

New Orleans colleges face big obstacles

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - By tradition, every Friday the sisters of Delta Sigma Theta circle around a campus flagpole and join hands to pray and sing, celebrating their closest friendships at Dillard University.

This semester, the ritual will have to take place outside the downtown Hilton Hotel, their beloved school's home through, at least, July, where the conference rooms are doubling as lecture halls.

The Dillard campus suffered perhaps the worst damage of the half-dozen or so major New Orleans colleges hit by Hurricane Katrina, and it is the only one not re-opening on its own grounds this month.

But all the New Orleans colleges face the same challenge: preserving the spirit and essence of their institutions while their battered buildings and finances are rebuilt.

The hurdles are enormous. The combined damage to the college campuses may approach \$1 billion. They have laid off hundreds of faculty and cut dozens of programs and sports teams. At a recent faculty and staff meeting, Loyola University's president implored tenured faculty, who were not laid off, to consider retiring. The public Southern University of New Orleans has had three chancellors since June.

Still, the return of students to New Orleans in recent days — in greater numbers than expected at some schools — seemed to inject everyone with a dose of optimism. Loyola and Dillard began classes last week; Xavier and Tulane universities start Tuesday.

"Everything happens for a reason, and Katrina was a horrible thing, but I think the school is going to be better for it," said Ashley Bell, a Dillard junior.

Her sorority sister, Joy Calloway, said the experience of temporarily attending other, more impersonal colleges made Dillard students appreciate their own.

"The students who came back are the students who really love Dillard and want to be a part of it," Calloway said.

The best-case scenario is that the New Orleans colleges will emerge stronger, with new buildings and sharper missions. They will cooperate more and attract a crop of civic-minded students drawn to New Orleans

to participate in the city's rebuilding.

The rebuilding effort offers them a unique laboratory for courses ranging from sociology to architecture to engineering. Tulane is instituting a public service requirement, and Dillard, which already required students to perform 120 hours of community service, will now require each to complete some kind of Katrina-related academic project.

Katrina "almost destroyed Tulane University," President Scott Cowen told freshmen and their parents at the university's convocation last Thursday, but now, "We have the opportunity of a lifetime ahead of us."

About 88 percent of Tulane's 12,500 students before the storm returned. Xavier says about 3,100 re-registered — roughly three-quarters the previous figure but higher than the school expected. Dillard, with 1,100 students back, is about half its former size.

The University of New Orleans — a public school attracting mostly local students — is aiming for 12,500, compared to 17,000 before the storm.

"For most colleges and universities, tuition is the largest share of revenue," said Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education. "If you're getting 80 percent of your revenue from tuition and you lose half your students, you're facing enormous difficulties."

For now, housing is a challenge, even with fewer students. Tulane has rented a cruise ship. Off-campus housing in the neighborhood around Dillard may be scarce for years, and if the college reopens next fall it will be down at least six dorms — three that burned during the flood and three unusable because of water damage. At Xavier, President Norman Francis says hundreds more have registered than he has beds for, and he isn't sure where they'll live.

Xavier's damage is estimated at \$35 million (money from FEMA could eventually cut Xavier's bill to \$12 million). Francis, president here for 38 years, announced even before he saw the damage that Xavier must and would return.

The country's only historically Black, Roman Catholic college, Xavier sends more Black students to



Christine Hutchison (left), a second year student from New Orleans, unpacks boxes of supplies recently for her new dorm room with the help of her mother Darlene Hutchison at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Tulane University, which has been closed for more than four months after Hurricane Katrina, resumed classes on Tuesday.

medical school than any other college, and alumni account for nearly one-quarter of all Black pharmacists in the United States.

"We have moved mountains to be where we are," Francis said.

A recent campus tour revealed the scope and expense of reconstruction at Xavier. A quarter-million-dollar electron microscope lay ruined in a first-floor science room. Gone are the theater seats and Internet connections of the main lecture hall of the pharmacy school, replaced for now by high-

school style desks.

But 95 percent of the students in the highly competitive pharmacy program will be back.

Xavier is "not coming back just to recover," Francis said. "We're coming back to do better."

Some fear such predictions are wishful thinking, given the scope of budget cuts. Xavier laid off more than one-third of its faculty, though it has rehired some. Even relatively wealthy Tulane, with an \$800 million endowment, cut more than 200 faculty (most in the

medical school) and hundreds of staff.

Eliminating graduate programs will let faculty focus more on undergraduate teaching, Cowen said. And by eliminating adjunct faculty, colleges may indeed give students more exposure to full-time professors. Between the cuts and makeup courses, however, those full-timers may be too busy to pay students much personal attention.

Weakened individually, the New Orleans colleges could find strength in each other. Many credit Tulane —

traditionally viewed as more concerned with national research prestige than community development — with reaching out aggressively, offering classrooms and other facilities to help the other colleges.

They also could benefit from the national attention on New Orleans, which may help explain why Tulane's applications are up 15 percent. And there are stronger ties to other universities; Brown and Princeton, for instance, provided extensive aid to Dillard, and are working —

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N.C. cops monitored in 'black book'

By Melde Rutledge
Special to Sentinel-Voice

GREENSBORO, N.C. (NNPA) - David Wray retired as this city's police chief. But his quitting left many unanswered questions.

Greensboro City Council made a responsive move to help reduce the community's apprehension over events that led to the resignation of Wray.

In their first meeting of the year, City Council went into a closed session for more than an hour before unanimously voting to release some of the information involving Wray for public view in an attempt to "restore and maintain public confidence."

The most noteworthy part of the city manager's report consisted of Wray's involvement with a secret "black book."

Mitchell Johnson has not actually seen the "black book," but said that the police department's Special Intelligence Section utilized it. The actual color of the book is not black, but consisted entirely of the names and profiles of African-American police officers.

Approximately 19 officers with their pictures are in the book, according to the city manager. As stated in the report, the book was created and used in response to the complaints about those officers from Greensboro residents.

Wray didn't create the book, but when questioned by Johnson about knowledge of the "black book," Wray denied existence of it.

"However, when the possible existence of the book became known to the public, Chief Wray instructed a sub-

ordinate to hide and secure the book and did not inform his superior of its true existence and actual purpose," said Johnson.

The act of not reporting the existence of the book to the city manager, led to much confusion in the city manager's office and among Greensboro's residents, Johnson explained.

The ongoing investigations pertaining to the "black book", the actions of the Special Intelligence Section and Wray's withholding of information has cost the city \$70,000 and 1,100 hours of staff time. The investigations also include assistance from investigators independent of the Greensboro Police Department.

As assistant city manager, Johnson headed the selection committee that chose Wray as police chief in August

2003.

"I deeply regret that we have had to take these actions," the city manager said before reading aloud the 5-page report to the press, "and while what I am going to share with you is disappointing, I feel that I must remind everyone that Chief Wray served this community with distinction for many years."

Wray gained attention last June with the suspension of Lt. James Hinson.

In early June, Hinson accused the police department's Special Intelligence Unit of unjustly targeting him.

He had noticed officers following him during his work shift. Later it was confirmed that he had a tracker on his vehicle.

Wray failed to notify the city manager — at any point (See Black Book, Page 17)