

Tulane President addresses national media at D.C. Press Club

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Tulane President Mike Fitts addressed national higher education reporters on a wide range of topics facing universities on Thursday night at the National Press Club. (Photo from the National Press Club)

Tulane University President Mike Fitts joined national higher education reporters and leaders from other top universities for a wide-ranging conversation on critical issues facing universities during a special President's Dinner Thursday night at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Reporters from the Associated Press, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* were among major media outlets attending the event, which was hosted by Bucknell University.

Sharing the dais with Fitts at the storied press club were more than a dozen college presidents, including the leaders of Carnegie Mellon University, Colgate University, Dartmouth College and Spelman College.

The presidents fielded questions on accessibility/affordability, campus diversity, free speech, public perceptions of higher education, student outcomes, Title IX and more.

Several questions focused on the Trump administration's impact on higher education. Fitts said the most significant effect of the current administration may be the change it has brought to "nature of discourse" on college campuses. The increased polarization of American society presents a challenge and opportunity for universities to embrace their traditional role as a forum for ideas and perspectives from across the political spectrum, he said.

"It often boils down to who comes to universities and who is welcomed there," Fitts said, noting that Tulane, like many other schools, could be described as a "blue campus in a red state."

"That gives us a unique position in the national conversation," he said.

Diversity dominated much of the evening's conversation with university leaders agreeing that enrolling students from the widest array of racial and socio-economic backgrounds is just one factor in creating a truly thriving academic community reflective of the world students are preparing to enter.