The Sound Of Fashion: Stuart Weitzman’s Day at Tulane

September 20, 2024



Internationally renowned shoe designer Stuart Weitzman visited the Tulane on Sept. 13 to share insights from his 50-year career in fashion.

On Sept.13, Tulane University had the honor of hosting Stuart Weitzman, a trailblazer in the fashion world known for his pioneering designs and unwavering commitment to excellence. Mr Weitzman, known not only for his innovative approach to footwear but for his advocacy for powerful women and philanthropic endeavors, is a transformative figure in the industry. His originally planned visit to campus was canceled due to Hurricane Francine. Despite this setback, he adjusted his schedule, the skies cleared, and a large and engaged audience of students showed up to meet him, just as he had shown up for Tulane

The day began at Tulane’s Freeman School of Business with Mr. Weitzman’s keynote address, where he offered insights into achieving success by embracing core values

- referred to as “Stuisms” by his team - and pivotal moments from his career. He began with three key truisms: risk, imagination and inspiration. Risk, in particular, has been fundamental to his journey. He shared how his bold ad campaigns, such as his first featuring a Dalmatian with stiletto spots, established him as a designer to watch. This campaign's visuals were a gamble that paid off, setting his brand apart in a competitive field. Mr. Weitzman explained that the choice of a full-page, fold-out ad for his second notable campaign was designed to create an immediate impact, and with 90% of readers remembering the launch from that ad, he achieved that goal.



Weitzman, right, chats with Tulane Fashion Club members Annie Enbom (A '26, SLA '26), left, and Sharika Majeti (SSE '26).

Mr. Weitzman's commitment to taking risks extended to collaborating with creative minds. His spring 2016 ad, photographed by the legendary Mario Testino, drew inspiration from *The Three Graces*, a neoclassical statue by Antonio Canova. Despite the simplicity, its placement on Madison Avenue led to buzz, and his willingness to push boundaries and embrace risk helped build his brand’s reputation. For example, Aretha Franklin, who wore Mr. Weitzman's first custom shoe at the Grammy Awards,

was his first high-profile celebrity, and celebrities ultimately became a vital aspect of his brand and its influence in the media space.

His career began with a job that he later bought out, gaining network connections and learning skills along the way. He emphasized that jobs after college serves as graduate school and advised learning from those who've achieved success and working alongside creative people. “You can’t do it alone,” he remarked.



As part of his visit to Tulane, Weitzman was shown a selection of shoes from the Krewe of Muses and presented with a special shoe made in his honor.

Following Mr. Weitzman's keynote address was an intimate welcoming ceremony to share stories and respect. Freeman School Chief Business Officer Alysia Loshbaugh, proud member of the all-female Krewe of Muses, presented Mr. Weitzman with a Muses shoe inspired by the rare “Inverted Jenny” stamp, reflecting his passion for

stamp collecting. This thoughtful design paid homage to the city and a unique form of artistic expression.

Mr. Weitzman also engaged with university leaders, including Tulane President Mike Fitts and Freeman School Dean Paulo Goes, and members of the Tulane University Fashion Club (TU Fashion). Executive board members Taylor Guillete, Samantha Goldman and Zoë Dupre spoke to Mr. Weitzman about the club, their individual passions, and their experiences both in and out of Tulane University.

A Design Review followed the welcoming ceremony, offering Mr. Weitzman the opportunity to engage with Tulane designers, who had spent months refining their concepts. A standout moment was Mr. Weitzman's meeting with Robbie Johnson, TU Fashion’s creative director, whose work received Mr. Weitzman's stamp of approval ahead of the annual fashion show in April.

“Meeting Mr. Weitzman was a turning point in my life,” Johnson said. “It was the first time someone looked at my work and told me it was truly worth something.”

Johnson was one of nine student designers selected for the showcase, and each receiving invaluable feedback. The afternoon highlighted the immense talent within Tulane, setting the stage for future collaborations and inspiring creatives to push boundaries and take bold risks, a nod to Mr. Weitzman's own approach.



Weitzman, left, and Barbara Kreger, right, vice president of Stuart Weitzman Holdings, review the designs of Tulane Fashion Club member Zoe Sanchez (BSM '28).

The day concluded with an intimate dinner at which Mr. Weitzman joined TU Fashion's Executive Board members for an evening of advice, laughter and meaningful conversation.

As the evening progressed, there was a palpable sense of empowerment, much like the stride of a shoe entering a space and the energy which Mr. Weitzman compared to the “Sound of Fashion.” The discussions delved into entrepreneurship and personal growth, with students sharing their backgrounds and the motivations that propel them forward. This gathering not only provided insights but also fostered deeper connections among attendees, creating a space where thoughts and experiences could be exchanged. The elegant blue, white, and gold décor of the dinner setting perfectly matched the atmosphere, offering a fitting and memorable conclusion to a day rich with inspiration.



Guests at the dinner with Stuart Weitzmen included, from left to right, Isaiah Register, Professor of Practice Patricia Dunn, Nakia Fonana, Shirley Li, Zoë Dupre, Robbie Johnson, Samantha Goldman, Camille Buckner, Lucy Gillett, Taylor Guillotte and Coco Parris.

This story was written by Sam Goldman (SLA '25) and Zoe Dupre (SLA '25)