



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



2011

Scott S. Cowen



March 15, 2011

Dear alumni, faculty, staff and friends,

I hope everyone's new year has gotten off to a good start. As I write this, New Orleans has recently put the finishing touches on another safe and festive Carnival. If you are living away from all the madness of that season, I hope this letter rekindles fond memories for you.

As someone who was not born in New Orleans, it has taken some time for me to develop a true sense of the richness of the Carnival tradition and how it is so thoroughly integrated into the culture and identity of the city. It's just come to my attention, in fact, that the first organized Mardi Gras celebration was held in 1833—just one year before the founding of the medical school that would eventually grow into Tulane University. Now that's an interesting bit of trivia, but I think it also points to something that is not at all trivial: like Carnival, Tulane has been and is an integral part of this city.

Scott Cowen serves as moderator at a recent CASE (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education) conference where the featured speakers were Mary Matalin and James Carville.

NEW PROGRAM COMBINES **BUSINESS, LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULA**

The Jeffrey A. Altman Foundation has pledged \$8.3 million to Tulane University to establish a new dual-degree program in business and international studies. Similar programs are available at only a handful of select universities nationwide.

"In an increasingly global business environment, international study is a must. There are very few business programs in the entire country that offer a dual degree with an international component such as this," says Jeffrey Altman, a 1988 graduate of Tulane who is the founder and managing partner of Owl Creek Asset Management and founder and director of the Jeffrey A. Altman Foundation.

A collaboration between Tulane's A. B. Freeman School of Business and its School of Liberal Arts, the Jeffrey A. Altman International Business Studies Program will require students to pursue a curriculum that includes courses in business, foreign language and culture, along with a year of study abroad. Students graduating from the four-year program will earn a bachelor of science in management and a bachelor of arts with a coordinate major in international studies.

"This combination of disciplines with an emphasis on the understanding of foreign cultures is crucial to preparing students to excel in today's global economy," says Altman.

Students will begin enrolling in the program in the fall 2012 semester.

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**DROP-IN CENTER OFFERS
SAFE PLACE FOR AREA YOUTH**

"It's fabulous to come to work every day because I don't know what amazing person I'm going to meet next," says Isabella Christodoulou, a 1989 graduate of Tulane School of Social Work. Christodoulou works with homeless and at-risk youth who flock to the Drop-In Center operated on the edge of the French Quarter by the Department of Pediatrics in the School of Medicine. Established in 1991, the Drop-In Center provides youth from 13 to 24 years of age a chance to get off the street and receive health and mental health services.

**HELPING IMPROVE THE
INFRASTRUCTURE OF HAITI**

"We've got explicit goals that are not political goals," says Carl Kendall, director of the Tulane Center for Global Health Equity. He and other researchers are on the ground in Haiti, determined to improve the infrastructure of the struggling country, despite disputed elections, civil unrest, cholera outbreaks and the lingering effects of last year's tragic earthquake. Assistance is focused on three key areas: psychosocial support, health systems management and environmental health. Faculty from both the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and the School of Social Work have worked with a senior member of the Haitian Ministry of Health to develop a plan to train Haitian staff in psychosocial assistance. Beginning this year, Kendall and his colleagues are conducting a program to train a new cadre of nurses for the country.



Isabella Christodoulou, right, loves going to work at the Drop-In Center in the French Quarter because of the incredible people she meets every day.

I mention all this because it relates to something that I've given a lot of thought to lately, and that is the civic role of what are called "anchor institutions." These are universities, hospitals, nonprofits, performing arts groups or any other organization that play an ongoing and substantial role in strengthening the fabric of a community.

By any definition, Tulane is just such an anchor institution. Not only are we richly involved with the traditions and culture of community, but we also are one of the city's largest employers and most powerful economic engines.

Now, in my view, part and parcel of being an anchor institution is having the responsibility to see where we can engage in activity that will have a positive impact on the community in which we exist. And honestly, I have to admit that identifying these areas of engagement has become one of my passions. It's something I am wholeheartedly committed to. "Civic engagement" and "community empowerment" are to me not buzzwords to be glibly thrown around, but concepts central to the mission of Tulane and any institution devoted to the public good.

So Scott, you may ask, how does this all work? How does Tulane become a leader working for the public good? I can answer that in this way: when you commit to doing the right thing, good things just start to happen.

I'll give you one example.

Back in 2009, Tulane developed a number of social entrepreneurship initiatives that would allow the university to better support innovative solutions to address pressing social problems. In fact, I wrote about these initiatives in a letter I sent you in the fall



Carl Kendall and his colleagues are working on programs to aid the Haitian people in psychosocial support, health systems management and environmental health.



Habitat for Humanity gives this group of alumnae a chance to give back to a city they love.

of that year. Just in case that letter isn't presently at your fingertips (smile), this is part of what I wrote:

“Social entrepreneurship is an innovative blend of social action and entrepreneurial strategies. Social entrepreneurs identify problems that plague communities and then seek out fresh approaches to address those problems.”

