

'We're in good hands'

February 06, 2014 11:00 AM Carol J. Schlueter and Fran Simon
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"Affable." "Fantastic." "Gregarious." Students, staff and faculty gave plaudits to Michael A. Fitts upon meeting the president-elect of Tulane University on Tuesday (Feb. 4).

It took just six words to sum up the reaction from James J. Reiss Jr., emeritus member of the Board of Tulane: "I think we're in good hands," he said with a smile.

Tulane board member John Williams also was beaming. "To have someone like Mike running Tulane University, it doesn't get any better than this." Fitts and his wife, Renee Sobel, "will make a great team. We're very lucky."

"It's a great day," said provost Michael Bernstein after the announcement. "I'm tremendously excited about Mike." Having President Scott Cowen step down after 16 years makes the occasion "bittersweet," Bernstein said, but Fitts "has just the right tone ? reverence for what's been done, and tremendous excitement about what's to come."

Luann Dozier also expressed excitement about the new president. The vice president of constituency programs for the development office, Dozier said, "I'm very reassured that our current president thinks he (Fitts) can do the job. That means a lot."

"He's obviously ready to become a New Orleanian," said Jared Bocage, director of reunions, clubs and special interest groups in the Office of Alumni Relations. "He already knows half the people in the room!"

The introduction of Fitts to the Tulane community was of great interest to those who assembled for the announcement.

"I think it's interesting that Dr. Cowen is leaving Tulane University and so am I," said Hal Miller, a senior in political science who is graduating in May.

Junior Peter Haskins said he believes Fitts will relate well to students. "He seems like someone who is going to really connect with students, and that was the thing that was most important to me."

Many commented about Fitts' warmth.

"I think every staff meeting should now start with a bear hug," said Kelly Venable Carroll, director of university services.

Video produced by Ryan Rivet and Alicia Duplessis Jasmin.

