

President Fitts delivers University Partnerships Programme Foundation lecture in London

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President Michael A. Fitts addressed higher education leaders at the third University Partnerships Programme Foundation lecture, which took place in London at the iconic Lord's Cricket Ground. (Photo provided by UPP Foundation)

Addressing more than 120 higher education leaders and policy makers recently at the third University Partnerships Programme Foundation lecture on the civic university, President Michael A. Fitts called on universities to pursue "true academic excellence with social impact." Doing so will strengthen public perception about the value and importance of higher education, he said.

During the lecture, titled “Transforming communities: academic institutions and the cities we call home,” Fitts provided examples on the many ways Tulane and New Orleans partner. Through translational research, Tulane’s impact on the community is stronger and more visible than ever before. Fitts also discussed the emphasis on [service learning](#) in Tulane’s curriculum — an approach through which students apply the knowledge and skills they learn in the classroom to address societal problems in their community, region and world.

Fitts discussed the university’s strong support for interdisciplinary research and scholarship and the impact it has in New Orleans and beyond. He also highlighted the university’s planned [transformation of the downtown area](#) into a [hub of innovation and discovery](#).

The address focused on the long-term role Tulane has played in regenerating and revitalizing New Orleans, from Hurricane Katrina through COVID-19 and beyond. Fitts also delved into the debate about free speech, noting that universities are “one of the few institutions in society that bring together individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives to live, learn and work together in an intensely relational atmosphere... This affords us a unique potential to facilitate civil discourse and find common ground across ideological lines.”

Fitts’s address was the first UPP Foundation lecture since COVID-19. The event was held in London at the iconic Lord’s Cricket Ground. Previous speakers include the late Robert Zimmer, then president of the University of Chicago, and Glyn Davis, then head of the University of Melbourne, Australia.

“We are honored to have President Fitts — one of the leading figures in U.S. higher education — join the UPP Foundation in discussing universities’ civic purpose,” Richard Brabner, director of the UPP Foundation, said. “Tulane University has some striking examples of how a university can revitalize and regenerate a city following a crisis, and will provide intellectual stimulation for UK university leaders and policy makers as we confront the impact of COVID-19 and the cost of living within our towns and cities.”