Bernstein Opens New Chapter in College History

Though new to his role as dean, George Bernstein is no stranger to Tulane College. We were accustomed to seeing him twice a week, when he taught in the building’s electronic classroom. And we knew him by reputation: Professor Bernstein has been one of Tulane’s favorite faculty members for more than twenty years. George (he will insist you call him “George”) is an avid proponent of the virtues of a liberal education and all the opportunities such broad learning affords. “Nothing prepares us better for our lives and careers than a knowledge and understanding of language and culture; of the history, literature, and art of our own and other cultures; and of the basic principles of science that allow us to better understand ourselves and the world in which we live,” wrote George in a letter of introduction to undergraduates. “I myself gained a lifelong love of classical music and art as a result of the courses I took at Columbia—required courses, I might add.”

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A Letter from the Dean

It is my distinct honor to greet you all in this first issue of the Collegian published since I became dean of Tulane College, as it has been a pleasure to see many of you in person in these last few months. I have met with alumni who represent a variety of fields and interests, in Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., and here in New Orleans.

Perhaps the most fun I’ve had with alumni thus far was over Homecoming weekend. The events we hosted as a College—the breakfast and cocktail party at Cudd Hall, and the tailgating tent at City Park before the game—were filled with recent graduates and forty-year reunors alike. I enjoyed hearing the reminiscences of all the different groups of alumni, especially because their feedback on the state of the College was overwhelmingly positive.

I also had the recent pleasure of socializing with a number of graduating seniors, at the first of this year’s senior banquets. Our students are (of course) savvy, and they had thoughtful things to say about their experiences over the last four years, and good suggestions for positive changes the College might consider for the future. It was my pleasure to tell them about my meetings with alumni and about the interesting things you are doing, to encourage them as they head on to the job market.

We welcomed Arthur Demarest ’74 at this fall’s John J. Wiltmeyer ’68 Dean’s Colloquium. Professor Demarest is a world-famous anthropologist and archaeologist specializing in Mesoamerican cultures; he shared his wisdom with seniors, at the first of this year’s senior banquets. Our students are (of course) savvy, and they had thoughtful things to say about their experiences over the last four years, and good suggestions for positive changes the College might consider for the future. It was my pleasure to tell them about my meetings with alumni and about the interesting things you are doing, to encourage them as they head on to the job market.

I look forward to continuing my journey as dean, to hearing from more of you in other cities, and to the many exciting programs upcoming in the spring.

Yours.

George L. Bernstein
Dean of Tulane College
ALUMNI DISPATCH:
WAR CORRESPONDENCE

Peter Benninger ’01 and Ross Berkoff ’02 have come a long way since the European history class they had together in the fall of 1998. Both went on to earn their degrees in history at Tulane, and both completed officer training as part of their Army ROTC programs. Now, they are thousands of miles away from Tulane and from their New Jersey hometowns, deployed as part of the United States’ military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Benninger is serving as First Lieutenant in the Army’s 101st Airborne Division in Iraq, Berkoff as Second Lieutenant in the Army’s 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan. They both managed to make time recently to correspond with the College about their experiences there.

Benninger, writing from an airfield south of Mosul, reported: “I am doing OK, just waiting to get home, as I have now been deployed seven and a half months. Things can still get kind of rough over here, but I think we are all dealing pretty well. . . . I have been deployed since early March. I started in Kuwait, where I stayed for almost one month, before arriving into Iraq as a member of Alpha company as their company fire-support officer. We flew to just south of An Najad and took part in the major battle to take that city. My unit then moved to the town of Al Hillah, which is the current location of the ancient city of Babylon. I actually went to Easter services there. I took part in the taking of Al Hillah, another major battle, and then helping to put together some sort of government for the city. . . .

“We then moved to an airfield just south of Mosul,” he continued, “where we did a few combat patrols until major combat operations were declared over on May 1. I then began work in a civilian military operations center in Ash Shurah, Iraq. After a month there, I moved to a new unit, where I currently reside. Here we have done mostly guard missions and escorts of fuel and people around the Mosul area. . . . Bottom line is that it is dangerous over here.”

Benninger added that both his ROTC training and his liberal arts education have come in handy: “My ROTC experience definitely helped, giving me the tools that I needed to help me become a leader in combat. I am also the editor and generally the writer for anything that my unit has to submit to a higher headquarters, or any speech that my boss has to give. Tulane definitely gave me good writing skills. Tulane is a fun school,” he added. “The thing I miss the most is having all that freedom and very little responsibility. There is nothing like college. . . . The real world is not as fun as it may seem when you are studying for exams.”

