For many years, the Tulane Honors Program was synonymous with Dr. Jean Danielson, or Dean Jean, as she was affectionately known. Her 2004 retirement marked the end of an era, and her passing last summer was a great loss for the entire Tulane community (see sidebar, page 9). But her spirit lives on in Hebert Hall, where today’s Honors Program continues to be inspired by Dean Jean’s passionate yet practical approach to working with students.

Over the course of their undergraduate years at Tulane, Honors students will have academic opportunities only afforded to top students nationwide, including mentored research resulting in an Honors thesis, and support in applying for nationally competitive academic grants and awards. Most important, however, are the relationships these students develop with the Honors Program staff, who help them pursue their areas of academic interest with energy and rigor. Working closely with students, the Honors staff connect them with faculty who will guide them toward a learning experience that has both depth and breadth.

Dr. Thomas Luongo has served as director of the Honors Program since 2007. He began his own undergraduate education at Columbia University, and was immediately drawn to the study of medieval history and Italian civic history, two concentrations he saw as “exotic and unlike other fields.” Luongo shares his love of these subjects with students as a professor in the History department, teaching courses on subjects like Medieval Religious Culture and Dante and His World when he’s not advising Honors students in his Hebert Hall office.

“We think about real-world application, but it’s important to think about what we do here, what we do inside the classroom,” Dr. Luongo says. “The heart of an undergraduate education should be intellectual inquiry, asking the kinds of questions and having the kinds of conversations that happen at the university in a way they don’t happen elsewhere.”

continued on page eight
Letter from the Editor

One of the great perks of working in the Office of Cocurricular Programs is having the opportunity to meet an amazing variety of amazing people. This issue of the Newcomb-Tulane Collegian looks back on the 2010 Reading Project event series, which featured American Routes host and Tulane professor Nick Spitzer, author Dave Eggers with the Zeitoun family, and the filmmakers and stars of the award-winning documentary Trouble the Water. We pay tribute to Dean Jean, the beloved late Honors Program director, and meet the dedicated staff members who are carrying on her legacy in an article by 2011 graduate Alex Lipoff. Kramer Schmidt ’09 writes from Capitol Hill, where he serves as a congressional staffer, to give us a glimpse into daily life in D.C. We take a look at several talented Tulanians, from student grant recipients who’ve mounted their own theatrical productions to this year’s star-studded Witmeyer Dean’s Colloquia, which featured Broadway and Mad Men star Bryan Batt ’85 and Entourage creator and head writer Doug Ellin ’90.

This year’s Review departs from a strictly scholarly format to feature an excerpt from Bryan Batt’s upcoming design book, Big, Easy Style. After earning a B.A. in English, Bryan has forged a multifaceted career as an actor, author, activist, entrepreneur, and designer, and his success highlights the nearly unlimited possibilities open to those with an undergraduate degree from Tulane. The photography in Big, Easy Style—which must be seen in all its full-color glory to be truly appreciated—is by another highly successful Tulane graduate, Kerri McCaffety ’85, whose background as an anthropology major informs her approach to preserving New Orleans culture. McCaffety’s lush interiors stand in stark contrast to professor Stephen Hilger’s black-and-white images of a New Orleans neighborhood on the brink of extinction, which remind us that we are still a city in transition.

We hope you will enjoy the 2011 Newcomb-Tulane Collegian & Review. As always, we invite you to submit your news, ideas, and original work for possible publication in next year’s issue.

Best,
Trina J. Beck

This Issue’s Contributors

BRYAN BATT, a 1985 Tulane graduate, has received two Screen Actors Guild awards for his portrayal of Sal Romano on AMC’s Mad Men, and has appeared in nine Broadway productions. With his partner, Tom Clanfichi, he owns Hazelnut, a fine gift and home accessories shop on Magazine Street in New Orleans.

TRINA J. BECK is director of Newcomb-Tulane College Programs. A graduate of Yale University, she has been on the staff at Tulane since 1998.

STEPHEN HILGER is an assistant professor of photography in the Newcomb Art Department. He received his MFA from Columbia University in 2003 and attended the Whitney Independent Study Program in 2003-2004. His photographs employ a documentary approach to investigate notions of place, class, and the social landscape.

ALEX C. LIPOFF, who hails from Pennsylvania, graduated from Newcomb-Tulane College in May 2011 and is currently pursuing his master’s degree in English through Tulane’s 4+1 program.

KRAMER SCHMIDT is a 2009 Tulane graduate and Covington, Louisiana native. He currently works as a Legislative Assistant to Congressman Tim Griffin in Washington D.C.

