclesiastical institution—a place of learning and studied introspection.

Tulane, on the other hand, has always looked outward. From its origins, it has focused on solving problems.

In 1834, a group of young doctors wanted to solve a crisis then ravaging New Orleans. Epidemics of yellow fever and cholera were killing thousands of people. Together, those doctors founded a medical college, the seeds of a university that would grapple with the world's toughest challenges for the next 182 years.

Generations of faculty and students tackled the mystery of how yellow fever spread. It turns out that it was not by “vapors,” or even human contact, but through a tiny mosquito. These doctors then pioneered the public health responses necessary to transform the lives of everyone who lived in the tropical world.

That is Tulane. Bold. Creative. Interdisciplinary. Generating knowledge to solve the world's problems. In the words of our motto, “not for one's self, but for one's own.”

Tulane grew over the years with the same visionary approach. It added a uniquely international law school. It founded the country's first public health school, one that continues to battle infectious diseases from Ebola to Zika. Josephine Louise Newcomb founded the country's first women's coordinate college. And now everything that Tulane does reflects those unique beginnings, from those original schools to liberal arts, science and engineering, business, social work, architecture and continuing studies.

In a world with increasingly little use for boundaries, Tulane, from

## A BRIDGE TO EVERYWHERE

Tulane graduates—bold, creative, innovative—make the world a better place, wherever they go.

the beginning, has leapt over them. At a moment when society is demanding that higher education demonstrate its relevance and its value, Tulane provides the answers.

This does not represent the latest academic trend for us, but the code of our DNA. We cross boundaries and we transform lives.

Tulane has always embraced New Orleans. And 10 years ago, the flood washed away any walls that had crept up between the city and our campus. The binding of our fates became absolute.

The extraordinary men and women who led Tulane through its greatest crisis—and many of you are here in this room—understood that Tulane could not survive by attempting to isolate itself from the trauma around it. You realized students would never choose to come here despite Katrina. Instead, they would come here because of Katrina.

Once again in our history, Tulane would choose to reach out, to answer urgent needs, to teach students through engagement. This was not a course change, but a magnification of who we already were.

I remain in awe of what Tulane accomplished. Tulane and New Orleans have risen together to become epicenters of entrepreneurship, educational reform, and a siren call to every young person eager to live their passions. We are part of the same zeitgeist. We learn from each other. We draw energy from each other. After Katrina, Tulane sent our students into the community to learn by doing.

The students who choose Tulane tend to be bold—intellectually and culturally adventurous. They travel farther from home to get here than any other student body in the country. They are willing to leave their comfort zones and to seek out the most foreign city in America. When they join together with our local best and brightest, they create a powerful Tulane community that works together to cross boundaries around the world.

Tulane is the university that the 21st century needs.

Together, we will make Tulane a place known worldwide for instilling creative combinations of knowledge in all of our students.

Tulane faces its future with an unparalleled boldness—a fearless desire to innovate, to cross boundaries, to shatter barriers, to inspire our community and to change the world.

It is a great and humbling responsibility to lead any university. It is the privilege of my life to lead Tulane.