Tulane University, one of the nation’s most prestigious research institutions, seeks a visionary leader and scholar to serve as Director of the ByWater Institute. The mission of the ByWater Institute is to advance applied, interdisciplinary research and community engagement initiatives around coastal resilience and the urban environment. Tulane seeks a Director who will harness the Institute’s assets to create a vision that maintains its core mission while keeping pace with the needs of an evolving, world-class University, a thriving coastal city, and a world increasingly affected by the issues this Institute was created to address.

With 8,339 undergraduate and 5,110 graduate students in the schools of architecture, business, law, liberal arts, medicine, public health and tropical medicine, the sciences and engineering, and social work, Tulane is known for its highly collaborative environment and has developed innovative interdisciplinary research and educational programs. The University has cultivated an emphasis on community service and practical experience that infuses its programs, culture, and community. Students are proud to take part in community-engaged research in all disciplines and contribute thousands of hours of public service to the greater New Orleans community each year. Following a decade of rebuilding and renewal after Hurricane Katrina, the University is operating on a balanced budget and has steadily increased its admissions selectivity, ranking, and student diversity. Tulane is in a strong position to realize an exciting next chapter under the leadership of its 15th president, Michael Fitts.

The ByWater Institute works with partners across Tulane and the globe to deliver engaged scholarship on energy, environment, and resilience. In the face of climate change and sea level rise, coastal regions in the Gulf South and throughout the world face challenges including infrastructure decline, human migration, tropical diseases, and ecological disturbance. Tulane is uniquely positioned to generate high impact research to support coastal communities in adapting and responding to environmental change. Building on more than 30 years of work at the Tulane-Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research, the ByWater Institute and its partners take advantage of the natural laboratory of New Orleans and the Lower Mississippi Delta region to address questions of global importance with an emphasis on achieving a sustainable balance between natural and human systems. The Institute’s interdisciplinary mission and assets are a point of pride throughout the University and feature prominently in Tulane’s $1.3 billion capital campaign, “Only the Audacious.”

As an academic center under the Office of Research at Tulane, the ByWater Institute conducts and facilitates research, education, and outreach through cross-disciplinary partnerships and collaborations. Reporting directly to the University’s vice president for research, the Director is a member of the academic leadership team and collaborates closely with the deans of Tulane’s schools and colleges to assist in making strategic faculty hires bolstering interdisciplinary research and programs. The new Director will leverage the Institute’s many assets, including unparalleled research and educational facilities along the Mississippi River in downtown New Orleans and Carmichael Forest, for sustained
growth and innovation. The Institute’s leader will put forth a vision that preserves the advances made over the past 30 years while boldly embracing the future, including opportunities to attract new resources to the ByWater Institute through research funding and philanthropy.

Tulane has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the Director of the ByWater Institute. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.

TULANE UNIVERSITY

Tulane traces its origins to 1834, when it was founded as the Medical College of Louisiana. It was renamed the University of Louisiana by the state legislature in 1847. The legislature subsequently transferred it to the Board of Administrators of the Tulane Education Fund in 1884. With that transfer, Tulane University was established as a private, nonsectarian university and named in honor of benefactor Paul Tulane, who donated more than $1 million in land, cash, and securities “for the promotion and encouragement of intellectual, moral and industrial education.” In 1886, the H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College was established as Tulane’s college for women. The unified Newcomb-Tulane College today enrolls all full-time undergraduates at the University. Tulane has an operating budget of $1 billion and an endowment of $1.4 billion.

The University’s 8:1 undergraduate student-faculty ratio allows Tulane undergraduates to receive the personalized attention of a smaller liberal arts college along with the resources of a major research institution. In 2020, U.S. News and World Report ranked Tulane 40th among national universities. Tulane is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities and is designated with “very high research activity” (R1) by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. University-wide research efforts garner approximately $140 million in sponsored awards each year.