MELISSA A. WEBER, manager of Newcomb-Tulane College Cocurricular Programs, is a native New Orleanian and graduate of Cabrini High School (class of ’93). She received her B.A. in Communications, with a minor in English, from the University of New Orleans.

Photo Credits

SALLY ASHER: page 13 (Ellin)
TRINA BECK: pages 1, 4 (Trouble), 8
GUILLERMO CABRERA-ROJO: pages 3, 4 (Zeitoun), 7, 12, 13 (Batt)
STEPHEN HILGER: pages 17, 18, 19
CATHERINE JACOT-GUILLARMOD: page 5
KERRI McCAFFETY: pages 15, 16
JULES MARKS: page 6
TOM MOODY: page 20

Courtesy of KRAMER SCHMIDT: page 10, 11
Courtesy of TULANE UNIVERSITY: page 9
The Tulane Reading Project Committee, made up of faculty, staff, and students, normally spends the spring semester reading and considering up to twenty different books before selecting one for all incoming students to read and discuss as a class. But in the spring of 2010, the committee met only once before deciding that Dave Eggers’s *Zeitoun* was the clear choice for the class that would matriculate that August, exactly five years after the disaster that changed New Orleans forever.

Eggers’s non-fiction book chronicles the experiences of a local contractor who stayed behind to take care of his properties while his family evacuated for Katrina. He paddled around the flooded city in a canoe, providing what help he could, only to be picked up on an unfounded suspicion of looting and locked up without even a phone call.

This riveting account of one family’s Katrina saga provided the perfect framework for the first-year class to explore the aftermath of the infamous hurricane and levee failures. Most of the newly minted Tulanians arriving from New York and California and Illinois were only 12 or 13 years old in 2005, and never imagined that the tragedy that unfolded on their T.V. screens was impacting a city that they would later choose to call home for four years. They welcomed the opportunity to learn more about this pivotal event in our nation’s history through a series of Reading Project events throughout the fall semester.

During move-in weekend, students took a break from unpacking to attend a lecture by Nick Spitzer, the host of NPR’s *American Routes* and a professor of anthropology and American Studies at Tulane. He used Zeitoun as a springboard to discuss the cultural recovery of New Orleans, giving many students their first introduction to social aid & pleasure clubs, Mardi Gras Indians, and musicians from Jelly Roll Morton to Allen Toussaint. Abdulrahman Zeitoun, the protagonist of Eggers’s book, is a contractor, not a musician. But Spitzer explained how the building trades in New Orleans are woven together with the musical culture, with many early jazz musicians taking great pride in their day jobs as skilled plasterers, bricklayers, or carpenters. Like the sounds of jazz, the characteristic architectural details of New Orleans are the unique creation of its hardworking residents, who refused to concede when the waters rose and scattered them around the country. As the title of Spitzer’s talk proclaimed, there was “no water line on culture” after the flood. Thanks to skilled workers like Zeitoun and musicians like Toussaint, the homes of the city are being rebuilt, and the music of the city has never stopped.

Less than a week after Spitzer’s talk, students streamed back into McAlister Auditorium for the chance to hear Eggers speak, but many were even more excited about the recent announcement that the Zeitouns themselves would be joining him for a Q&A session. Yet as the event began, Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun still hadn’t arrived. Dean MacLaren walked to the podium to introduce Eggers, and two reserved seats in the front row were conspicuously empty. The Zeitouns’ friend and lawyer Raleigh Ohlmeier, who was in the audience, wasn’t concerned: he knew they tended to underestimate travel time, and he didn’t doubt that they were on their way. Sure enough, moments

Professor Nick Spitzer discusses the resilience of New Orleans culture after the 2005 flood.

Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun listen as Dave Eggers answers a question from the audience.

continued on next page
later, a woman in a hijab was spotted half-walking, half-running down McAlister, followed closely by a man striding purposefully but not hurriedly in the same direction. The woman glanced up and saw the giant banner stretching across McAlister that read “Dave Eggers Talks About Zeitoun.” She gestured excitedly to the man, making sure he hadn’t missed it. He smiled. The Zeitouns had arrived. They took their seats in the front row and listened as Eggers, with characteristic passion, exhorted the first-year students to do all they could to create a world where the injustices Zeitoun experienced would be unthinkable. When Eggers invited the Zeitouns to join him on stage, the standing ovation was immediate. After answering the audience’s questions, Eggers and the Zeitouns stayed for nearly two hours to sign books and chat with students and other audience members. One student was so moved by the Zeitouns’ story that she asked if she might give Kathy a hug. Kathy happily obliged, and several other students followed suit.

