Students unlock entrepreneurial insights at Founders Forum

March 13, 2024



The founders of 23 New Orleans companies shared insights with entrepreneurship students at the Freeman School's second annual

Founders Forum.

The Freeman School’s Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation hosted its second annual Founders Forum on March 6 in the Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex's Marshall Family Commons. The event brought together the founders of 23 New Orleans area companies and gave students the chance to meet successful entrepreneurs and connect classroom theory with real-world strategies.

The event’s format was based in part on speed networking. Prior to the forum, 140 students in Freeman’s Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship course selected five companies they were interested in from the list of participants. Course instructor Brian Bergman, assistant professor of management, then matched students with two of their selections, allowing them to meet in small groups with each founder for 25 minutes.

During those sessions, the students engaged in immersive networking with each founder, exploring the company’s origin story and uncovering key entrepreneurial strategies. The interactive sessions enabled students to ask detailed questions and evaluate firsthand how the entrepreneurs built and positioned their companies.

Participating firms included DOCPACE, Revelry Startup Studio, Ingest, LifeCity, Urban South Brewery, Where y’Art Works, NDORSE, DAWn, FitLot, Shibusa Systems, Junum, Brass Roots, Thrivvy, Quick Take Health, My Next Electric, Pizza Delicious, Iris 1965 Jewelry, On Scene Services, Culturalyst, Leo’s Bread, Patch Princess and Vinti.



Kate Heller of Leo's Bread, right, talks to students at the Founders Forum.

Students came away from the evening with valuable insights from founders on the strategies they used to build successful businesses. They then took those insights back into the classroom, creating a comprehensive Lean Canvas for each of their assigned ventures and reflecting on each's key assumptions and strengths.

“Business model proficiency is crucial to entrepreneurial success; it is hard to do something innovative or different if you don’t understand what is currently happening and why,” said Bergman. “Throughout the Fundamentals course and through this event, we are giving students the tools and reps to quickly grasp the 'zig -- the standard or status quo -- with the hope that one day, they will have the confidence to execute on an opportunity -- to 'zag' -- in an industry they are passionate about.”

In April, Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship students will participate in a second event. The Supporter’s Forum, a twist to the Founder’s Forum, will allow students to speed network with entrepreneur support organizations (incubators, accelerators, etc.), economic development organizations, professional service providers and investors in the GNO area.

Learn more about the Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation by visiting their webpage at https://freeman.tulane.edu/lepage.