

A Woman's World

by Mike Fitts

Throughout its history, Tulane University has been defined by women. Evidence of this is everywhere. The university's most famous buildings, in fact, testify to it—from Newcomb Hall, named for the daughter of Newcomb College founder Josephine Louise Newcomb, to the Lavin-Bernick Center, built by a family foundation headed by one of America's leading female entrepreneurs, Carol Lavin Bernick. There's also the Lindy Boggs Center for Energy and Biotechnology, which houses our School of Science and Engineering, and the Caroline Richardson Building, named for the Tulane graduate and English professor who headed the Newcomb Relief Unit, which served overseas with the YWCA after World War I.

And, of course, there's the Newcomb College Institute, which carries on the tradition of women-focused undergraduate education and leadership training begun by Josephine Louise Newcomb more than a century ago.

The Mary Amelia Women's Center, which seeks to improve health for women, children and families through community building, research and advocacy, is one of many university efforts that are woman-run, woman-focused and Tulane proud.

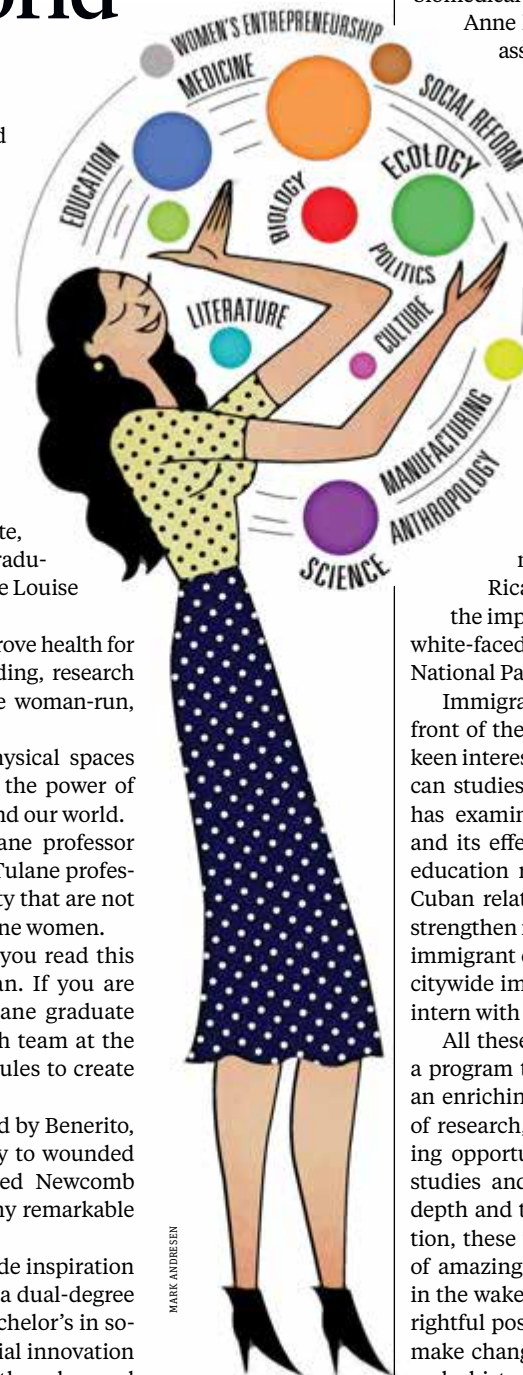
These buildings and centers represent not only physical spaces where learning, discovery and living flourish, but also the power of women that continues to shape our university, our city and our world.

From the arts (National Book Award-winning Tulane professor Jesmyn Ward) to Zika (vector-borne disease expert and Tulane professor Dawn Wesson), there are few aspects of today's society that are not being shaped, informed, influenced or improved by Tulane women.

It's likely that even the clothes you are wearing as you read this have been improved by the genius of a Tulane woman. If you are wondering what I mean, remember that in 1964, Tulane graduate and one-time professor Ruth Benerito and her research team at the U.S. Department of Agriculture altered cellulose molecules to create wrinkle-resistant cotton.

Wrinkle-free cotton was just one of the 55 patents held by Benerito, who also invented a method to deliver fat intravenously to wounded soldiers during the Korean War. Benerito, who entered Newcomb College when she was just 15 years old, is one of the many remarkable Tulane women to whom we all owe a debt.

Besides their own achievements these pioneers provide inspiration to today's Tulane students such as Lilith Winkler-Schor, a dual-degree major, who is earning a bachelor's in studio art and a bachelor's in social policy and political science, as well as a minor in social innovation (how's that for Tulane grit?). Lilith has wandered far from the columned porticos of Newcomb Hall, and works with formerly incarcerated young adults as they re-enter their communities. Her experience on the ground largely informs her research, as she examines the intersection of poverty, incarceration and housing access in New Orleans.



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FEMALE INFLUENCES
Tulane has long been and continues today to be an educational institution where women thrive and flourish.

Another high-achieving Tulane student who would make her predecessors proud is biomedical engineering major Anne Wolff.

Anne has traveled to Rwanda, where she assisted locals in fixing difficult-to-replace medical equipment and wrote a compelling case study on the gendered consequences of the judicial processes following that country's genocide.

Borneo was one of the stops for Mikayla Stern-Ellis, an ecology and evolutionary biology and anthropology double major, who has studied how raising awareness of the world's dwindling population of orangutans can influence people's decision in avoiding the consumption of palm oil. Her passion for primates brought Mikayla to Costa Rica this past semester to research

the impact of limited natural resources on white-faced capuchin behavior in Santa Rosa National Park.

Immigration, an issue currently at the forefront of the global conversation, is an area of keen interest for Hannah Dean, a Latin American studies and political science major, who has examined national immigration reform and its effects on Latino immigrants, public education reform in New Orleans and U.S.-Cuban relations. Hannah has also worked to strengthen relations between Tulane and local immigrant communities and has helped draft citywide immigrant integration policies as an intern with the New Orleans City Council.

All these students are Newcomb Scholars, a program that provides Tulane women with an enriching and shared four-year adventure of research, seminars and experiential learning opportunities. Besides excelling in their studies and experiencing the true richness, depth and transformation of a Tulane education, these young scholars are part of a wave of amazing women coming (indeed rushing) in the wake of their predecessors to take their rightful position as leaders. They are eager to make changes here and now and destined to make history in the future.

So as you read the stories of incredible Tulane women on the following pages, remember that the story does not end here. There is plenty more to come.