He also wants to thank the Tulane football team for beating Army this year because “I just love mocking West Pointers.”

Berkoff wrote from the Kandahar airfield in southern Afghanistan: “There has been quite a buildup of Taliban and Al Qaeda Forces in this part of the world. In fact, recent battles have accounted for the highest mark of bloodshed since the post–9-11 operations. I am a cavalry scout platoon leader—the only such officer in all of southern Afghanistan. I have about twenty scouts in my platoon, and we operate as a mounted reconnaissance force using six armored Humvees with a great deal of firepower. It’s the first time that a U.S. ground cavalry force has been deployed in Afghanistan in history. Apart from the challenging terrain (mostly mountainous), we are so far successfully completing our missions to deny sanctuary to anticoulier forces and terrorists so that they can no longer stage attacks or become organized.

“Believe it or not,” he added, “I think about my days at Tulane frequently over here—it’s only been one and a half years but feels like decades ago. Of course there is the constant longing for late-night Domino’s Pizza, the dorm-balcony social scene, and Dr. Harl’s intense lectures, but even more present are the lessons of preparation that I was forced to endure while juggling the strict ROTC and academic schedules. Time management, interpersonal skills, and the discipline required to finish a job before its deadline are just some of the valuable lessons Tulane has taught me and are practiced out here on the front line.”

Berkoff closed by noting the effect of seemingly endless cycles of war, violence, and international intervention on the Afghan landscape and people: “This country is unforgiving . . . and I really just want to do my job and get all my men home alive.” He hopes to be home by the spring of next year.

Both Benninger and Berkoff wrote that they would like to hear from old friends and colleagues and others in the Tulane community. Their email addresses are peter.benninger@us.army.mil and ross.berkoff@us.army.mil, respectively.

I read your article entitled “From the Archives: CACTUS” in the most recent edition of the Tulane Collegian with interest, maybe some nostalgia, and perhaps even a little bit of satisfaction. The original program was, as you related, the Mardi Gras Coalition (of Tulane University). We called it that because it lent a ring of legitimacy to minor city officials to what might otherwise have been perceived as a perhaps questionable nascent program proposed by a group of (somewhat) radical Uptown do-gooder college students.

I suppose the records do not disclose it, but the term Coalition was coined because there were more than Tulane medical school personnel involved, as might be inferred from the very fine article you wrote. The picture of the kid being grabbed by the NOPD horseman would indicate that he had a problem, albeit not necessarily medical, in the offing. There were many undergraduates, law school students, and others from various departments of the University all working to assist people who had been injured, arrested, or had any of a number of other problems to solve during Carnival. We needed to sound legitimate so that the city’s police department, courts, and hospitals would cooperate and talk to us, and provide the necessary information on people reported missing, in trouble, or in distress, so that we could do whatever might be called for and feasible to begin the process of sorting out their various problems and, hopefully, help solve some of them.

I am glad to see that this idea lives on, in one form or another. I am not really surprised, though, because I always felt that Tulane gave us more than the means to make a decent living, but also left us with a sense of social obligation to really help people and make society a better place. Who says doctors, and even lawyers, don’t really care about poor people or their problems? Tulane taught us better than that, and provided us with a challenge and a chance to do more than just talk about it. We tried to demonstrate to our own satisfaction, as Tulanians, that talk without action was like trying to make a doughnut without a hole (Oops!—we did that in New Orleans! We are in need of a better idiom . . . ).

If you want to know what we did: among other things, law students and some undergraduates ran a public telephone switchboard where people from out of town could call and see if there was any information on a missing kid or other Mardi Gras visitor. Folks in jail, the hospital, etc., could also call in and ask for help, or pass a message along to an out-of-town relative. Sometimes we were also able to intervene to convince a policeman or magistrate to let someone go. We also passed messages to and from our counterparts at the medical school and hospitals. It was a busy place. The only distress I have is that it is considered archival material. It seems like yesterday!”

“I AM ALSO THE EDITOR AND GENERALLY THE WRITER FOR ANYTHING THAT MY UNIT HAS TO SUBMIT TO A HIGHER HEADQUARTERS, OR ANY SPEECH THAT MY BOSS HAS TO GIVE. TULANE DEFINITELY GAVE ME GOOD WRITING SKILLS.”

—PETER BENNINGER ’01

My ROTC experience definitely helped, giving me the tools that I needed to help me become a leader in combat. I am also the editor and generally the writer for anything that my unit has to submit to a higher headquarters, or any speech that my boss has to give. Tulane definitely gave me good writing skills.