In 2006, Tulane became the first major research institution to require all graduating students to participate in public service, leading to a Community Engagement classification from the Carnegie Foundation. The University is a powerful magnet for talented young people throughout the nation, with undergraduates traveling further to attend Tulane, on average, than students of any other university. As such, Tulane has a major impact on the workforce of New Orleans, as only 18% of undergraduate students are from New Orleans and about 26% of alumni remain in the city after graduation.

The University is organized into ten academic divisions: A.B. Freeman School of Business, School of Architecture, School of Professional Advancement, School of Law, School of Liberal Arts, School of Medicine, Newcomb-Tulane College, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, School of Science and Engineering, and the School of Social Work. The mix of schools is an asset that is rich with opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration in research and education. Enrolled in these diverse programs are nearly 8,400 undergraduate and 5,100 graduate students from every state in the U.S. and more than 85 nations worldwide. The Tulane faculty totals over 1,200 full-time members with a staff of approximately 2,900.

Leadership

Michael Fitts is the 15th president of Tulane University. He arrived at Tulane in July 2014, bringing with him a strong emphasis on heightening cross-disciplinary education and research. In his first year as President, he launched task forces to lead the University in deepening its unique strengths for interdisciplinary collaboration. He aims to create the most engaged undergraduate experience in the country and to foster intellectual cross-pollination that can produce solutions to some of the world’s most fundamental problems. Previously, President Fitts served 14 years as Dean of the Law School at the
University of Pennsylvania, where he was recognized for greatly boosting that school’s offerings in interdisciplinary education. He also presided over a quadrupling of Penn Law’s endowment, a more than 40% increase in the size of the Law School faculty, and a doubling of all forms of student financial aid. President Fitts is a native of Philadelphia. He earned a bachelor’s of arts degree from Harvard University and received his juris doctorate from Yale Law School.

Dr. Robin Forman was appointed Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost in September 2016. He previously served as Dean of the Emory College of Arts and Sciences and the Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Mathematics at Emory University. He has held faculty and administrative appointments at Rice University, and has served as an instructor at MIT and as a visiting professor at the University of Burgundy, Harvard University, and the Mathematical Research Institute. Dr. Forman received a bachelor’s of arts and a master’s of arts in mathematics from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctoral degree in mathematics from Harvard University. His research, which has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the National Security Agency, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, focuses on combinatorial methods in topology and geometry.

Dr. Giovanni Piedimonte, an internationally renowned physician, researcher, and healthcare executive, was appointed Vice President for Research at Tulane in September 2019. He previously served as the Steven and Nancy Calabrese Endowed Chair for Excellence in Pediatric Care, Research and Education, as well as professor and chair of pediatrics at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Piedimonte brings to Tulane a passion for impactful research of all forms and a special interest in collaborations that bring together scholars from disparate perspectives and areas of expertise. He received his medical doctorate from the University of Rome School of Medicine, completed his residency in pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco, and received fellowship training at the Cardiovascular Research Institute of the University of California, San Francisco and at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

THE BYWATER INSTITUTE

The Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico have immeasurable impact on defining New Orleans as both a major port and a cultural hub of the United States. No university has deeper personal and geographic ties to the river and the coastal land and waterscapes that surround it than Tulane. In recognition of this symbiotic relationship between the environment, the city, and the University, research on resilience and sustainability is key to Tulane’s academic pursuits and essential to its educational and civic missions. Planning for greater resilience and adaptability has taken on a sense of urgency in New Orleans and other coastal communities in the face of climate change, sea level rise, and evolving natural and technological hazards. The ByWater Institute was founded to respond to these grand challenges by developing use-inspired research and unique programming at the intersection of environment, society, and community.

Untraditional by design, the ByWater Institute encourages interdisciplinary and cross-community communication and collaboration. The Institute’s researchers and affiliates seek to answer critical questions facing New Orleans and coastal Louisiana while keeping the important global implications of these challenges in view.

“There isn’t a more appropriate university to take on this research than Tulane. The survival of our region depends on negotiating our relationship with water.”