The 2011 Reading Project event series concluded with another family’s Katrina story, as told by the Academy Award-nominated documentary, Trouble the Water. After a screening of the film in Freeman Auditorium, filmmakers Tia Lessin and Carl Deal were joined in a panel discussion by the film’s subjects and stars: Kimberly Rivers Roberts, her husband Scott Roberts, and their friend Brian Nobles, who were welcomed by the audience with the same warmth and respect that the Zeitouns had experienced. Lessin and Deal discussed the challenges of creating a documentary narrative while honestly and accurately portraying the real people at the center of the story, with all their strengths, flaws, and complexities. They noted how difficult it is to end a story arc when the film’s subjects go on with their lives, but in this case the audience was able to hear from the subjects themselves about what has happened since the cameras stopped rolling. Nobles and the Robertses spoke about the vicious cycle of poverty that pits inner-city residents against each other and enforces the status quo. They stressed that education is a solution to breaking the cycle and that, five years after Katrina and the levee failures, the resulting overhaul of the New Orleans education system may be a pivotal improvement for many New Orleans residents.

By fulfilling their public service requirements as volunteers in New Orleans public schools and local rebuilding efforts, the class of 2015 will play a major role in building a better, stronger, and safer city. After reading Zeitoun and attending the 2010 Reading Project lectures and events, they will have a deeper historical perspective on their efforts, and they will achieve one of the main goals of the Reading Project: to join their classmates in educational experiences beyond the classroom.  

The 2011 Tulane Reading Project selection is The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, by Rebecca Skloot. For more information about the Reading Project, visit http://tulane.edu/reading.
**Dr. Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog**

With the help of a Newcomb-Tulane College Dean’s Grant, theatre major Stephen Eckert ’12 adapted and directed Joss Whedon’s Internet sensation for the stage. Tickets for the performance in the McWilliams Hall Lab Theatre were free, and the student actors played to packed houses every night.

Jacob Ely ’14 as Captain Hammer, Hope Barnard ’12 as Penny, and Nicholas Damon Carver ’13 as Dr. Horrible.

Nicholas Damon Carver ’13, as Dr. Horrible, admires his freeze ray.
Musical theatre honors student Jennifer Marks ’11 was awarded a Dean’s Grant to direct and choreograph a fully staged student production of the beloved children’s musical, which she also performed in. After graduating summa cum laude in May and starring as Little Red Ridinghood in Tulane Summer Lyric’s Into the Woods in July, Jenn is deferring matriculation at Tulane Medical School to spend a year in New York City.

A Year with Frog and Toad

Holt Kirkindoll MFA ’12 as Toad, Ryan Jones ’12 as Frog, and Jenn Marks ’11 as Mouse.

Jenn Marks ’11, Greg Gorenc ’14, and Kelsey Beck ’14 as the Birds.

The cast of A Year with Frog and Toad in rehearsal.
As I write this, the first day of classes is less than two weeks away, and the campus is already buzzing with activity. Along with the upperclassmen who will be returning to campus, we are expecting 1620 first-year students—our most competitive incoming class ever, selected from approximately 38,000 applicants. Our retention and graduation rates continue to climb, and we expect this will soon be reflected in Tulane’s rankings in *US News & World Report*.

We are all looking forward to this year’s Freshman Reading Project, which features *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. This book describes the remarkable story of a line of cancer cells taken from a poor African American patient in the 1950’s that were the first human cells to thrive in vitro. The resulting research has led to many medical advances in cancer treatments and vaccine development, but is controversial since this was undertaken without the family’s knowledge or approval. We invite the entire Tulane community to join us in reading and discussing this book, and in attending a series of events including a talk by Johns Hopkins bioethicist Ruth Faden on October 4. Details can be found online at tulane.edu/reading.

This past year, we welcomed Pete Alongia as our new Director of Study Abroad. Pete came to Tulane from the University of New Orleans, where he ran their study abroad programs for many years. With record numbers of juniors choosing to study abroad, we are continuing to expand our offerings, including new programs in Israel and two new summer offerings in Spain and France, to keep up with student interest.

This marked the second year of the Honors Program’s summer research program, which funded 10 students for 6 weeks of research, and it was our first year running honors tutorials that provide students small informal classes with faculty on special topics. Our Honors students won several competitive awards, including four Fulbright Scholarships and one Udall Scholarship honorable mention. With the finishing touches currently being applied to the new Weatherhead Residential College, which will house sophomore honors students and a faculty family, we are moving toward a greater integration of residential life and non-classroom-based learning experiences. You can read more about the Honors Program in this issue’s cover article.

