Former students team up to honor Trapani with professorship

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Friends, colleagues and former students of John M. Trapani came together on Thursday (Nov. 1) to honor the longtime A. B. Freeman School of Business faculty member with the establishment of an endowed professorship in his name.



John M. Trapani III, left, watches as Freeman School Dean Ira Solomon announces the establishment of an endowed professorship in his name.

Spearheaded by Stacey M. Berger (A&S ’76, MBA ’78) and David A. Sislen (A&S ’76), two of Trapani’s former students, the John M. Trapani III Professorship in Business Administration will support the teaching and scholarship of an outstanding early-career faculty member.

In announcing the professorship, Freeman School Dean Ira Solomon praised Trapani, the Streiffer Chair of International Finance and executive director of the Goldring Institute of International Business, for a career that has combined outstanding teaching with institutional leadership, most significantly partnering with universities around the world to expand the Freeman name and develop innovative new programs.

“As much as anybody—and maybe more than anybody—John has been an institution builder over the time he has been here at the Freeman School,” said Solomon. “I’ve traveled with John to South America, Central America and Asia, and I’ve had people tell me first hand. John has played a vivid role in the lifeblood of many individuals and institutions around the globe.”

Berger and Sislen helped raise more than $100,000 to fund the professorship, but the former classmates said that was a small price to pay to honor the man whose teaching and mentorship played such a significant role in their lives.

“I was not necessarily the most motivated student when I came here to Tulane,” said Sislen, president and managing director of Bristol Capital Corp. in Bethesda, Md. “Until I found John’s class and discovered an interest that sparked something I cared about—something that explained the world to me—I would have continued to be an undistinguished student. It was not only finding a topic that was exciting to me but also a guy, someone who could get me through the bizarre elements of economic theory, that really changed my direction in life and gave me that motivation.”



Trapani, center, with former students Stacey Berger, left, and Dave Sislen, who led an effort to raise more than $100,000 for a professorship in Trapani's honor.

“John was an extraordinary professor and we really enjoyed the experience and the feel in his class and what he taught us beyond economics,” added Berger, executive vice president of PNC Real Estate - Midland Loan Services in Washington D.C. “It’s an honor and privilege for us to be able to give John the tribute that he deserves for what he contributed to Dave and I personally and what he’s contributed to the Freeman School and Tulane University.”

In acknowledging the professorship, Trapani shared some humorous recollections of Berger and Sislen and reflected on the meaning of being honored by former students.

“There are many accolades we get in academia, but to be recognized by your former students in my mind is really the highest accolade of all,” Trapani said. “It’s my hope that the Trapani professorship will be used to nurture education as a personalized sharing relationship between students and faculty in the same way that I’ve had the fortune to experience here at Tulane.”