

President Fitts celebrates Tulane's unprecedented momentum

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If there's one thing President Michael A. Fitts loves as much as Tulane University itself, it's celebrating the people who make the university extraordinary and drive its unprecedented success. And in his 2025 State of the University address, he did exactly that, cheering on the faculty, staff and students who are propelling [Tulane's current rise](#) as a national leader in research, scholarship, innovation and impact.

"As a university, we are continuing to achieve levels of success that seemed unimaginable a decade ago, from admissions, to research, to athletics, to the transformation of our campuses," Fitts told a packed auditorium of faculty and staff Oct. 17, at the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life on Tulane's uptown campus and at the Hutchinson Building on Tulane's burgeoning downtown campus. "Together, we're not just making progress. We're redefining what's possible."

Fitts, now in his 11th year as president, will speak to staff and researchers at the Tulane National Biomedical Research Center in Covington on Dec. 12.

From record-breaking research funding and soaring admissions selectivity to capital projects, Fitts highlighted how the university's "momentum continues despite a challenging national environment for higher education." Fitts credited Tulane's exceptional progress to the dedication and creativity of the university's "incomparable" staff and faculty. "Each and every one of you in this room," he said, "plays a key role in moving the university forward."

Among this year's milestones, Fitts spotlighted the completion of the university's largest capital project to date: The Village, a state-of-the-art residential community that brings juniors back to campus and strengthens Tulane's distinctive living and learning experience.

"This living and learning community has transformed the student experience," Fitts said. "This is huge. Data shows that students living on campus have better

outcomes and greater satisfaction with their college experience.”

Fitts lauded Tulane’s distinctive undergraduate experience that is attracting record numbers of applicants, with its newest class boasting record academic achievement. He also highlighted programs such as the Louisiana Promise, which provides grants and scholarships to make up the difference between what Louisiana families earning less than \$100,000 per year can pay and the cost of attending Tulane.

In addition, Fitts celebrated the university’s rise as a research powerhouse. Over the past decade, Tulane’s federal funding has nearly doubled and is now among the highest growth rates of any university nationwide. Faculty are leading groundbreaking discoveries across disciplines, from AI-powered cancer surgery tools to breakthroughs in prevention and treatment for tuberculosis and other diseases.

“Tulane’s research is changing lives in the Gulf South and beyond,” Fitts said. “We’re tackling society’s biggest challenges, from healthcare to climate, with creativity, collaboration and courage.”

Looking to the future, Fitts outlined the next chapter in Tulane’s physical and academic evolution: the expansion of its downtown campus and the creation of a world-class destination for medical research and innovation. The revitalization of the iconic former Charity Hospital building, the renovation of Hutchinson Research Labs and new amenities including Wave City Market are transforming the landscape of downtown New Orleans.

“This is the largest initiative in the history of Tulane, and perhaps of New Orleans itself,” Fitts said. “We’re not just expanding our campus. We’re revitalizing an entire neighborhood and creating a hub for discovery, healthcare and economic opportunity.”

Throughout his address, Fitts emphasized four factors positioning Tulane for success: its relational culture, its commitment to institutional neutrality and open dialogue, its expanding role in healthcare innovation and its transformative economic impact on the region. These, he said, are the forces powering Tulane’s rapid growth as one of the nation’s premier research universities.

He closed the address by celebrating the passion and dedication that continue to move the university forward. “Building bridges is what we do best: between disciplines, between people, between Tulane and the world,” Fitts said. “This is how

we'll continue to seize opportunities to scale up our impact."

Fitts interspersed his speeches with the presentation of staff and faculty awards. These included:

The President's Staff Excellence Award Winners:

- Shanna Harper, director, Pre-College Programs
- LaShanda Robinson, executive assistant, School of Science & Engineering
- Heather Seaman, executive director, Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life
- Fred Barrows, network administrator III, Controller's Office
- Tammy Naramore, senior research administrator, Center for Airborne Infection & Transmission Science
- Tanya O'Rourke, associate controller for Grants & Compliance, Grants and Contracts Accounting
- Linda Orth Wright, senior director for Data, Systems and Support, Advancement Information Systems
- Nichole Valenzuela, assistant director for Immersions and Interprofessional Education, Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
- Ryan Washington, police lieutenant, Tulane University Police Department

Departmental/Team Excellence Award Winners:

- School of Architecture and Built Environment
- Office of Research Proposal Development

Spirit of Tulane Award Winner:

- Tim Lempfert, executive director, Housing and Residence Life

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