I am happy to report that the Teacher Certification and Preparation program, which was previously housed partially in Newcomb Hall and partially in Cudd, has moved to a new home on Freret Street, where they finally have the space they need to serve the over 300 students—half undergraduate, half graduate—who are now working towards certification. Whether or not these students choose to stay and teach in New Orleans after graduation, they will make a positive impact on the New Orleans public school system through their partnerships with local public schools during their time with TPCP.

Academic advising is expanding the ways they connect with students, working more with social media and instituting an Exploratory Studies track for students trying to decide on a major. Exploratory Studies is closely linked with Career Services in order to help students start to think about their long-term goals as well.

For those of you on campus or in the New Orleans area, I encourage you to attend some of the many events sponsored by the Office of Cocurricular Programs, from the Dean’s Colloquium, to the Newcomb-Tulane College Lecture, to our annual concert with Ellis Marsalis or our Jazz at the Rat music series. The current events listings are at http://college.tulane.edu/programs.htm.

Yours,

James M. MacLaren
Newcomb-Tulane College Dean
Luongo sees the Honors program as directing students toward this kind of conversation through an enhanced curriculum and special programs and events.

Luongo and his staff design activities and requirements that encourage students to seek their own interests and knowledge through an engaged academic experience. The Honors freshman seminars allow students to begin their undergraduate education by asking fundamental questions about the meaning of education and one’s place in society, through the reading and discussion of great books from the ancient Greek era through the 20th century. The Honors program also offers a variety of interdisciplinary courses, such as a Fall 2011 course on Moral Psychology co-taught by professors in philosophy and psychology. Other programs continue the conversation outside of the classroom in residence hall roundtables and guest lectures. The end result is that students in the Honors program learn to take ownership of their own education, focusing not on grades alone but on contributing to an ongoing scholarly dialogue.

Dr. Scott Pentzer joined the staff in 2009, after Dr. Luongo and Dean James MacLaren successfully pushed for the creation of his Associate Director position in order to significantly enhance the advising available to Honors students. Dr. Pentzer graduated from Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service, where he developed his interest in Latin American Studies. He spent his junior year studying in Costa Rica and traveling through Central America. Returning to Georgetown “hooked on Latin America,” he signed up for a post-graduate year as a volunteer in Peru, and ultimately came to Tulane to pursue graduate work in Latin American Studies. Before coming to the Honors Program, Pentzer returned to Costa Rica, where he worked as the program director of a study abroad program, advising students as they met the challenges of an experience abroad. Today, Pentzer—himself a Fulbright recipient—advises students as they compete for top academic scholarships and grants, such as the Fulbright, Marshall, or Rhodes scholarships. Pentzer explains that the qualities that qualify students for national scholarships are well aligned with the objectives of the Honors program. “Prestigious scholarship programs like the Rhodes, Marshall, Truman, Goldwater, and Fulbright look for the same depth, intensity, and capacity for formulating original questions that honors students must develop to succeed with their research at Tulane.”

Pentzer stresses the importance of connecting students with faculty, who serve as “example[s] of the intellectual life we think honors students are looking for. Whether or not they want to be college professors (most don’t), honors students are interested in questions worth asking, and in how they can be answered in collaboration with others. This is what faculty members do all the time, and a lot of our work has to do with finding interesting ways to bring honors students and faculty together.” Along with the rest of the Honors Program staff, Pentzer is “really excited” about expanding the Honors Program’s residential component beyond the Butler freshman honors dorm to the new Sophomore Honors Residential College (SoHo) at the newly constructed Weatherhead Hall. With nine faculty fellows, a faculty couple in residence and a planned schedule of dinners, discussions, and other activities, SoHo will offer a variety of new opportunities for students to connect with faculty with similar interests.

For students in the Creative Arts, Senior Program Coordinator Norah Lovell is a valued resource and mentor. Lovell grew up in New York City, where her early interests in visual and performing arts were encouraged by her film critic father and photographer/landscape designer mother. Lovell was an honors student herself, working on an honors thesis as an undergraduate at the University.
of New Mexico and pursuing graduate study at the University of Chicago. While Lovell agrees that Tulane is already an intellectually rigorous environment with diverse offerings for students, part of what she sees the Honors program offer is an intensified experience: “What it really translates to is greater involvement with peers and faculty, thematic colloquia and discussion-based sessions held in the honors dorms. Ultimately this can lead to the most important piece: a connection with meaningful subject matter which may prompt an honors thesis and postgraduate projects.”

Much of Lovell’s focus in the coming academic year (along with the rest of the Honors program staff) will be developing programs at SoHo. These programs will be articulated with programs already in place at the Butler freshman dorm. “In my first six months on the job, I have enjoyed coordinating Butler Roundtables (ongoing informal faculty/student discussions) and I greatly look forward to working to develop more programs in keeping with our long-term educational goals for the living/learning community,” says Lovell.

