



L E T T E R  
T H E P R E S I D E N T

Scott S. Cowen



April 15, 2006

Dear alumni, friends and colleagues:

In just a few weeks, the Tulane University community will gather at the New Orleans Arena for what will undoubtedly be our most poignant commencement ever. For our students, faculty and staff, the past 12 months have brought changes to our university, our city and to each of us as individuals that no one could have predicted or imagined.

On May 13, we will gather to celebrate not only the achievements of our graduates but our own survival and resilience as a community. I am pleased to say that President George H.W. Bush and President William Jefferson Clinton will be joining us as our commencement speakers. Their work on the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund has demonstrated their compassion and dedication toward rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Their appearance at our commencement also signals their recognition of Tulane University as a leader in the rebuilding of our own community and the city of New Orleans.

This letter is also my first since Katrina, and I would like to take a few minutes to look both to the past and the future—at what has worked well in our post-Katrina recovery, and at a few of the biggest challenges we still face.

**UNIVERSITY  
COMMENCEMENT  
CAPSULE**

- Ceremony:  
May 13, 2006
- New Orleans Arena
- 2,400 graduates
- Guest speakers: President George H.W. Bush and President William J. Clinton

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Reed Kroloff, dean of the Tulane School of Architecture, brings his expertise to the rebuilding process by working with the Bring New Orleans Back Commission. Students pitch in to live and learn in the revitalization of the city.

**THREE NEW ACADEMIC UNITS**

will be created under the Renewal Plan starting July 1, 2006.

- School of Science and Engineering, with Nicholas Alterio as dean. He currently serves as dean of the School of Engineering.
- Newcomb-Tulane College, with James MaClaren, associate provost, as interim dean. Tulane commences a national search in July to fill permanently this deanship and the following one.
- School of Liberal Arts, with George Bernstein as interim dean. He is now the dean of Tulane College.

**NEW ORLEANS, TULANE AND RENEWAL**

One of the most exciting developments since Katrina has been the close bond that is developing between Tulane University and the city of New Orleans. As New Orleans' largest employer, we have a responsibility to our hometown, yet in the past the relationship has not always been as strong as we would like. Since the storm, I believe both Tulane and the city realize how important we are to each other. It is truly exciting to watch as our faculty and students take an active role in rebuilding New Orleans, and as New Orleans' leaders look to Tulane for expertise and ideas.

For example, architecture dean Reed Kroloff co-chaired a crucial part of the Urban Planning Committee for New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOB), while Yvette Jones, Tulane's chief operating officer and senior vice president for external affairs, headed up the Bioscience and Technology Subcommittee. I served on the 17-member BNOB Commission and headed the committee to propose transformative changes to the New Orleans public education system. The state's Louisiana Recovery Authority called on Paul Whelton, senior vice president for health sciences and dean of our School of Medicine, to serve on its task force on public health and healthcare. Across the city, our faculty and staff members and our students are working alongside city leaders and New Orleans citizens to rebuild New Orleans, revitalize it and make it better.

Student involvement is a second area of post-Katrina Tulane with which I am especially pleased. Not only did 88 percent of our full-time students return for the spring semester, but they came back happy and engaged. Tulane students, whose arrival in New Orleans in January boosted the city's population by an estimated 10 percent, have been active throughout the city, volunteering for everything from conducting surveys to painting public school buildings, from helping local citizens clean out flooded homes to donating weekend time to pick up trash from neutral grounds around the city. I have always known Tulane students were special; their work this spring has shown me that their compassion, commitment and energy know no bounds.



Eighty-eight percent of students returned in January, celebrating Orientation Dèjà Vu with enthusiasm. Back in class, they are taking post-Katrina studies seriously.

