



MARK ANDRESEN

Proud to Call It Home

by Mike Fitts

Greetings from New Orleans, home of world-renowned Tulane University, and now my home sweet home, too.

It's hard to believe that I have just finished my first semester as president of Tulane. I say it's hard to believe because it feels like I have been a Tulanian for much, much longer. Come to think of it, maybe I have always been a Tulanian at heart. I certainly admired the university and its people, now my colleagues, from afar for years.

That's why when the opportunity came to join the Tulane family I jumped at it. I packed my bags, left my hometown, the place where I had grown up and lived most of my adult life, flew to New Orleans in the dead of summer and said, "Where do I start?"

Turns out the answer was, "Here and here. Oh, and over here, too. ..."

The opening of Yulman Stadium, Tulane's first on-campus stadium in nearly four decades, the welcoming of a new class, which helped push our total enrollment to a new all-time high, and the dedication of the Barbara Greenbaum House at Newcomb Lawn, Tulane's third residential college, all took place within weeks of my arrival.

Not long afterward we announced the gift of \$15 million from the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation that established the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking. This exciting new center of thought and action, named in honor of our alumnus and board member, will bring Tulane faculty, students and researchers from throughout the university together to help solve real-life problems in the environment, education, health care and more. (See page 39, for more about the Taylor Center.)

The Taylor Center promotes one of my main goals for Tulane—to increase the university's capacity for collaborations between various fields of knowledge, expertise and research in order to meet the many challenges facing our society. These collaborations will not only

THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT

President Mike Fitts finds plenty of opportunity for collaboration during his first semester at Tulane.

include increased interdisciplinary cooperation within Tulane but will also encourage more partnerships with individuals and institutions worldwide.

A prime example, of which you will read more about in this issue of *Tulane*, is the leading effort our heroic researchers and physicians have played in combating the deadly Ebola outbreak in West Africa. I hope you have experienced the sense of admiration and awe I have in following team Tulane's lifesaving work in Sierra Leone and other epicenters of this horrific outbreak.

Actually, I know you have because one of the many highlights of my first semester was the opportunity to get to meet so many of you—the incredibly diverse, successful and committed worldwide family of Tulane alumni. I visited a dozen alumni chapter cities this semester and plan to visit at least another 16 cities and Panama before the end of next semester.

I am also becoming more adept at learning, living and loving the one-of-a-kind culture of New Orleans. Every city has aspects unique to itself and its people, but New Orleans is in a class of its own.

I was well prepared for the heat of New Orleans. In fact, maybe I was a little over-prepared. So many people warned me about how suffocating, stifling and downright hellish summertime was in New Orleans that I half-expected to see folks bursting into flames on the sidewalk.

Luckily, though, my first New Orleans summer proved to be rather pleasant, not all that radically different from a Northeast summer—although a whole lot longer.

Still, coming from Philadelphia to New Orleans is akin to moving to another country. Everyone is warm and welcoming, but sometimes you wonder what exactly they're talking about. If you moved to the Crescent City from far away you know what I mean.

Do I want to dress my sandwich? Can I eat a whole muffuletta? What kind of sno-ball do I like? Who Dat?

I have had much fun learning all about the wonderful idiosyncrasies of our city—the ins and outs and the dis and dats of NOLA living. I know there is still a whole galaxy of "only in New Orleans" moments I have yet to discover, but I am well on my way.

I am also looking forward to experiencing my first Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest. I am, as a popular bumper sticker says, proud to call both New Orleans and Tulane home.