—Peter Benninger ’01
In 1949 Stuart Klabin ’53 left his small-town New Jersey home on a train headed for New Orleans, and, says Klabin, his life changed forever. “The changes were profound but came in small increments, so it was not until later, when I had sufficient perspective, that I truly understood the value of my years at Tulane.” Now, by contributing his time and money to the College, Mr. Klabin is ensuring that other students have the opportunity to experience the kind of personal development he enjoyed. He has served on the Dean’s Advisory Council over several years and under three deans, and he has given two important gifts to the College: he provided the funds for a portion of Cudd Hall’s renovation, giving the Barbara Shields Klabin Academic Advisers’ Administrative Suite in honor of his wife; and most recently he established The Stuart and Barbara S. Klabin Endowed Fund at Tulane College to be used at the discretion of the dean. The fund will ensure that many of the College’s successful programs for students and alumni will be financially secure in the future.

After graduating with a B.S. in psychology, Mr. Klabin studied at the Sorbonne before being drafted into the Army. Klabin values his liberal education in particular, he says, “because of the subsequent rewards I have received studying literature, astronomy, and French.” His involvement in arts and sciences goes beyond mere dabbling: Mr. Klabin has studied astronomy and cosmology at the University of Arizona, Cornell, and Harvard; and he was a founder of the L.A. County Museum of Art and the L.A. Museum of Contemporary Art. Mr. Klabin has lived in the Los Angeles area for nearly forty-seven years, where he is chairman of The Klabin Company, a real-estate development firm. He says he discovered the industry as “an accident introduced by my father-in-law, but it has been very rewarding.” If you would like more information about supporting Tulane College, contact Anne Normann at anormann@tulane.edu or by phone at (504) 865-5794.

For years George has supported Tulane College’s efforts toward preserving and promoting liberal arts learning opportunities. Several years ago he took notice of the College’s accomplishments under the stewardship of former dean Anthony Cummings: the restoration of Cudd Hall, the high quality of student-advising services, the development of new student programming, the traditions established as part of the commencement ceremony—all made a strong impression on George. “When I saw what Tony was able to pull off, I wanted to get behind him.” George offered Dean Cummings funds from the Georges Lincy Charitable and Educational Trust (of which he is a trustee), and it was quickly decided that the money should go directly to students’ scholarly pursuits. The Georges Lincy Grants in the Liberal Arts and Sciences, for which all Tulane College students may apply, provide money for student-initiated, faculty-directed research; it has proved to be one of the College’s most successful and beneficial programs.

George’s own experiences attest the value of a liberal education: born in 1947 and raised in the Washington, D.C., area, George graduated from Sidwell Friends School in 1964 (he currently serves on its board). He continued his studies at Columbia University at an exciting time in U.S. history: “I was part of the class of 1968 that is so often associated with that era’s student protests, though I was not a student protestor myself—I don’t know whether that is good or bad,” he teased. He did graduate work at both Harvard and the University of Chicago, where he earned his Ph.D. in modern British history in 1978. Between 1977 and 1980 he worked in fund raising, first in the annual-giving program at Chicago and then in the College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern, where he was also involved in curriculum development.

George came to Tulane in 1980 to join the A&S faculty as assistant professor of history. He describes himself as a “real city boy” and considers the move to New Orleans one of the great blessings of his life. “The academic job market in history has been challenging, at least for the last thirty years. To have gotten such a great position, at such a fine school, in such an interesting city—it was like a gift from God!” Since coming to Tulane, he has written two books, Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England and The Myth of Decline: The Rise of Britain Since 1945 (coming out next year), as well as numerous articles on British and Irish history. George has earned many accolades for his work with students; among his honors are the Sheldon Hackney Award for Teaching Excellence, the USG’s John H. Stibbs Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Professor, the Newcomb College Alpha Lambda Delta Advising Award, the Honor Proctor Professor of the Year, and the Tulane College Senior Class Adviser Award for Exemplary Service to Students.

Tre Hershkowitz ’98, finance director for the Louisiana Democratic Party, remembers Professor Bernstein engaging students “in the type of freewheeling discussions from which one learns the most. He was always more than just a professor; he was someone who cared about the average student’s overall well-being. That’s why I was so excited to hear he had been selected as dean of the College. He understands that a first-rate college education happens both inside and outside the classroom.” Dan Frost ’05 recalls (with some exaggeration, claims George) “that when calling roll in the first days of class, ‘Dr. Bernstein would read a student’s name from the roster and then stare at his or her face for literally several minutes. This made us a little uncomfortable, but Dr. B later explained that he likes to learn each student’s name—in a lecture class of forty students!—on the first day. My two courses with him were by far the most challenging and valuable classroom experiences I’ve had in college so far.”