The third post-Katrina accomplishment at Tulane that provides hope for the future is the prospect of the increased focus and clarity of purpose that is resulting from the university's Renewal Plan, adopted by the Board of Tulane last December (see <http://renewal.tulane.edu> to read the complete plan). The plan calls for a smaller, more focused university, with a renewed emphasis on undergraduate education and the creation of a new, inclusive undergraduate college that will be called the Newcomb-Tulane

College. This new college, which all students will begin entering this fall, offers us cost savings through streamlining and consolidations, but also will provide a shared and consistent undergraduate experience for all of our students, whether they are in the liberal arts, the sciences and engineering, public health, business or architecture. Importantly, the new college will allow us to offer all our undergraduates a common core curriculum, including a public service requirement, along with in-depth study in their specific disciplines and majors and special programming that will benefit all undergraduates regardless of school or major. This new way of looking at undergraduate education will continue to pay dividends for the university as a whole for years to come.

## SUPPORT, RECOVERY AND CHANGE

Given the rollercoaster effects of getting Tulane up and running after a natural disaster of the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina, our current upswing is positive and exciting.

But we also have to be realists, and there are some very real challenges that Tulane still must face in our recovery. As someone described it recently, the patient is off life-support but is still in the hospital.

If I had to name the single biggest hurdle we have to overcome, it is financial. Our storm-related losses in terms of physical damage, lost revenue, and lost or damaged research were enormous, and it will take all of the good will and generosity our alumni and friends can muster to ensure that we not only survive, but thrive. I don't usually use this letter to appeal for support, but I am doing so now. If you have ever been inclined to support Tulane or to increase your level of giving, there has never been a better time or a better cause. We made the tough decisions we needed to in order to survive and move the university forward. Now, we need your assistance to help us along the way. If you are able to help in the university recovery effort, please go to <http://www.tulane.edu/rebuildingfund.html> to make a donation online, or mail your donation to the *Tulane University Rebuilding Fund, Dept. 572, P.O. Box 4869, Houston, TX 77210-4869.*

## STARTING THIS FALL, UNDER THE RENEWAL PLAN

all undergraduates will matriculate through the Newcomb-Tulane College. The new college will provide an improved academic experience for students, including:

- A common shared "Tulane experience" or common academic core
- Enhanced ability for cross enrollment in schools and programs
- One set of academic policies, services and programming
- Opening up programming to all students, such as the prestigious Honors Program and leadership programs designed especially for women or men
- Facilitating required public service and interdisciplinary learning
- Coordinated and consistent delivery of student services



## ENROLLMENT OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

- 1,683 expected for fall 2005
- 1,343 enrolled in spring 2006
- 1,400 expected for fall 2006

Another challenge Tulane faces is how the rate and success of rebuilding New Orleans will impact our enrollment and retention rates. I am pleased to tell you that we have received almost 21,000 applications for the 1,400 available spots in next fall's entering class. We purposely reduced the size of our first-year class from about 1,600 in 2005 in order to preserve our academic standards, recognizing that many people still feel uneasy about New Orleans and its potential both to rebuild and to weather upcoming hurricanes. This unease is likely to continue for several years, until New Orleans' rebuilding is more established and the city's levee system proves stable. But, as I said earlier, Tulane is taking an active leadership role in the recovery of our city, and I am confident this unease will dissipate over time. Also, if the enthusiasm of our students and the love they feel for this community are any indication, both Tulane and New Orleans will recover sooner rather than later.

Finally, Tulane will continue to face the challenges that inevitably arise any time an organization undergoes significant change. As the university community looks at the Renewal Plan and how it will go from a paper plan to a working, thriving university, there will inevitably be hiccups along the way. Right now, faculty members are exploring ways to work public-service components into their courses, and departments and programs throughout the university are examining their own structures in light of new opportunities that will come with the implementation of the Renewal Plan. The next couple of years will be ones of transition, but also of excitement as we see our blueprint for Tulane become reality.

Throughout the last seven months, as our faculty and staff have worked so hard to ensure the survival of Tulane University, I have been touched and humbled by the passion all of you feel for the university and your willingness to support it. I hope you will continue to stand behind us as we move the university forward into our post-Katrina future, both wiser and stronger.

All the best,

  
Scott S. Cowen