

Alumni aid students during unprecedented year

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Generous support from the Tulane alumni community has made a remarkable impact on current students who are facing unanticipated emergencies. The [Student Emergency Assistance Fund](#) allows Tulane students to surmount unexpected financial challenges.

“Often the emergency fund is the difference between a student having to leave school and being able to stay in school. And so it’s really one of the most important things we have at Tulane,” said Erica Woodley, Tulane’s dean of students and assistant vice president of student affairs.

The emergency support has been used for varied reasons, such as flying a student home after a family member’s death, ensuring students have enough food to eat, assisting in the case of a natural disaster or funding mental health therapy.

The fund has been especially helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic because the

needs were immediate, said Benjamin Dorris, manager of online student services. “The first immediate need that popped up was helping students get home. The fund also assisted students with rent and utilities if they were unable to work. And helping students obtain a computer or WiFi hotspot so they could access their courses.”

Woodley said that as Tulane’s student body has been getting more diverse, there is a bigger gap in students with discretionary funds. “Some people think of Tulane students as having a lot of funds at their disposal, but the reality is they don’t and not all do, and that number is growing. In all the best ways it’s growing. We really have to focus on this to be able to keep students here.

“This is the kind of fund you don’t have to give a million dollars to make a significant impact. Even a \$100 gift has the potential to have a significant impact.”

For one Tulane alumna and her husband, also parents to a graduating Tulane senior, giving to the fund has been an opportunity to make a meaningful gift to Tulane. When she was a student, the alumna saw the financial divide at Tulane and students who couldn’t always afford needs that went above their scholarships, such as meals or health care. “If this fund fills in the gaps to allow students to thrive, that makes us so happy.”

She said the emergency fund is a way to have a big impact, no matter the size of the gift. “For students it’s a plane ticket home, a security deposit for rent, a mental health therapy session. Those aren’t giant numbers, but they are hugely meaningful to the student.”

Her husband agreed: “This was an opportunity to have real impact with our dollars. If we can even that playing field so they can just focus on the future, that feels like a great opportunity. So I’m thrilled that we were able to do that.”

[Learn more](#) about the fund.