In order to facilitate students becoming contributors to and stewards of their communities, the Honors program seeks to provide an educational experience where students find their intellectual passions but also learn how to apply the knowledge they gain at Tulane. With the help and mentorship of Tom Luongo, Scott Pentzer, and Norah Lovell, Tulane Honors students become not merely knowledgeable citizens, but members of an intellectual and inquisitive community of leaders. Dean Jean would surely approve.

For many years, the Tulane Honors Program was synonymous with Dr. Jean Danielson, or Dean Jean, as she was affectionately known. It’s hard to overstate the impact the inimitable Dean Jean had on generations of Tulanians—not only students, but faculty and staff as well. When she passed away last summer at the age of 77, Tulane lost an intellectual icon and a model mentor. Never afraid to speak her mind, she encouraged others to be equally fearless, to challenge the status quo, and to ask difficult questions. If a student was planning to choose a major or a career path for all the wrong reasons, Dean Jean could spot it a mile away, and she had the knowledge and compassion to be able to guide the student towards a better decision. Her razor-sharp intellect was also put to good use in the classroom; she began her career at Tulane in 1965 as the first female professor in the Newcomb College political science department, and received several teaching awards.

Even after her retirement in 2004, Dean Jean remained a valued member of the Tulane community, and was a frequent visitor to Cudd Hall. She was a regular guest at Friday morning Dean’s Coffees, an outspoken member of the committees that reviewed student grant applications, and held office hours as an “adviser at large” until failing health forced her to curtail her trips to campus. But she kept in close touch, and the news of her passing was deeply felt by Newcomb-Tulane College. Her legacy is preserved in the Jean Danielson Memorial Scholarship, which will provide enrichment grants for outstanding honors students with financial need. For information on contributing to the scholarship fund, please contact Anne Normann at anormann@tulane.edu or 504-314-7325.
It’s 1 a.m. and I am standing in front of a vending machine in the deserted basement of the Longworth House Office Building. My tie is loosened, my brain on the fritz, and I haven’t eaten dinner yet. A late Friday night has turned into an early Saturday morning. I drop three dollars in quarters into the vending machine and select the package containing two frozen hamburgers (the frozen burrito was a close second). The sudden drone of the machine’s robot arm springing into action cuts through the silence. I zap the hamburgers in the microwave and rush back to my desk on the second floor—my workspace isn’t much larger than the interior of a phone booth.

There will be three more hours of debate and votes on the House floor, and I am in charge of advising my boss on how to vote on the thirty-or-so amendments left to consider. The overtime work is a daily reality. Salaries are low, living expenses in Washington D.C. are high, and the hours, especially on this night, are long. But I wouldn’t trade it for anything in the world.

The other day, I came close to running over Nancy Pelosi as I turned a corner in a hallway near the House floor. My cat-like reflexes allowed me to not only avert the former Speaker, but also a physical takedown by her secret service detail. My sister recently spotted me on C-SPAN as I sat in the House chamber, and in the past six months I have met with a former Attorney General, a former Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and a sitting Member of the British Parliament. Both fascinating and sometimes intimidating, these experiences are a humbling reminder of the concentration of power in the Capitol.

Tulane’s roots in D.C. run deep, and nowhere is this evidenced more than in my office. I work as a Legislative Assistant for Congressman Tim Griffin (Law ’94), and the Congressman’s legislative director is Brooke Bennett (Law ’05). My job is to advise my boss on legislation that comes before the House Judiciary Committee, of which he is a Member, and within a larger portfolio of issues such as energy, the environment, and tax and budgetary policy.

Depending on your view, the level of political debate over the issues of the day can be described in different ways. Some may call the current debate “contentious,” or even “spirited.” These are the optimists. The alternative view is well described by my fellow Covington, Louisiana native, the late writer Walker Percy. “The level of debate lies somewhere between Genghis Khan and the Incredible Hulk,” he once said. There is no doubt that Washington is a place that is deeply partisan, but the political veneer of the place misrepresents it to the rest of the country.

Congressional staffers and Members of Congress alike, no matter one’s party identification, are generally friendly and often close friends. My best friend, whom I have known since the age of 8, is also my roommate in D.C. He works for a liberal Democrat. I work for a conservative Republican. The D.C. “normal” contrasts what we often see on T.V. People here respect one another because everyone is motivated by the same love for one’s country and desire to improve it. This mutual respect trumps partisanship and begets friendships and even marriages (I’m looking at you, James Carville).