– Tulane President Michael Fitts
Research and Scholarship

The ByWater Institute leads and facilitates research across Tulane relevant to the Institute’s mission, engaging collaborators in Science and Engineering, Public Health, Law and Policy, Environmental Studies, Energy and Business, Emergency Preparedness, Architecture, and Liberal Arts. In addition to convening research collaborations throughout the University, the Institute is currently home to one full-time research faculty member. Last fiscal year, ByWater Institute members and affiliates submitted or facilitated submission of research proposals totaling more than $7.8 million.

The newly implemented ByWater Institute Faculty Affiliate program cultivates relationships among deans, department heads, and key faculty members across Tulane. Deans and department heads are welcomed as ex-officio affiliates and are invited to nominate members of their faculty to three-year terms as faculty affiliates. Affiliates participate in the research and intellectual life of the Institute and receive resources that support their research and academic pursuits.

The ByWater Institute awards fellowships to faculty members conducting interdisciplinary research addressing issues relevant to the Institute’s mission. Fellowships provide seed funds intended to support fellows’ pursuit of additional extramural support for their research. The first class of fellows successfully completed their projects, submitting proposals to NSF and NIH and building teams that are ready to compete for future funding opportunities.

Research initiatives led by ByWater Institute faculty, affiliates, and fellows include:

- Determinants of business owner support for coastal resilience measures
- Chemical evolution and plant-microbe degradation of petroleum in saline marsh plants and soils
- An integrated biophysical model of morphological and ecological processes in a changing deltaic and coastal ecosystem
- Citizen Science and Environmental Technology: the impact of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on the New Orleans East Vietnamese community
- A theoretical and empirical basis for analyzing nature-society relations to examine global environmental sustainability
- The role of built environment changes as population-level interventions for violence prevention and health promotion
- Diversity and disease in a post-trauma urban landscape
- The incidence of Naegleria fowleri in premise plumbing of low-income homes in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana
- Temporal and spatial variation in the degree of chronic exposure to petroleum hydrocarbons in brown pelicans
- Development of improved serological diagnostic and parasite genotyping tools for congenital Chagas disease

Partnerships

Community partnerships and outreach are cornerstones of the ByWater Institute’s interdisciplinary programs. Effective environmental research and public policy requires close collaboration between educational institutions, researchers, decisions makers, industry, community leaders, and community members. As such, the ByWater Institute strives to help communities in Louisiana build capacity to address environmental challenges such as coastal restoration, storm events, and environmental hazards. Key partners in the Institute’s ongoing programs include: the City of New Orleans Office of Resilience and Sustainability, the Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development, Global Rivers Observatory, Stockholm Resilience Center, and the US Forest Service. In addition to these and
other partnerships, the ByWater Institute has maintained a longstanding collaboration with Xavier University that began as the Tulane-Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research.

The ByWater Institute serves as the Tulane University representative in the Gulf Coast Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (GC-CESU). The GC-CESU facilitates collaborative research, education and technical assistance pertaining to the human and natural environment among federal and state agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations with and beyond the Gulf Coast region. As the representative for Tulane, the Institute receives and disseminates special federal funding opportunities for university researchers to work in cooperation with federal agencies.

**THE ROLE: KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DIRECTOR**

Reporting to the Vice President for Research, the Director manages the Institute’s core staff, including the assistant director, managing director of A Studio in the Woods and Lower Coast Field Station, and research personnel, while simultaneously setting the vision for the Institute’s wide range of initiatives with collaborators at Tulane and external partners. The Institute’s current annual operating budget of approximately $700,000 is derived from extramural research grants, philanthropy, and endowment funds.

The ByWater Institute’s assets for research, education and outreach include:

- **Tulane River and Coastal Center.** Founded in 2016, this center offers 5,800 square feet of research and conference space located beside the Mississippi River in downtown New Orleans. Accessible to multiple departments and partner organizations, it is used as a staging ground for research and events in support of the institute’s mission.