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BERNSTEIN

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Even with all his new responsibilities as dean, George continues to teach; he is currently leading an independent study in Irish history with three seniors and working with a number of graduate students, and he plans to teach an honors course next year. And his commitment to education extends beyond the limits of Tulane’s campus: George helps support the New Orleans Center for Math and Science, which was founded by Dr. Colby W. “Skip” Dempsey and Dr. Paul Guth of the Tulane School of Medicine. The Center is open to all interested high school students; no motivated student is excluded on the basis of previous academic performance, and there is no test for admission. The school’s mission is to provide young people the opportunity to learn science and math utilizing techniques and equipment used by practicing scientists and mathematicians. What impresses George most about the Center is that it teaches its students not just a subject, but how to think, to interact and to learn—skills he sees the liberal arts and sciences imparting at all levels of education.

It may seem uncharacteristic that George would consider a move away from teaching and toward administration. He admits that such a career shift had not entered his mind until he was approached by faculty members and administrators—on more than one occasion—and urged to consider the position. “I felt I was at a crossroads in my career. I was just finishing my book, and I was ready to take on a new challenge.” The more he heard about the job, the more it appealed to him. “At first I resisted, because I didn’t see myself as having a ‘vision’ for the College. Then I realized that I don’t need a vision. The College already has one—and a good one. I felt I could successfully build on that and ensure the continuation and expansion of already successful programs for students and alumni.” Rather than come in with a new agenda for the College, George met with staff, alumni, and students to discover what worked, what didn’t work, and what they would like to see more or less of in the future. Dr. Ernest Sneed ’86, a member of the Dean’s Advisory Council who served on the dean’s hiring committee, noted that “George is a very open and thoughtful man who has the best interest of Tulane College as his main priority. He is an active listener regarding others’ concerns.” George has listened, and has plans for two new programs based on what he’s heard: alumni career panels, assembled on campus, which will give presentations and answer student questions about pursuing careers in various fields; and lunches with junior faculty, which will allow the staff of the College to get to know these new members of the Tulane community, whom they often don’t have the opportunity to meet. “It will give us the chance to hear from them, to let them feel an association with the College from their earliest days at Tulane,” explained George. His plans exemplify his nature; said Hamilton Simons-Jones ’01, director of community service coordination at Tulane, “George is open, accessible to everyone. He brings his humanity to the office.”

Davis

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Dave shared his thoughts on the benefits of a liberal education with freshmen in Tulane and Newcomb Colleges at this year’s orientation. “What does it take not merely to survive, but to thrive, in a world of rapid and often unpredictable change? Fundamentally, it takes two things: perspective and agility.” By perspective Dave means the ability to see oneself and one’s society in context—as part of history, and in comparison with the wider world. By agility he means the ability to adapt to change and emerge satisfied, rewarded. “Those skills are what the liberal arts and sciences provide.” Dave feels that in his role as associate dean, he can contribute to students’ acquisition of these skills in three fundamental ways: “by helping them see their academic careers in the broader context of their lives, now and in the future; by helping them through the rough spots as they pursue their academic goals; and by helping them navigate the University bureaucracy.” Dave will also continue to teach, entertaining and enlightening students next spring with a seminar on pirate societies. “Pirates are interesting to me from two perspectives,” Dave said. “First is the fact that they have become cultural icons, cloaked in legend, much of it based on misinformation. For example, few people realize that pirates never employed walking the plank as a means of punishment, and that they very rarely buried any treasure. But what interests me most is the fact that they functioned as small, self-contained societies, consisting almost exclusively of men, with their own norms and rules of social organization and interaction.” How appropriate that Dave should find himself at the helm of a small liberal arts college for men.
TULANE COLLEGIANS: CLASS NOTES

1950s
Dr. Raymond Cohen ’51 passed away in April. He will be remembered not only for his talent as a physician but also for his love of music and the arts.

1960s
Patti Drake Pett ’61 is teaching adult pottery classes and exhibiting throughout northeast Georgia with a group of nine women potters, the North Georgia Potter’s Institute.

1970s
Dr. Roger Feltland ’76 is associate clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Brown University and president of the medical staff at Women and Infants Hospital in Providence, RI. He and his wife, Leslie, have three children, aged sixteen, eighteen, and twenty-two. They look forward to touring the Tulane campus soon.

