



## Parent Perspective

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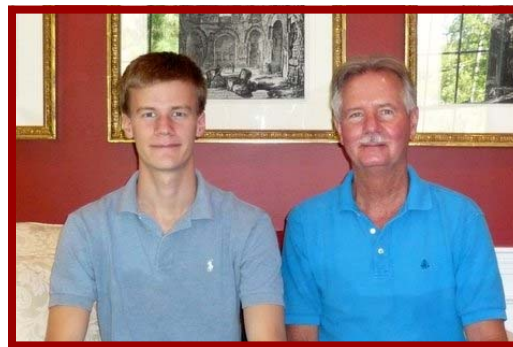
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### Parent Perspective: A father's perspective about his son's education

*Written by Richard Wendorf, Father of Reed Wendorf-French (2011)*

I live in a small town outside of Boston, a village so quintessentially New England that its seacoast, white-spired churches, and lovely green common provided the setting for John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick* when it was made into a film several years ago. Despite what the rest of the world thinks of the liberal commonwealth of Massachusetts, our town has traditionally voted Republican and has successfully fought against unruly overrides to our annual budget, much to the dismay of our local teachers and students. It's not uncommon for the weekly police blotter – which is dutifully published in the local paper – to note that someone has received a hang-up call on the telephone. It's quiet here; you might call it a complacent community; it's certainly a comfortable one.

This is the environment that my son Reed, now completing his second year at Tulane, experienced during the three years in which he lived with me and attended our local high school. When he was ready to apply for admission to college, the last thing in the world he wanted was to spend four more years in a bucolic setting in the middle of nowhere. Something much more cosmopolitan appealed to both of us. Chicago? Washington? New York? They all had their appeal. But I had recently been in New Orleans; I had seen the devastation; and I knew a number of people who were quite knowledgeable about Tulane. The university and its exotic location were enticing; the need to reclaim the city was powerfully compelling. We decided to give it a shot.



*Reed Wendorf-French (2011) and his father, Richard Wendorf*

When we arrived on campus later in the spring so that Reed could take a good look at the college that was now wooing him, we were both strongly moved by Scott Cowen's summary of the commitment the university had made to undergraduate education. The President was quite persuasive as he talked about the percentage of faculty members who taught undergraduates, the research opportunities that were available to students, and the flexibility that enabled undergraduates to take courses in the professional schools. I was intrigued (on my son's behalf as well as my own) by President Cowen's exploration of the four cultural elements that were unique to the Crescent City: its language, its cuisine, its architecture, and its music. But as an eighteen-year-old who had already volunteered as a manual worker in Appalachia, Reed was especially taken by the conclusion to Scott Cowen's speech. After telling us – in no uncertain terms – why every high-school student in the room should enroll at Tulane, he then turned the tables on them. "But I don't want any of you to join us here," he told them, "unless you're going to help me rebuild the city of New Orleans."

Has Tulane offered my son everything he hoped to find there? Only he can answer that question in full – and he clearly understands that any academic environment is largely what you make of it. What I can say, having made much of this journey with him, is that he's more modest, more thoughtful, more politically engaged, more likely to wonder what someone else's view might be than he was two years ago. He really does love Tulane, and I've found that it's difficult to pry him out of New Orleans. And when he does return to this charming village by the sea, his thoughts are still very much elsewhere.

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