

[National Press Club Hears Crescent City Story](#)

December 03, 2009 2:15 AM Mary Mouton and Debbie Grant
newwave@tulane.edu

On a cool and cloudy morning in our nation's capitol, Tulane University President Scott Cowen and New Orleans City Council President Arnie Fielkow sketched a bright but balanced picture of New Orleans' progress since Hurricane Katrina for an audience of news media, congressional staffers, alumni and friends of the university and New Orleans.



New Orleans City Council President Arnie Fielkow, left, and Tulane President Scott Cowen represent the Fleur de Lis Ambassadors at a Newsmakers Press Conference of the National Press Club of Washington, D.C. (Photo by Hilary Schwab). [Mouton Media](#) assisted with this story.

Invited by the National Press Club of Washington, D.C., to give a Newsmakers Press Conference, Cowen and Fielkow represented the [Fleur de Lis Ambassadors](#) organization that they founded as they took turns explaining how New Orleans has evolved from the aftermath of a great disaster to become a model city for the 21st century.

The duo cited public education, community-based health care and civic activism as

examples of why New Orleans, while remaining an iconoclastic city renowned for its charm and distinctive culture, also should be considered a demonstration lab for disaster recovery and community transformation.

Instead of bringing New Orleans to her knees, Cowen said that Hurricane Katrina was a ringing call to action that resulted in citizens and neighbors mobilizing and organizing for change, noting the work of groups such as Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans and Women of the Storm.

Cowen said that other cities can learn from the failures and successes experienced by a post-Katrina New Orleans, citing public education as an example. According to Cowen, student achievement in all metrics has improved in public schools since Katrina.

Fielkow credited a highly energized citizenry for the reforms. "It's not who you know in New Orleans, it's what you know," said Fielkow who also told the audience that New Orleans can set the standard for recovery from other disasters in the United States.

There is a collective determination to make things better in New Orleans and there are greater things in store for New Orleans, concluded the two Fleur de Lis Ambassadors. The audience members, including Tulane Law School graduate Janet Woodka, Federal Coordinator of Rebuilding in the Gulf Coast Region, agreed as they gave the pair a round of applause at the end of their presentation.

Said Woodka, "Your enthusiasm and love for the city are inspiring ? and make me so very proud ... and very proud to be a Tulane alum!"