

Tulane unveils state-of-the-art labs designed to discover tomorrow's breakthroughs and cures

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On Feb. 11, President Michael A. Fitts joined university leaders, faculty and staff to celebrate the \$35 million transformation of Hutchinson Memorial Building's fifth and seventh floors. (Photo by Kenny Lass)

Tulane University President Michael A. Fitts joined university leaders, faculty and staff this week to unveil newly renovated laboratory space on the university's downtown campus designed to accelerate biomedical research and improve health outcomes across the Gulf South and the globe.

The transformation of Hutchinson Memorial Building's seventh floor — and earlier major renovations on [the fifth floor](#) — marks a major milestone in Tulane's ongoing

redevelopment of its downtown campus. The building now houses an additional 40,000 square feet of modern laboratory, office and collaborative space, nearly the size of the Steven and Jann Paul Hall for Science and Engineering on Tulane's uptown campus. The labs will support research in multiple high-impact areas, including nephrology, cancer and neuroscience.

"This is an extraordinary moment," Fitts said during a [ribbon-cutting ceremony](#) on Feb. 11. "I can't overstate how exciting it is because it captures, in a sense, the incredible momentum that put us at this place. But it's also an inflection point, looking forward, about what's going to happen at this school, at this university and on this floor moving forward."

The \$35 million transformation of Hutchinson's fifth and seventh floors will provide space for more than two dozen principal investigators and their research teams, dramatically expanding the School of Medicine's research capacity.

The Hutchinson renovation is part of an ambitious downtown initiative that also includes recent major renovations at the J. Bennett Johnston Building and plans to redevelop the former Charity Hospital building, which Fitts has described as the "next frontier" in Tulane's growth as a leading national research university.

The project is part of Fitts' vision of positioning Tulane as a major driver of discovery, biotech innovation and economic revitalization anchoring a burgeoning academic and research district in the heart of the city.

Fitts noted Hutchinson has been home to generations of pioneering physicians and scientists, including Nobel Prize winners — endocrinologist Andrew Schally and pharmacologist Louis J. Ignarro. He said the newly transformed laboratories build on that legacy, providing modern, collaborative research environments that support Tulane's expanding scientific enterprise.

Fitts placed the renovation within the broader context of Tulane's strategic investments in research over the past decade, which have yielded dramatic gains in national standing and impact.

"Our funding has close to doubled over the last decade," Fitts said, "and faculty research citations have skyrocketed. You see it every day in the research that comes out of Tulane."

Those advances, he said, position Tulane to help address some of the nation's most persistent health challenges, particularly in the Gulf South, a region that has long experienced disproportionately poor health outcomes.

Tulane is taking multiple steps to seize what Fitts described as a historic opportunity to transform healthcare access and quality in the region, including its partnership with LCMC Health and the reimagining of its downtown campus as a destination academic medical center.

Fitts also recognized the donors whose support made the renovation possible. They include Pierce Marshall B '90, who provided substantial funding in memory of his father, E. Pierce Marshall, through the Marshall Heritage Foundation and the Marshall Legacy Foundation. The gifts supported the creation of cancer research laboratories now known as the E. Pierce Marshall Memorial Laboratories, as well as an endowed chair and research fund dedicated to cancer research.

Funding was also provided by the Myrna L. Daniels NC '52 Facilities Fund. Among Daniels' many gifts to Tulane, her philanthropy has established an endowed fund and chair in geriatric medicine, further strengthening Tulane's leadership in caring for an aging population.

Referring to all the donors, Fitts said, "This is part of why Tulane has had the momentum it has had. We have alumni who care about the place and who love this place, but they also understand the promise of this place."

Dr. Lee Hamm, dean of the Tulane School of Medicine, opened the ceremony, calling the moment one of the most exciting chapters in the history of Tulane, which was founded in 1834 as a medical school.

"What surrounds us is a restoration and transformation of space into modern laboratory space," Hamm said. "It is beautiful and laid out so well. If you're a scientist, you want to go grab your equipment and plant it here because it's so well done."

Among those joining the celebration were Marla Lampp, director of research operations, and Dr. Robert Hoover, a physiology professor and section chief of nephrology and hypertension. Both were involved in the planning of the space and said they were overjoyed to see its completion.

Hoover said 85 percent of the space will eventually be occupied by newly recruited scientists. "This space allows us to expand and bring in brand new scientists with new ideas and new techniques."