Carol Lavin Bernick to deliver 2025 R.W. Freeman Distinguished Lecture

January 13, 2025



Carol Lavin Bernick (NC ’74), CEO of Polished Nickel Capital Management and former Executive Chairman of Alberto-Culver Co., will discuss her extraordinary life and career as the Freeman School of Business's 2025 R. W. Freeman Distinguished Lecturer.

In a fireside chat with Associate Dean Myke Yest, Bernick will share life and business lessons gleaned from her remarkable career.

The presentation, “Letting Her Hair Down: Carol Lavin Bernick on a Life in Business,” will take place in the Freeman School’s Marshall Family Commons on Friday, Feb. 7, at 1 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

As the CEO of Polished Nickel Capital Management, Bernick leads a privately held company that oversees a diverse portfolio of investments and companies, including consumer products and professional sports.

During her 37-year career at Alberto Culver, a global manufacturer of beauty and personal care products and owner of 3,300 Sally Beauty stores, she directed product development, led its consumer products businesses, and was elected Executive Chairman in 2004. While dramatically growing the company, Bernick instituted a nationally-recognized cultural overhaul, profiled in the *Harvard Business Review* and other publications. Alberto Culver was sold to Unilever in 2011.

Among her civic commitments, Bernick chairs the Northwestern Health Network board, comprised of nine hospitals and 3,400 physicians in association with Northwestern Memorial Hospital, which is ranked in the top ten nationally. She is also the immediate past board chair of Tulane University, a board she continues to serve on.

Bernick’s charitable work includes founding a support group for Prentice Women’s Hospital, having raised tens of millions of dollars benefiting infant and women’s health. She launched Enchanted Backpack in 2017, which supports 20,000+ under-resourced students annually. And in 2020, she created CC’s Wish List, providing tens of thousands of cases of new clothing, footwear, winterwear, bedding and other essentials in-kind to more than 100 nonprofits each year.

Carol authored *Gather As You Go: Sharing Lessons Learned Along The Way*, in 2018, donating net profits from sales to Enchanted Backpack, and released a book on Alberto Culver's history in 2024. She has three married children and eight grandchildren between the ages of 5 and 11.

The R.W. Freeman Distinguished Lecture series, an annual presentation of the A. B. Freeman School of Business, is named in honor of Richard W. Freeman Sr. (BBA '34), former president and chairman of the Louisiana Coca-Cola Bottling Co. and chairman of the board of Delta Air Lines. Freeman served on the Board of Tulane for 13 years and led the Freeman family's effort to name Tulane's business school in honor of his father, New Orleans businessman and civic leader A. B. Freeman.