- **A Studio in the Woods.** Nestled in the eight-acre of bottomland hardwood Carmichael Forest on the Mississippi River on the Lower Coast of New Orleans, the Studio provides a nurturing environment for research and education. It houses living and working space for artists and scholars in residence and frequently opens its doors for public programming.

- **Lower Coast Field Station.** Encompassing Carmichael Forest and the nearby F. Edward Hebert Research Center, this facility provides rare access to a carefully stewarded forest that allows researchers, teachers, and students a venue for exploring and studying aspects of the natural and human history of the region.

- **Research Vessels.** The Institute maintains two research vessels for use by any Tulane University department.

To succeed in this role, the Director will build upon a strong foundation and address a number of key opportunities and challenges, including, but not limited to:

**Foster world-class interdisciplinary research programs at Tulane University**

With a mission that exceeds the scope of any single department or college on campus, the ByWater Institute serves as a hub for catalyzing ambitious, impactful research on the most timely scientific and social problems affecting the Mississippi Delta and the world. The Director will assess the Institute’s existing collaborative programs and develop new strategies to facilitate the formation of interdisciplinary teams of Tulane faculty members, external partners, and community stakeholders to address these challenges. As the scientific leader of the ByWater Institute, the Director is expected to be an active contributor to the Institute’s research portfolio while continuing to foster ongoing interdisciplinary programs led by Institute faculty and staff. In addition, the Director will consult with deans and academic
departments on strategic hires to build out Tulane’s research capacity in areas of particular importance to the Institute’s mission.

**Attract new resources to support the Institute’s mission**

Tulane University recently launched a $1.3 billion capital campaign, Only the Audacious, in which the ByWater Institute is prominently featured. The campaign seeks funds to support dedicated research facilities in energy and the environment, water management and climate change, healthy communities, trauma and resilience, the culture of the Gulf South, and more. Simultaneously, the growing Institute has set a strategic goal of elevating its federal research funding to $10 million and diversifying its overall research funding portfolio. To meet these ambitions, the Director will facilitate proposals for research funds from federal, state, and foundation sources while maintaining an active role in fundraising for the Institute and for broader initiatives at Tulane that support the Institute’s mission.

**Strengthen existing Institute programs while exploring new initiatives and strategic growth**

Although river and coastal resilience research at Tulane has a long history, the ByWater Institute, in its current form, dates back only to 2016. Capitalizing on this start-up energy, the Director will assess ongoing programs at the Institute with an eye toward an ambitious, expanded role for its future. Opportunities exist to expand the Institute’s data science capacity to support data management, synthesis, and visualization of findings generated by the Institute’s interdisciplinary research programs. The Director will also investigate the potential to generate or facilitate new academic programs on campus that address key themes including urban ecology, climate change, and art and science collaboration.

**QUALIFICATIONS**

Tulane University seeks candidates who bring many of the following skills and experiences:

- Scientific breadth and intellectual curiosity, an appreciation for the range of approaches, methodologies, and disciplines that inform the work of the ByWater Institute;
- Strategic vision and an innovative focus that is energetic, forward-thinking, and above all, collaborative;
- The skill and predisposition to convene diverse groups, connect researchers from across fields, and lead a multidisciplinary endeavor;
- A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and open discourse;
- A significant and consistent record as a funded investigator, preferably with experience obtaining multidisciplinary, multi-investigator grants;
- Experience with and/or a strong interest in securing additional research funding through philanthropic support;
- Strong fiscal leadership and entrepreneurial management, preferably in a responsibility centered management (RCM) environment;
- A fair, collaborative, collegial, and transparent leadership style;
- An earned doctorate or terminal degree in an academic discipline relevant to the Institute and a strong record of teaching and scholarship, as evidenced by tenure in their field.
TO APPLY

Tulane University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist the Director of the ByWater Institute Search Committee in its identification and review of candidates. Nominations and applications, including – as individual attachments – a cover letter and a resume, should be submitted online: www.imsearch.com/7393

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Tulane is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer and actively works to enhance its diversity.