

Fitts fields queries at Town Hall meeting

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rrivet@tulane.edu



Tulane University President Mike Fitts, right, answers questions during a Town Hall meeting in Dixon Hall on Friday (Nov. 14). Gabe Feldman, left, served as moderator. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Tulane University [President Mike Fitts](#) was asked a few softball questions in his first annual Town Hall meeting ? where does he like to eat? What is his favorite spot on campus? But, for the most part, the audience queried him Friday (Nov. 14) about substantial topics regarding the past, present and future of the institution.

Prior to opening up the floor for questions from the audience as well as those submitted online, Fitts said he has spent the first few months on the job getting to know Tulane and the students, staff and faculty.

"I've spent the first three of four months as president of Tulane University falling in love with this institution and the people of this institution," Fitts said. "This is an exciting job and I love it."

Law professor and the event moderator Gabe Feldman led into the questions calling the event an "opportunity to see the institution and community through the eyes of someone new."

With that in mind, Fitts fielded questions about why he took the job, calling it the "job of a lifetime."

"For anybody that cares about higher education and where it's going," he said, "the ability to be president of one of the country's supreme universities is wonderful."

The Town Hall meeting, a traditional centerpiece of [Homecoming Weekend](#), was held on Friday morning (Nov. 14) on the Tulane uptown campus.

Responding to questions about the post-Katrina [Renewal Plan](#) that eliminated some of the engineering programs at Tulane, Fitts said that the university is committed to expanding the offerings in technology and engineering, but warned that the university needs to look forward, not back.

"We need to think about ways we can be distinctive and be leaders," Fitts said. "Areas like biomedical engineering, computer sciences and big data are areas where Tulane can be a leader. I don't think we're going to go back and recreate what we had; we need to be thinking about what this field will look like in the 22nd century."

The final question of the meeting addressed the increasing costs of higher education and what Tulane was planning to keep those increases in check.

"That's the issue that keeps me up at night ? affordability of higher education," Fitts said. "Last year, Tulane raised its tuition less than it had in prior years, but that still was an increase. One of the priorities for us moving forward is to try and improve the financial aid offered. We do not have a very large endowment and that constrains us in many ways."

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