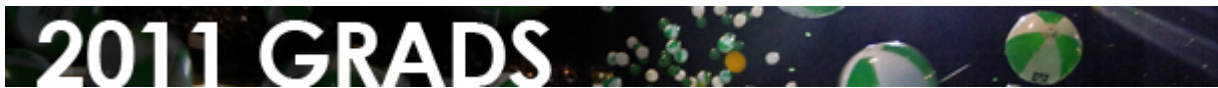


## Community Spirit Leads to Top Award

May 13, 2011 11:45 AM Cody Wild  
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This year, two outgoing seniors, Matt Peters and Ben Zucker, were selected for the Jim Runsdorf Excellence in Public Service Award, a prestigious honor bestowed on students who exemplify civic mindedness and demonstrate singular dedication to public service during their Tulane years.



Dedication to public service marks the Tulane careers of May graduates Ben Zucker, left, and Matt Peters. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

While Peters' contributions have unfolded on a more targeted, interpersonal stage through tutoring and coordination of a Tulane public service student group, Zucker's ambitions have been wide-ranging, as he set his sights on remediating some of the world's most glaring inequities. Both, however, show an inspired readiness to look beyond their own personal narratives to connect to a larger societal or global one.

Growing from the seeds planted during freshman service as a tutor, Peters became the co-head and later overall chief of Ben Franklin Elementary School's Science Club,

an initiative begun three years ago by the Community Action Council of Tulane University Students ([CACTUS](#)).

“At the end of the semester,” Peters reminisces, “one of the kids was just in tears. I had this great epiphany: They're not only getting excited about science, but I'm also making these great connections ... and they look up to us as role models.”

After graduating, Peters will join the ranks of Teach for America as a middle school science teacher.

Zucker's public service journey at Tulane began after attending meetings of the Tulane University Peace Action Committee ([TUPAC](#)), an organization dedicated to fair working conditions. As an organizer for TUPAC throughout his senior year, Zucker became a staunch advocate for the Sodexo food service workers on campus who sought unionization and improved working conditions.

“I remain engaged with public service because I believe that it is essential for working people and students to organize to build a grassroots movement for change,” says Zucker. “If people have a sense of their own power, we can work together to make enormous strides in our society.”

Zucker says that “groups in the New Orleans and global progressive community look to Tulane as a model for university-community engagement.”

The [Runsdorf](#) award is sponsored by the Tulane [Center for Public Service](#).

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