



January 26, 2006

RE: The Future of Newcomb College at Tulane University

President Scott S. Cowen
Tulane University
6823 St. Charles Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70118

Dear President Cowen,

Greetings from Washington, D.C.! I write to you as the Newcomb College class agent of 1997 and on behalf of the former and current students who are deeply concerned about the future of Newcomb College at Tulane University. First, let me thank you for your continued efforts in keeping the Tulane community informed of the latest news surrounding the university. Your leadership during this most difficult fall makes me proud to be an alumnus of the university. I am certain Tulane will return to its former preeminence and help rebuild the city of New Orleans. As a representative of the class of 1997, I can say the alumni are ready to help you and the university with this reconstruction.

I have kept abreast of your e-mails, Dean Lowenthal's communications, and other pertinent messages posted on the website. Among the materials I have reviewed is the Renewal Plan for the university. As I read the plan, I was unclear as to which aspects of the proposed reorganization were permanent or temporary in nature, particularly with respect to Newcomb College. After reading Dean Lowenthal's message dated January 9, 2006, the intent to eliminate Newcomb College is now clear. With this decision, I respectfully disagree with the Board of Administrator's strategy for rebuilding Tulane University, and it should be of no surprise that Newcomb alumnae are justly disappointed. To summarize our concerns, the elimination of Newcomb College will greatly alter the university's tie with decades of Newcomb College alumna; sacrifice the benefits of the women's college option for residents of the state of Louisiana; and inhibit the university from taking part in public policy debates on women's issues.

I understand that it may be difficult for those of us residing outside of the New Orleans area to grasp the severity of Hurricane Katrina's impact on the university and the urgent need to take immediate action in light of the financial situation, but it would be short-sighted to believe that the future vitality of Tulane University can be restored without Newcomb College. What has helped make Tulane University one of the premier academic institutions in the country is its commitment to women's higher education through Newcomb College.

As the daughter of Filipino immigrants, my parents' dream for me was simply to attend college. I was admitted to the School of Engineering at Tulane University with an Air Force R.O.T.C. scholarship in electrical engineering. However, after taking my liberal arts electives; interacting with Newcomb students, faculty, and fellows; and discovering a field in children's issues that captured my interest, I decided to transfer to Newcomb College. What I discovered was that Newcomb College was not simply a point-of-entry for academic admissions for women, but a place that was committed to nurturing the personal and professional growth of its female students. After graduating from Tulane in 1997, I went on to receive a Women in Management scholarship for graduate study at Washington University in St. Louis; a Presidential Management Fellowship in the federal government; and a Fulbright doctoral research grant at George Washington University. Today, I

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am a supervisor at the U.S. Department of Labor overseeing \$165 million of federally-funded grants to prevent and eliminate the worst forms of child labor internationally. I do not reference these accolades for the honors, but to highlight what Newcomb College at Tulane University has done for me. It taught me to believe in myself and *dream* that I could make a difference in this world and the lives of others.

While I share my story with you, I am only one of the many other women who feel the same solidarity towards Newcomb College. Newcomb graduates are making a difference in this country and around the world. To name a few, my fellow alumnae are friends working at the United States Geological Survey to preserve the Everglades; living in Cambodia to provide social services and legal counsel to child survivors of trafficking; participating in research at distinguished medical institutions to find a cure for HIV/AIDs; serving as psychologists for developmentally-challenged students in the public school system; and climbing the ranks of corporate America in women-friendly businesses. We all in some way participated and benefited from the various Newcomb student programs that included the Newcomb College Senate, Women in Sciences, honor societies, leadership development courses and conferences, and public policy workshops. While we were at Newcomb, we also served the New Orleans community by mentoring young girls in neighboring elementary, junior, and high schools. Newcomb alumnae continue to remain connected with one another through formal and informal networks. Newcomb College for us was a place for personal growth, intellectual scholarship, and a shared camaraderie in knowing that we were carrying out the legacy of Josephine Louise Newcomb for her daughter.

I do not need to go into great depth about the benefits of women's colleges over typical coeducational institutions for female students. Compared to students at traditional universities, women who attend single-sex institutions receive more individualized attention from faculty and staff; demonstrate greater gains in academic achievement; hold more leadership positions; and have increased self-esteem and confidence in their personal and intellectual abilities. Tulane University has developed its world-class reputation due in part to its commitment to offering female students across the country the traditions of a women's college in an exceptional coeducational setting. For local residents seeking a women's college education within the state, Louisiana will no longer have a women's college if Newcomb College ceases to exist, and the South loses one of its most prestigious women's colleges.

In addressing the short-term needs of the university, I urge the Board to also view the longer-term impact the current proposals will have on the ability for Tulane University to participate in important public policy discussions surrounding women and girls' education. As a women's college, Newcomb College is part of the Women's College Coalition, which is an association of 58 institutions committed to advancing gender equity in education through policy, advocacy, and research. The Women's College Coalition remains a powerful national voice on women and girls' education. While I was at Tulane University in 1997, President Bill Clinton's Interagency Council on Women hosted a White House Symposium on Women and Girls' Education and invited representatives from the Women's College Coalition to focus on education priorities for women in the twenty-first century.

As the Mortar Board President, I was selected as the Newcomb College delegate and accompanied then Dean Jeanie Watson and Dr. Margaret King, Director of Newcomb Programs. It was an empowering and enriching experience to present policy recommendations that included funding for health research on college campuses (i.e., eating disorders, substance abuse, stress management); advancing women's participation in math and sciences; monitoring the impacts of welfare reform on

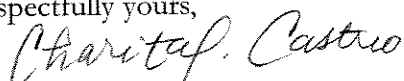
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women; and establishing a platform to address the human rights of women in an international context. Without Newcomb College, Tulane University loses its connection to the Women's College Coalition, and the ability to have a policy input on significant issues at the state, national, and international arena.

In the last nine years since graduating, this unparalleled education experience is what I have touted to prospective students inquiring about Tulane University. I have seen the younger sisters of my friends attend Tulane University because of its distinctive relationship with Newcomb College, and it brings me no greater joy than to hear, "Thank you for telling me about Newcomb College and Tulane University. I love it here."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, those of us with a special connection to Tulane University and to the greater New Orleans area share a grief that is hard to describe to those unfamiliar with the *raison d'être* of the school or the city. To put it simply, it is like losing a friend. However, as you have stated in several e-mails, we also share a hope for rebuilding Tulane University and the city of New Orleans. For my fellow alumna, part of this hope rests in preserving the institution of Newcomb College. If Newcomb College ceases to exist, we lose part of our connection to the university. As the Board moves forward to implement the Renewal Plan, I strongly request that due consideration be given to revisit the plan and consider other options to assure the long-term preservation of Newcomb College, such as through the creation of the Newcomb School of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In the words of women's rights suffragist Susan B. Anthony, "Failure is impossible." If an earnest attempt is made to keep Newcomb College alive as part of Tulane University's renewal plan, I do believe the Board of Administrators together with the input of current students, faculty, and alumna can make this a reality for future generations of women and girls. Hurricane Katrina had done much to alter the city of New Orleans, please do not let it erase the rich 120-year history of Newcomb College at Tulane University.

Respectfully yours,



Charita L. Castro, NC '97

cc: The Honorable Mary Landrieu, U.S. Senator (D-LA)
The Honorable David Vitter, U.S. Senator (R-LA)
Cynthia Lowenthal, Dean of Newcomb College
Allison Raynor, Director of Newcomb Alumnae Affairs