New Orleans Saints, Pelicans team up with Tulane business analytics students

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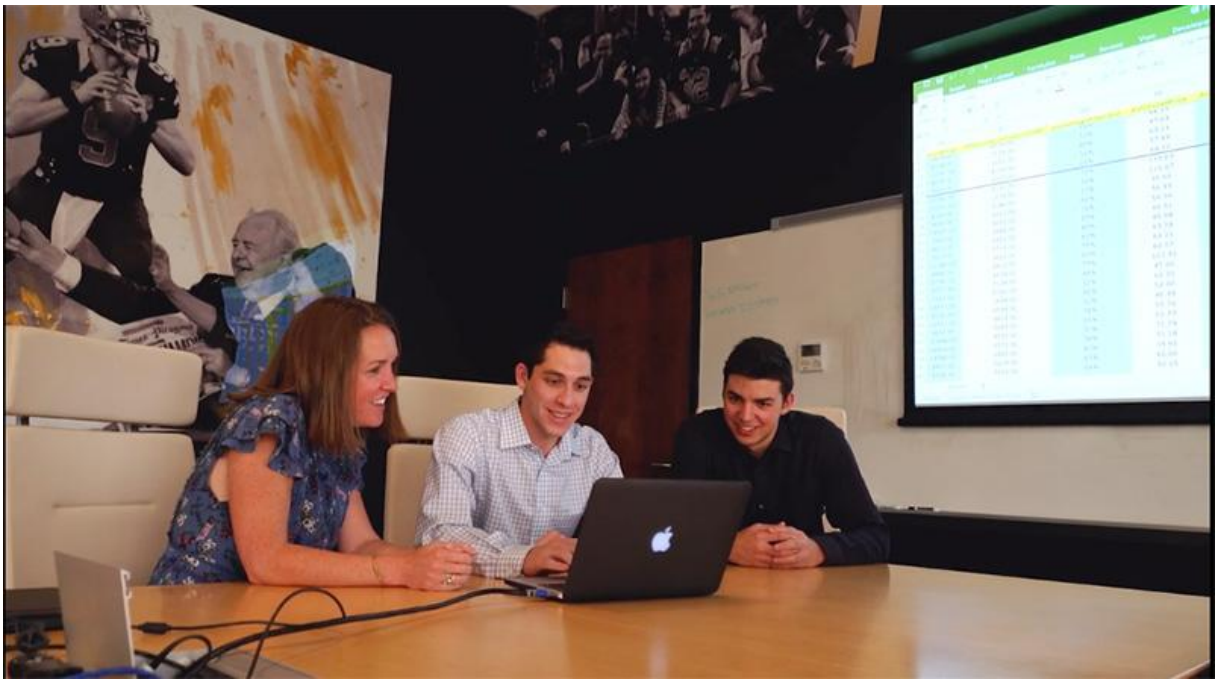

Kate McCabe (MBA ’17), left, business intelligence manager for the Saints and Pelicans, reviews the findings of a data analysis project with Freeman School Master of Business Analytics students Jason Ehrlich (MANA ’19), center, and Josh Gaiman (MANA ’19).

The New Orleans Saints and Pelicans recently teamed up with the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University for a semester-long project that introduced Master of Business Analytics students to real-world projects and helped the two sports organizations apply findings from data to influence operational decisions.

Over the last five months, students from the Freeman School's Master of Business Analytics (MANA) program worked with the Saints and Pelicans Business Analytics Department to study its data and determine factors that influence attendance at Pelicans games. The students were tasked with finding the optimal dates and times to host games at the Smoothie King Center during the 2019-20 season. Implementation of these findings will positively influence ticket sales, attendance and the overall fan experience in the future. The analytics will be used by multiple departments to make fast-paced decisions as the Pelicans work with the NBA to solidify game date selections for upcoming seasons.

"We compete in a world where nearly everything can be measured and quantified," said Saints and Pelicans President Dennis Lauscha. "Over the past year, we have worked directly with students from the Freeman School to help understand, optimize and gather information that is usable and effective. This information has positively impacted our organization and given us the opportunity to make strategic decisions efficiently and accurately."

"Experiential learning opportunities like this are the hallmark of a Freeman education," said Ira Solomon, dean of the Freeman School. "It's yet another way to ensure that our students have the knowledge and skills they need to make an immediate impact in whatever field they choose."

Tulane's Master of Business Analytics (MANA) is a 10-month program that teaches students how to analyze complex sets of data in order to inform business decisions. Coursework emphasizes applicable skills and training in industry-standard analysis and visualization software; long-term projects working with real-world data and partnerships with industry leaders prepare graduates to add value in their future careers.

"We teach students the theory and practice of business analytics, but there's no substitute for working with real data," said Xianjun Geng, executive director of the Master of Business Analytics program. "By working with organizations like the Pelicans, students can put their skills to work on real-world challenges and gain the

experience they need to hit the ground running in a variety of analytics roles.”