

## Homecoming visitors bring questions to annual Town Hall meeting

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cjs@tulane.edu

Tulane alumni, parents and students settled into their seats in Dixon Hall on Friday morning (Nov. 2) with more than Homecoming on their minds. They arrived at Tulane President Scott Cowen's Town Hall meeting ready to ask questions about the new on-campus stadium, tuition increases, future on-campus housing, the retention rate and the Congressional budget stalemate.



Tulane President Scott Cowen, right, answers a question at the annual Town Hall meeting on Friday (Nov. 2). Gabe Feldman, left, Tulane Law School professor, was moderator. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Joining Cowen for the Q&A session was moderator Gabe Feldman, professor and director of the sports law program at Tulane Law School. Visitors on campus for [Homecoming and Family Weekend](#) lined up to ask questions while other queries were submitted via email.

Live blogging kept a broad Tulane audience tuned in to the event, a format that pleased Feldman, who has 27,000 followers on Twitter ([@SportsLawGuy](#)). Read a transcript of the event [here](#).

One listener asked if a great athletics program is achieved at the expense of great academics, referring to the newly named [Yulman Stadium](#) that is planned on campus.

“First of all, you do both; they are not mutually exclusive. All of the money for the stadium comes from private donations” that likely would not have been available for academic measures, Cowen said.

Other topics raised were:

• Tuition increase. “You have to consider the value of a college degree at the same time you discuss its cost. We try very hard to keep tuition increases as low as we can while increasing the lifelong value of the degree.”

• On-campus housing. Housing “is a very high priority” for the university, with 3,800 beds on the uptown campus now and a long-term goal of 5,100. Work will begin this spring on a new 260-bed residence hall on the Zimple lawn.

• Retention rate. The retention rate of students from first to second year averaged approximately 85 percent from 1980–2004 but since Katrina Tulane has consistently gotten the rate to 90 percent, thanks to a number of new initiatives.

• National budget. If Congress doesn't solve its budget stalemate, it could have a “very negative impact” on research funding for major universities. Tulane is developing its contingency plans, and Cowen is involved on the national level as chair of the executive committee for the [Association of American Universities](#) (AAU).