

# Water, Water (and Hope) Everywhere

by Mike Fitts

Peril and promise, hope and hazard. Like so many issues facing our world, water is a contradiction. It is both a foundational force of life and a threat to it.

As this issue of *Tulane* magazine attests, faculty and researchers in areas as diverse as our 169-year-old law school and our newly launched ByWater Institute are discovering new ways to protect this precious resource and the land, wildlife and culture it continually shapes and sustains. Tulane students and alumni are also devoted to this work, including Sarah Mack (PHTM '04, '09), who came to Tulane specifically to work on water issues and today is president and CEO of Tierra Resources, a social enterprise that allows companies to invest in wetland restoration projects to offset their greenhouse gas emissions.

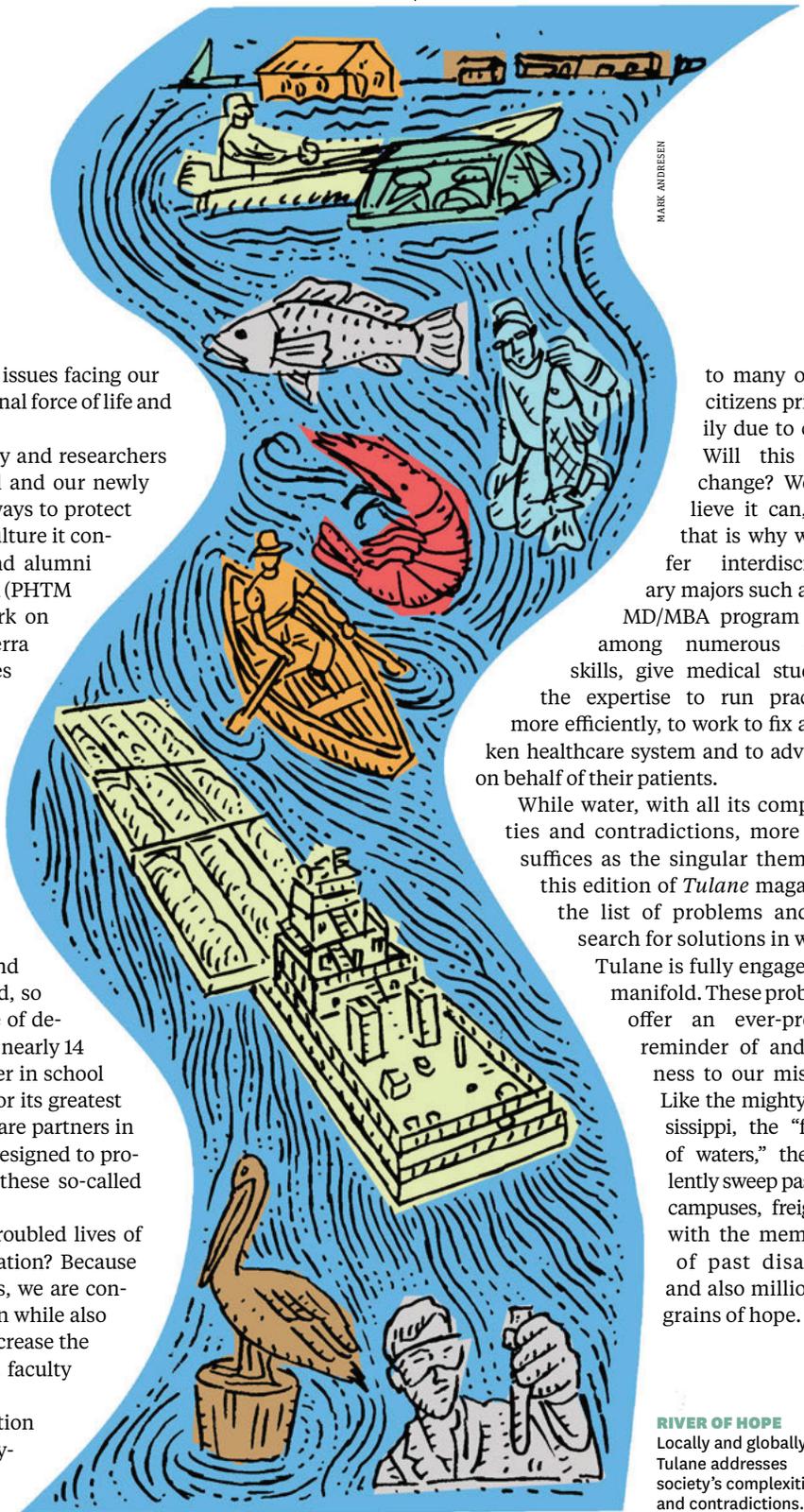
The work of Mack, our researchers and our students becomes ever more urgent as sea levels rise and deltas sink, not only here in New Orleans but also in New York, London and Tokyo.

Like water, other societal issues—poverty, environmental degradation, lack of affordable health care, inadequate education—contain a similar dualism of peril and promise.

Just as a river brings both the threat of flooding and the sediment that is the building block of new land, so too do societal problems contain both an effluence of despair and the seeds of new life. For instance, are the nearly 14 percent of young people nationwide who are neither in school nor working part of the country's biggest problem or its greatest potential? Tulane thinks the latter. That is why we are partners in EMPLOY Collaborative and a host of other efforts designed to provide career pathways for young people and turn these so-called "problem youth" into "Opportunity Youth."

Are the children of the poor destined for the troubled lives of their parents or for the greatness of a new generation? Because Tulane believes in these children and their dreams, we are continually engaged in improving K-12 public education while also embarked on a concerted and sustained effort to increase the racial and economic diversity of our own students, faculty and staff.

The United States is the world's wealthiest nation with the most advanced medical care available anywhere. And yet so much of the quality, cutting-edge health care that we take for granted is inaccessible



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to many of our citizens primarily due to costs. Will this ever change? We believe it can, and that is why we offer interdisciplinary majors such as the MD/MBA program that, among numerous other skills, give medical students the expertise to run practices more efficiently, to work to fix a broken healthcare system and to advocate on behalf of their patients.

While water, with all its complexities and contradictions, more than suffices as the singular theme for this edition of *Tulane* magazine, the list of problems and the search for solutions in which Tulane is fully engaged are manifold. These problems offer an ever-present reminder of and witness to our mission. Like the mighty Mississippi, the "father of waters," they silently sweep past our campuses, freighted with the memories of past disasters and also millions of grains of hope.

**RIVER OF HOPE**  
Locally and globally, Tulane addresses society's complexities and contradictions.