

# Jon and Meredith Angrist: An unexpected Tulane meet cute

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Mary-Elizabeth Lough [mlough@tulane.edu](mailto:mlough@tulane.edu)

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The typical Tulane “meet cute” story involves locking eyes under the oaks, but for Jon and Meredith Angrist, it was under a sink. Jon (A&S '92, B \*93) was living with three roommates in a duplex on Hillary Street, when the neighbors moved in — four young women attending Newcomb College, among them Meredith Rich (NC '93). When Jon offered to help with unpacking, his future mother-in-law put him straight to work under the sink with Meredith — installing what would transpire to become perhaps the world’s only legitimately romantic dispenser of paper towels.

It’s a funny, light-hearted story, but it also illuminates its main characters’ skill in recognizing something good when it comes along — and a commitment to putting the work in too. Meredith first came to Tulane at her mother’s suggestion. “My mother told me I was going to Tulane. So not only did my mother introduce me to my husband, she also told me I was going to Tulane.” After a visit to campus,

Meredith was sold on the idea.

A native of South Florida, Jon visited some of his older classmates attending Tulane and knew immediately he had found the school for him. “I applied early decision after being there. I just thought, ‘this is where I want to be.’ It wasn’t a very detailed search, but I ended up there, probably by chance more than anything, but I loved it.”

Meredith recalls, “Jon studied every day and went out every night. He had the ability to study and have fun, so that when his tests came or his papers were due, he was already done.” Jon graduated *summa cum laude* and continued on at Tulane for his MBA. Meredith remarks dryly, “He was really good at time management. I was not as good. I didn’t graduate *summa cum laude*, I graduated *summa cum lucky*.”

Looking back, Jon credits Tulane for his academic success. “I did fine in high school, but I wasn’t much of a student. I really became a student — someone who studies and works on their own — in college, and it was largely due to a couple of wonderful professors.”

Like the Angrists’ own relationship, their connection to Tulane is for a lifetime. They are now parents of four children, and their son Ridley is a member of the Class of 2024. Like his parents, Ridley knew that Tulane was the school for him.

“Our son knew instantly when he stepped on campus that he wanted to go to Tulane. It was the only school he applied to. There are just some people that connect to it,” says Meredith.

The Angrists make sure their connection to Tulane continues to grow. They are members of the Family Leadership Council, generous benefactors of the A. B. Freeman School of Business, and the Philanthropy and Social Change course at the School of Liberal Arts.

Though Jon has the busy schedule you’d expect from the CEO and chief investment officer of Cognios Capital, an investment advisory firm in Prairie Village, Kansas, he still finds time to serve as a mentor to students in Professor Mara Force’s Aaron Selber Jr. Course on Hedge Funds.

He remembers fondly how Professor John Elstrott, founder of the Freeman School’s

Levy-Rosenblum Institute for Entrepreneurship Research, gave him a helping hand when he was first starting out and is committed to doing the same for today's Tulane students. "[Professor Elstrott] did the most amazing thing. He wrote a handwritten letter of recommendation. Even back in 1996 nothing was handwritten, but he wrote a handwritten letter of recommendation to a private equity firm. At the time, private equity firms were not hiring from consulting, so I really wasn't even on the list."

The letter opened important doors for Angrist, allowing him to move out of consulting and into investing venture capital. "John Elstrott gave me the opportunity, and it turned out to be just a wonderful, life-changing career opportunity for me."

Tulane was life-changing for the Angrists on several levels, and it's an experience they want to further enrich for students like their son Ridley and for future generations.

Meredith says, "Ultimately, we met there and, well, we love the school, we love the city. It's our turn to be involved with the school."