One of my great friends in town works at the White House. A privilege of working at 1600 Pennsylvania is...
having access to the White House bowling alley—located in a basement under the White House itself. It was here that I recently rang in my 25th birthday with ten friends, a German chocolate cake, and a few bottles of champagne.

The White House bowlers that day were an amalgam of the different spheres of professional D.C. There were the Hill staffers and the White House staffers, a teacher, a non-profit worker, and even a few lobbyists (they’re not all evil). No one was over the age of 26. The relative youth of the bowling crew underscored one of the great qualities of the nation’s capital—it is a city run largely by young people.

Walking the halls of Congress is not that different than walking the halls of Norman Mayer, Newcomb, or the Freeman School. The legislative hearings, markups, and meetings I attend on behalf of my boss are opportunities to meet fellow staffers—most of whom are my age or a little older. Behind all the speeches on C-SPAN and votes on the floor are these young staffers, who write the speeches and recommend to their bosses how they should vote on legislation. Make no mistake, these are not the people advising or negotiating with the President at the White House. That role is for those much older and in an entirely different level in the atmosphere. In certain ways, though, congressional staffers turn the cogs of Washington. The long hours, low pay, and whirring pace of Capitol Hill necessitate youth.

D.C.’s young professional population is a constant, so it follows that people come and go in short bursts of time. This is a most transient place. In fact, I am writing this piece as my roommate packs up to move out of town after two years of work on the Hill. I moved up here soon after graduating from Tulane, and this summer marks the beginning of my third year in town. After only a few months here you learn the drill—you make friends, gradually many move away, you make more friends, then sooner or later you become the next one to skip town. Most people leave for want of a slower pace or to go back to school. Washington has an undeniable magnetism and doesn’t really push people away, but those who leave somehow manage to escape its pull.

I moved here intending to stay for one year before heading to graduate school. One year quickly turned to two, and now two has turned to three. Yes, the often stagnant political process can be frustrating, the pace of the town is tiring, and the average beer costs six dollars. But if you believe in certain ideas and want to make a contribution, however small, each passing year makes the decision to leave more difficult.

My most fulfilling times at work usually happen after hours. I sit at my desk, click on the lamp, and take time to read and to think. I read the news and pore over bill text in search of ideas for amendments or legislation. Most ideas are flawed and quickly disposed of, but every now and then one will stick.

By its very nature, Washington D.C. forces you to question your beliefs as well as those of others—this is a consequence of living in the cradle of democracy. Many of the most engaging and provocative debates I have had here are with people from my side of the aisle. This is the place where the fundamental questions of our time get asked and where well-intentioned ideas get tested. Every congressional staffer wants to contribute to making people’s lives better; the question is, how do we do that? The process of answering that question is both arduous and emboldening, and it is the force that keeps pulling me back in.

Schmidt is the coach of the congressional softball team, the “W Hobats,” made up of Capitol Hill staffers from Louisiana.
When Bryan Batt ’85 was a Tulane undergraduate, he spent his extracurricular time acting in plays and enjoying an active social life.

Returning to Tulane as the guest speaker at the John J. Witmeyer III ’68 Dean’s Colloquium on November 16, 2010, he joked with audience members that he finds himself doing much of the same thing now, but this time for many more people.

Batt is well known for his portrayal of “Salvatore Romano,” the closeted art director, on AMC’s Emmy-winning series Mad Men. He’s also played “Spencer Cannon” on TV’s Ugly Betty and has appeared in numerous Broadway productions, from the 2005 revival of La Cage Aux Folles to Beauty and the Beast to Cats. He starred in several iterations of the cult off-Broadway hit Forbidden Broadway, and originated the role of Darius in both the stage and film versions of Paul Rudnick’s ground-breaking AIDS comedy, Jeffrey.

Batt’s return to campus began with a visit to theatre professor Ron Gural’s Video Production class, where he spoke candidly with aspiring actors, directors, and producers about the ups and downs of the business. Later that afternoon, after mingling with students at a catered reception in the 1834 Club, Batt headed to the Kendall Cram room for the Colloquium itself. In a unique twist on the standard format, Batt’s talk was conducted as an interview and led by Leslie Castay, another successful Broadway veteran as well as Batt’s Tulane ’85 classmate and friend. Castay was the perfect foil for Batt, a storyteller with a sly sense of humor whose animated, personable style was perfectly suited to the intimate onstage conversation.

