

Inauguration of President Fitts celebrates the boldness, creativity and 'bricolage' of Tulane

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"We are perfectly poised to lead in the century ahead," said Michael A. Fitts at his [inauguration](#) as the 15th president of Tulane University on Thursday (March 17) in McAlister Auditorium on the uptown campus.

In a dignified and musical ceremony with nearly a hundred representatives of other institutions of higher education clad in academic regalia in attendance, before an audience of nearly a thousand, Fitts reiterated the theme of the inauguration — "crossing boundaries" — as he spoke of his passion for interdisciplinary academic work.

"We cross boundaries and we change lives," said Fitts. It is in the DNA of Tulane to look outward and solve problems. From unraveling the mystery of yellow fever in the early days of the university to the commitment to help in the rebuilding of the city of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Tulane has improved and saved lives.

Tulane is the university that the 21st century needs, said Fitts. "It moves forward with unmatched determination, with a character forged like steel by the fires of crisis. Together we will make Tulane a place known worldwide for instilling creative combinations of knowledge in all its students."

Amy Gutmann, president of the University of Pennsylvania, made the official presentation of Fitts. She has known him for a dozen years from his tenure as dean of the law school there, where she said that he was a “truly transformative dean.”

“Ask Mike about this, and he will talk about interdisciplinarity. It’s a mouthful. Ignore that,” said Gutmann.

Instead she suggested another word: bricolage, a French word meaning something created from a diverse and sometimes entirely unexpected range of materials.

“Bricolage is the spirit that animates New Orleans,” she said. “The unique genius of New Orleans is to put great things together and come up with something greater still.”

Fitts has an “absolute mastery of academic bricolage,” said Gutmann.

“President Fitts will bring together the best minds from across Tulane to enhance education, to electrify research and to address the greatest questions of our time and of all time,” she said. “Out of the disparate corners of this great university, President Fitts will inspire you all to create something more beautiful, more exciting and greater than anyone ever expected.”

Fitts, for his part, looked ahead with optimism. “Tulane faces its future with an unparalleled boldness, a fearless desire to innovate — as our history has shown — to cross boundaries, to shatter barriers, to inspire our community and to change the world.

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