

## Tulane Community Music Festival 2011

Tulane University

2011 – 2012 Affiliation Year

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Abstract: Each April, Tulane University's RHA brings in over 16,000 lbs of crawfish, 12 local bands, local artists, and 11,000 students to celebrate Tulane and New Orleans rich arts and music heritage. This music festival serves to ease students' minds while gearing up for finals, as well as acquaint students with the true local vibe of New Orleans while building ties with our local community. The event is free to students and is also to the public, which further connects the school with the community.



The proverbial “bubble” – That invisible boundary that separates so many schools from their community and local culture. Tulane University in New Orleans, LA can be no exception. Despite our volunteer efforts and various community programs it still proves to be difficult to bond with the greater New Orleans area. It seemed all of our activities were work related, and while that has its place it will never serve to bond with the surrounding community on a personal level. Out of this barrier, TCMF, the Tulane Community Music Festival was born.

In the past Tulane has had a “Crawfest” - a small scale gathering for students to try some local New Orleans fare, to hear a bit of music, and then continue with their routine. For 2011 this would no longer be the case. Planning began nearly a full year in advance to reserve three full sized stages, sift through nearly 50 local bands to find the 10 that would fit our program best, organize the delivery and boiling of nearly nine metric tons of crawfish, reserve two main quads, permit 16 local art vendors, and coordinate hundreds of volunteers from setup to cleanup. No small task, but a small price to pay to bridge the gap between school and community.

Preparation for TCMF 2011 began before the close of the 2009-2010 school year. It was clear after the close of the 2010 school year that our campus would a much larger scale event. The planning began.

As is surely the case on most campuses reserving facilities can be tricky – especially at the last minute. With this in mind, a proposal to reserve the two largest quads on campus for a full day was submitted to Facilities Management at the start of the 2010-2011 year. With that initial step in place, we were able to begin further steps to solidifying TCMF 2011. Due to the scale of the event and the timeframe in place, no time could be lost in contacting and reserving stages, vendors, bands, and crawfish. By the time Facilities granted us permission to use the quads we had already begun investigating our options.

To find local bands we put out fliers in the community and advertised online. Bands simply had to send a quick synopsis of their style, and could either email a clip or work out an audition. Replies ranged from smooth jazz to heavy metal, but in the end 12 bands were settled on, and included an incredible middle school band, punk rock, roots reggae, bluegrass, country, full brass, and rock&roll. The goal in this area was to provide as diverse a music selection as possible to attract the widest range of fans – without having any too offensive or loud for families with small children.

Luckily, food and stage-wise we were set. The catering company used in the past – Mr. Mud Bug – was able to accommodate our huge order of 16,000 plus pounds of crawfish at the best price we could find. And the mobile stage company used at parents

weekend was able to accommodate our three full stages, lights and all. While this may not be as easy in all locations, we found sticking with a company your school has used in the past tends to build good relations and often results in better prices.



By getting the word out on campus and with the help of on campus organizations we were able to wrangle over 200 volunteers to assist with everything from ticket-tearing to after show cleanup. An event this size would not be possible without a full dedicated volunteer crew so we made sure to get the word out before the end of the Fall semester.

Tulane's Student Government budgeted \$10,000 to put on TCMF, and local business and other campus organizations also donated smaller amounts. With an attendance of just under 8,000 students and community members, this works out to just over \$2.00 per person to put on this fantastic event, in part due to the bulk that we were able to buy food and drinks. Needless to say all on campus residence organizations and departments were exceedingly pleased. As a result, we have been promised nearly

double the funding this year and hope to use it to put on two separate Community Music Festivals, one in the Fall and one in the Spring semester.

The main problem we faced in this event is that no one expected the huge turnout. The food, at 16,000 lbs of it, had been eaten by just after noon though the festival ran until 9 in the evening. Thankfully enough drinks were ordered for the hot day, but in the future we will be sure to order more food. Aside from the food shortage, the biggest task was cleanup. It turns out students are not the best at finding trashcans. Thankfully our volunteers were willing to clean up after the mess, but for future events we will at least double the number and frequency of trashcans.

In all, we consider the Tulane Community Music Festival a great success. Seeing Tulane students and community members side by side dancing to great music, enjoying great food, and having a great time, all for just over \$2.00 a person just can not be beat. We look forward to continuing the tradition of TCMF for many years to come!