In addition to his work as an accomplished actor, Batt is also a local entrepreneur, published author, and activist. With his partner of over 20 years, Tom Cianfichi, he owns Hazelnut, a fine gift and home accessories shop on a bustling stretch of Magazine Street. There, Batt helps customers practice the innovative interior design and style tips that he preaches in his forthcoming book Big, Easy Style:
Doug Ellin ’90, Creator of Entourage, Visits Campus

When Entourage creator and head writer Doug Ellin’s busy schedule allowed him to pay a visit to New Orleans for the first time in several years, he made a stop at his alma mater for an impromptu Witmeyer Dean’s Colloquium. Students got valuable tips on breaking into the film and television business, as well as the inside scoop on the upcoming final season of Entourage. After the informal discussion and Q&A in Richardson Memorial, Ellin chatted with students at a reception in Cudd Hall.
THAT’S ENTERTAINING

BY BRYAN BATT WITH Katy Danos

Following is an excerpt from the second book by alumnus Bryan Batt ’85, whose memoir She Ain’t Heavy, She’s My Mother is now available in paperback. In Big, Easy Style, to be published in October by Clarkson Potter, Batt draws on his charmed New Orleans childhood, his years of living in New York as a Broadway actor, and his experiences on the hit show Mad Men as he shares his unique design philosophy. Fellow Tulane alum Kerri McCaffety ’89 contributes the gorgeous photography.

My father always said that I was a natural entertainer. I love being on stage, but enjoy entertaining at home just as much—it doesn’t require memorizing lines, and I get to choose my own costumes. I adore the glamour of dining rooms and well-appointed bars, and I love to use these spaces, along with my kitchen, when having family and friends to my home. Designing these communal spaces in your home for sharing the good times in life should be a priority in any well-tended house.

My impulse to entertain definitely harks back to my childhood, when, as a youngster, I would sneak into my parents’ swanky cocktail parties. The ladies were always dressed to the nines in silk chiffon and taffeta dresses, while the gentlemen all wore ties with tie bars, cuff links, and often dinner jackets. There was a romanticism in that period: guests dressed the part. At many of these glamorous events, after saying good night to the guests at my bedtime, I would slip out of my room, procure an olive, and then make my way around the room dipping it in everyone’s drink for a taste, until I was found out and whisked away. Once or twice among the din, I would sneak back undetected only to be discovered underneath the dining table in my Batman costume singing the refrain of Petula Clark’s smash hit, “Downtown.” My parents’ soirees seemed like the most fabulous of affairs, never pretentious, but fun and swell. There was always laughter and dancing; often my mother and Aunt Carol would break into a soft shoe if the moment was right. For the more formal events there would be a bartender and ladies passing hors d’oeuvres on silver trays, while a smart jazz trio roamed through the house. For less formal parties, Burt Bacharach would be spinning on the hi-fi while my dad played master mixologist behind the bar, which was his pride and joy. The construction of the bar was of his own mid-century design and incorporated a serpentine, highgloss cypress base beneath a gleaming, copper countertop. The entire back wall was beveled mirror and outfitted with underlit glass shelving that housed interestingly shaped bottles and every colorful liquor known to man. Everything was picture perfect for the period. The size of my parents’ budget for entertaining was irrelevant; it was the attitude and spirit that went into decorating their home for events that prevailed.

On the set of Mad Men, while wearing Janie Bryant’s brilliantly designed costumes and living among Amy Wells’s perfectly appointed sets, my childhood memories of my parents’ oh-so-chic fetes came flooding back to me with vivid accuracy. Maybe we don’t need all the smoking and boozy lunches, but I have never lost my fondness for a sexy cocktail and intimate dinner parties. And in addition to cocktail parties, a return to family and friends dining together at home—at a table, with cloth napkins, and without television—is an effort worth making.

Dorothy Draper, the famed American decorator, once wrote, “Entertaining is fun!” I’d like to take
that sentiment a step further. Entertaining must be fun; otherwise, what’s the point? Entertaining should not be considered an obligation or chore; if it is, then it will feel the same to your guests. Sometimes the best soirees are impromptu and some of the most memorable are last-minute get-togethers with simple fare. Too much thinking leads to second-guessing, and second-guessing leads to panic . . . relax! It’s just a party. Keep the focus on what entertaining is really all about: the breaking of bread and sharing yourself and your home. Extending invitations and warmly welcoming people should be done only with great joy and the heartfelt desire to share camaraderie. Your home reflects your unique personality, and entertaining provides another opportunity to develop and share your signature style. I love living in New York, New Orleans, and L.A., where there always seems to be a festive reason to gather. Whether a debutante ball or a crawfish boil, in New Orleans we celebrate life, death, and everything in between. Even at a christening or a funeral, there will be a party, complete with a full bar and a lavish spread. In New York and Los Angeles, I’ve attended opening-night parties for Broadway and glamorous award events; a highlight was the after-party for the Screen Actors Guild awards. In an over-the-top setting, the designers managed to create intimate lounge areas where we celebrated and hobnobbed. But my favorite type of party, above all, is the self-catered dinner party at home. Preparing the house, setting the table, planning the dinner, and, of course, all aspects of the décor come into play. Besides, no one ever asks, “Who are you wearing?”