1980s
Ismail Montes ’84 and his wife, Ana, announce the birth of a daughter, Ana Margarita, on April 9, 2003. She was welcomed by her three-year-old brother, Nicholas. The family lives in Deerfield Beach, FL.

1990s
William Hyatt Gordon ’90 earned his D.B.A. and is now at NYU completing a professional certificate in construction project management; he will start his developer-certification program in the fall. He is active in the Urban Land Institute and has recently become a United States Green Building Council-Accredited Professional in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Certification Program. He had the chance to work with William Wilson of Boston, who designed the Environmental Science Building at Tulane. “I still really love Tulane and wish I was a sophomore there every day.”

Clinton McGrath ’92 received his LLM in taxation from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. He was married in June to Laurie D. Dubriel from Ft. Valley, GA.

Sandy Coats ’94 is a litigation attorney with Fellers, Sinder, et al. Her wife, Danielle Brooks Coats (N ’93), teaches at Bishop Hont Carrel School. They live in Oklahoma City with their sons, Brooks Andrew, born on January 18, 2002.

Matthew Setig ’94 and his wife, Hilary, are celebrating the birth of their first child, Jake Nolan, on March 15, 2003, in New York City.

Lee Menzies ’66 “had the distinct pleasure of reestablishing my friendship with classmate Robert Lovenheim in Paris, France. The years have been good to both of us. I cherish my education at Tulane. Best wishes to all my classmates of A&D’s ’66.”

2000s
Benn Vincent and Brett Mason

Benn Vincent ’00 graduated from the LSU Law Center in May 2003 and will join the law firm of Breazeale, Sachse and Wilson in Baton Rouge as an associate in the litigation practice group.

Benjamin Christopher-David Legrand ’02 just finished an American Express teaching program in the Central City area of New Orleans. He’s recently back from Mexico City and taking up screenwriting while developing a human-rights-education theatre module in theatre of the oppressed for Amnesty International. He is applying to graduate school at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in an interdisciplinary program in education and international studies.

TULANE COLLEGE is the University’s liberal arts division for men and its historic undergraduate college. Of the University’s six undergraduate divisions, Tulane College alone dates from the beginnings of the University.

The College was founded in 1847 by the act of the State of Louisiana that founded the University of Louisiana. The act provided for “faculties of...the natural sciences, and...letters, and a college proper or academical department,” which today is Tulane College, and departments of law and medicine, which today are the Tulane Law and Medical Schools. The already-existing Medical College of Louisiana, which had been founded in 1834 as an independent institution, became the University’s department of medicine.

The University was renamed “The Tulane University of Louisiana” in 1884 in recognition of the generosity of millionaire philanthropist Paul Tulane, who had provided the institution with an endowment. The “college proper or academical department” was renamed Tulane College at the same time.

Throughout the 1890s and ’90s, the administrators regularly discussed the inadequacy of the campus on Common Street in downtown New Orleans, where the University had been located since its founding. They began the purchase of the property along St. Charles Avenue that eventually became the uptown campus. In 1894, the University was relocated to its current site, and Tulane College was relocated to Gibson Hall, now the main administration building, which had been constructed specifically for the College. The same

year, courses in engineering and applied science were removed from the curriculum of Tulane College, and a separate College of Technology (now the School of Engineering) was founded. Tulane College was renamed the College of Arts and Sciences at that time.

In 1888, the separate faculties and curricula of the College of Arts and Sciences and the H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College, the University’s liberal arts division for women, which had been founded in 1886, were merged. Today, men and women attend class together and are taught a common curriculum by a single faculty, the Faculty of the Liberal Arts and Sciences.

In 1993, the University’s board of administrators voted to restore the College’s historic nineteenth-century name, Tulane College.

The College now enrolls 1,600 men pursuing the bachelor of arts, bachelor of fine arts, and bachelor of science degrees. Its living alumni number some 21,000, the largest number of any of the University’s schools and colleges; among them are some of the nation’s and the world’s most accomplished and distinguished professionals in a remarkable variety of fields.

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

DROP US A LINE!

We want to hear from you! Please fill out this form so we can keep your classmates up to date on developments in your lives; we welcome photographs of alumni and their families.

NAME
first
middle or initial
last
class year

HOME
street
city
state
zip

BUSINESS
title
company
email

street
city
state
zip

NEWS
e.g., career, activities, family, achievements

Please send me information about supporting The Tulane Collegian and other Tulane College Student and Alumni Programs.

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