Now, among the initiatives that we implemented that year was the NewDay Social Entrepreneurship Speaker Series. The intent was to bring to campus people who are absolutely out front and leading the way in social entrepreneurship. The series has been a fabulous success and has introduced our students, faculty, staff and community members to a host of remarkable innovators, the most recent being Deborah Bial, who spoke on campus in January.

In 1989, Deborah founded the Posse Foundation, a nonprofit organization that identifies inner-city high school students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential, teams them with similar students in their communities, and provides these small groups (posses) with the opportunity to attend top colleges and universities around the country.

In 2008, Tulane became a partner of the Posse Foundation when we admitted, on scholarship, a group of students from the Los Angeles area. There are currently six other cities in the country that are working with the foundation to round up posses of highly qualified and deserving students.

BUILDING HOUSES BRINGS FRIENDS TOGETHER

“We all learn to do things we never thought we could do,” says Cheryl Josephs Zaccaro, a 1969 graduate from Pittsfield, Mass. For the fifth year in a row, a group of Newcomb College alumnae made the trip to New Orleans to volunteer as house builders. The dozen or so friends from across the country have been getting together once a year, usually right after Thanksgiving, to work on Habitat for Humanity houses. This year, the women, most of them sorority sisters from the classes of 1967 to '71, cut soffit for exterior finishes and painted a Habitat house. The reunions are not all work. The group eats well, and the yearly sojourns in New Orleans are a great way to catch up with friends. “We pick up where we left off the year before,” says Zaccaro.

To watch a video about the Newcomb alumnae's volunteer efforts, visit tulane.edu/empowers and click “Tulane Empowers in Action.”

STUDENT MEETS EVERYDAY CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

When Bob Lathrop initially came to Tulane, he had in mind a career in biomedical engineering with a corporation. But after two months volunteering in eastern Africa with Engineering World Health, Lathrop's interest is leaning toward more socially innovative ventures. Engineering World Health is an organization dedicated to improving the quality of health care to those living in impoverished nations. Lathrop was chosen as one of about 50 students and young professionals to work in Africa repairing broken equipment and training staff to use equipment properly. “We were able to repair a total of 57 pieces of equipment,” says Lathrop. “Every day was full of new challenges: Tripping over a chicken as you carry an oxygen concentrator back up to the maternity ward, catching a grasshopper and removing it from the O.R. so the surgery can recommence, or trying to train a nurse 20 years your senior who speaks no English how to properly wash out a suction pump.”

To watch a video about Bob Lathrop's experiences, visit tulane.edu/empowers and click “Tulane Empowers in Action.”

**PRESIDENT OBAMA NOMINATES
SCOTT COWEN TO COUNCIL**

Last December, President Barack Obama announced his intention to appoint Tulane University President Scott Cowen to the newly formed White House Council for Community Solutions. The council, which comprises 26 community leaders from around the country, will provide advice to Obama on the best way to mobilize citizens, nonprofits, businesses and government to work together to more effectively solve specific community needs. In addition, the council will provide strategic input to help the federal government promote greater innovation and cross-sector collaboration, as well as work to highlight citizens making a significant impact in their communities.

**BIG LESSONS FROM
A SMALL TOWN**

While medical student Valerie Cagle's third-year clinical experience may be in a small town, the amount of work and experience is anything but small. She not only sees patients daily at one of the busiest family medicine practices in rural Point Coupee Parish, La., but she also spearheads the local school district's anti-obesity campaign to get children more physically fit. Cagle is part of the Tulane Rural Immersion Program, an initiative that sends students to rural communities for their entire third year at the Tulane University School of Medicine. "In Point Coupee Parish, they don't have a single pediatrician so it's conceivable that a student like me could eventually graduate and become a pediatrician and return to the community where she trained," says Cagle.



Valerie Cagle makes notes after seeing a patient in Point Coupee Parish, La., where she is part of the Tulane Rural Immersion Program.

So when I was having lunch with Deborah on the day after her campus presentation, my question to her was this: why shouldn't New Orleans be the next posse city and how can Tulane be a catalyst to make that happen? It is my aspiration to make New Orleans a posse city so many of our students in public education here will have the opportunity to go to highly selective schools around the country. I expect the next time I write you to be able to report that New Orleans is a participant in the program.

You may ask, how does this benefit Tulane?

In doing the right thing we assume on a national stage a leadership role in civic engagement and in defining what it means to be an anchor institution—and we become a model for other institutions to follow. In embracing social entrepreneurship and integrating it into our curricular and extracurricular activities we dismantle the image of the remote and irrelevant “ivory tower” and replace it with that of an engaged and dynamic community of learners and doers. In introducing service learning into their classrooms, our faculty members connect the dots between their scholarship and research and the needs of the community. In applying their studies to the real world, our students learn how to solve problems, think innovatively and act with compassion.

As I mentioned earlier, this has become my passion, perhaps my obsession. With every situation that is before me I now think in two dimensions: Is there a role for Tulane and if so, how might our role impact what goes on in our community while further strengthening the university?

And I invite you to join me. Look around your own community and ask, is there a role for me to play? How might that role positively impact my community?

In doing the right things we enable other good things to happen. I see it every day.

All the best,

Scott S. Cowen