It seems like what has been lost in the shuffle of our hectic lives is the beauty of a simple dinner party. Time has given way to a more casual form of entertaining, which has its place and time, but for me, there is nothing lovelier than an intimate dinner party. As a child, I loved watching my mother prepare and attend to all the details for an elaborate buffet or a seated dinner. As a child, I loved watching my mother prepare and attend to all the details for an elaborate buffet or a seated dinner. In college, my brother and I would borrow our parents’ home to throw our own dinner parties. His were called “New Talent Night,” where the mandatory rule was that each invited guest bring a date that no one else had ever met. Mine were alfresco dinners

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for up to sixteen friends on the patio. I’d push all available tables together underneath the large awning, cover them with white linen, and then go to town arranging potted geraniums and tall hurricane lamps down the center of the long makeshift table. I had no idea how to cook, but I was determined to do it all myself, so I made sure the recipes were easy and obviously foolproof. Although this kind of dinner party may have been a little formal for some college students, my crowd dined and danced all night.

Never let a small apartment or house limit your entertaining—square footage never inhibited my desire to throw a party. The true spirit of entertaining should not be defined by anything but your imagination and sense of style. New York (or any big city) is actually a great training ground and a laboratory for cultivating wildly clever ideas and unleashing design creativity. Not only is there a barrage of constant inspiration from the talent the city attracts, but everything you need is always just a few blocks away. The flower district is an amazing treat for the senses and easy for procuring blossoms, from the most exotic to the ordinary. A trip to Chinatown yields strings of lights with Japanese lanterns to hang overhead, and a call to the neighborhood sushi joint for delivery makes for a great gathering at a moment’s notice. New Yorkers are known for having black-tie parties in one-bedroom apartments and cookouts on the roof. For many events, my friends and I would move half of the furniture to the basement to make room for a dance floor, put coatracks in the hall, and ice the champagne and wine in the bathtub. Being clever with what you have is the key. One important lesson I learned from living in New York is that there is absolutely no reason to wait for more space, more money, or more of anything to enjoy one of life’s most rewarding pleasures: entertaining.
Stephen Hilger is an assistant professor teaching photography in the Newcomb Art Department. His photographic projects construct visual archives of the disappearing. Recently, he has photographed the Lower Mid-City neighborhood of New Orleans as it faces its demolition and erasure in order to make way for new hospital construction. A portfolio of these images appears in the inaugural issue of the journal *Satellite* this fall.

**Interior**, 2010  
Archival Pigment print  
20 by 30 inches
PhOtography  continued from previous page

Shotgun Double, 2009
Archival Pigment print
30 by 20 inches
Veteran, 2010
Archival Pigment print
30 by 20 inches
NEWCOMB-TULANE COLLEGE is the academic home for all of Tulane's full-time undergraduate students, who are taught by faculty in the School of Architecture, the A. B. Freeman School of Business, the School of Liberal Arts, the School of Public Health, and the School of Science and Engineering. Newcomb-Tulane College comprises several student-service offices: the Academic Advising Center, the Center for International Studies, Cocurricular and First-year Programs, the Honors Program, ROTC, Teacher Preparation and Certification, and the Office of the Dean.

Newcomb-Tulane College's main offices are located in Robert C. Cudd Hall on the historic St. Charles campus. Built in 1901, the distinctive Dutch Gothic (or Italian Renaissance Revival, according to some sources) building originally served as the university refectory, or dining commons. Since then, the building has served in a variety of capacities, providing classroom and office space and acting as the home for several different departments. Over the years, a number of piecemeal additions and adaptations obscured most of the building's architectural interest. In the 1990s a group of donors provided the funds to restore the building and remodel the interior as the home for Tulane College, formerly the men's undergraduate liberal arts college. The building was reopened and placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1999. In 2006, following the university's post-Katrina restructuring, Robert C. Cudd Hall became the administrative home of the newly created Newcomb-Tulane College, housing the Office of the Dean and the Office of Cocurricular Programs.

In the more than 150 years since its founding, Tulane University has subscribed to a few basic principles: a belief in the enduring value of liberal arts and professional education, a conviction about the importance of extracurricular activities and accomplishments, and a justifiable pride in the achievements of its talented students, dedicated faculty, and distinguished alumni.