Q&A with Helmuth Chavez, Dean of UFM Business School

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Helmuth Chavez (MMG '09, PhD '12), right, dean of the School of Business at Universidad Francisco Marroquín (UFM) in Guatemala City, Guatemala, poses with Freeman School Dean Paulo Goes, left, during a November 2025 meeting on campus.

Helmuth Chavez (MMG ’09, PhD ’12) is dean of the School of Business at Universidad Francisco Marroquín (UFM) in Guatemala City, Guatemala. He teaches courses including Corporate Finance, Valuation, Derivatives, Capital Markets and Business Strategy and serves as director of Heuristica-UFM, a research and innovation center affiliated with UFM. He was also a co-founder and general partner with Invariantes Fund I, an early stage venture capital fund targeting the software sector.

Chavez became UFM dean in 2011 after earning his PhD in finance from Tulane University through the Latin American Faculty Development PhD program, an initiative of Tulane’s Freeman School of Business. His connections with Tulane run deep. Beginning in 2005, he served as research director of Burkenroad Reports for Latin American, a satellite of the Freeman School’s acclaimed equity analysis program that focused on Latin American companies. Since 2012, he has served as an adjunct professor at the Freeman School, where he teaches Firm Valuation, Options, Futures and other Derivatives, and Financial Management and Portfolio Management.

In addition to his PhD, he holds a Master of Management from Tulane University, a Master in Financial Markets and Asset Management from IEB in Spain, a Master of Management from ESEADE-UFM Guatemala, an MBA from Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, and a Master of Economics from UFM Guatemala. He has also completed executive seminars in finance and strategy at institutions including Harvard, Northwestern, Boston University, London School of Economics and Babson College.

Beyond academia, Chavez is co-founder and CIO of Blastos, a crowdfunding firm and a board member of Campus Tec, a business incubator for technology startups in Guatemala. He has also been the Director of Valente, a consulting firm for mergers, acquisitions, and securities issuance in Central America and Panama, and has served as Chief Investment Officer of two private equity funds in Guatemala.

We recently sat down with Dean Chavez to discuss his career, business education in Latin America and UFM’s relationship with Tulane

Tell us a little about UFM and the School of Business.
UFM is a private university in Guatemala City founded in 1971 that offers programs in business, law, medicine and the liberal arts. We have about 3,000 students, by design. We try to keep the university small to maintain the quality of the programs

and access to faculty. UFM's School of Business, which offers master's-level business programs, has 450 students, all of whom are part time. In Guatemala — and Latin America in general — you don't see many full-time master's programs. We offer an MBA, which comprises about 55% of our students, as well as a Master of Finance, a Master of Real Estate Development — which is a dual-degree program with FIU — a Master of Economics, and an LLM in finance for lawyers.

Talk a little about UFM's relationship with Tulane.
Tulane is one of the strongest international alliances at UFM and the strongest alliance at the School of Business. The relationships first began 40 years ago with Tulane's School of Architecture. In the 1990s, John Trapani, the Freeman School's former senior associate dean, visited UFM, and we jointly established the Professional Master of Finance and Master of Management programs. Partnering with Tulane enables our students to access the quality of education that Tulane provides and to visit New Orleans and be exposed to the perspectives of Tulane's outstanding faculty. It's very important for our students.

The relationship is also important for our faculty. Every time we have a visiting professor from Tulane, we have some activities with professors here at UFM, so it's important to have visiting professors.

Tell me about the two dual degree programs UFM School of Business is currently running in partnership with Tulane, the Master of Finance and the International Master of Management.
The structure is the same in both programs. Students take six courses from Tulane, one in New Orleans on Tulane's campus and five in Guatemala or Panama, depending on the program. The course in New Orleans is a week-long intensive class, and the others take place on two weekends per month. The program is designed to accommodate working professional students. We have a strong finance faculty at UFM, so it was natural to partner with Tulane for the Master of Finance. Our MFIN was the first in Latin America to be recognized by CFA. It's a data driven program. Other schools in Latin America offer master's programs focusing on financial management. We have financial management, but also strong courses in investments, risk management and data analytics. That's the value proposition for our students.

What are the benefits of participating in an international master's program?

The intensive course usually takes place in the summer, so UFM students can attend classes in New Orleans with other international students participating in Tulane programs. I think that's important. Our students have been able to collaborate with students from China, Colombia and other countries during their intensive course. So that week is very interesting for them, and the networking effect is very valuable.

Panama in particular is growing in terms of multinational firms, so I think our students from UFM Panama value the international networking experience the most because they're in a country that's attracting a lot of international investment.

How valuable is it for your students to get a degree from an institution like Tulane?

We have a lot of businesses that require a U.S. degree for their top management positions. They think students with international degrees — especially U.S. degrees — have more open minds due to the international exposure, so it's very important in Guatemala as well as in Panama. If you are going to work for a multinational firm, having a U.S. degree is essential.

What do you see as the future of the Tulane UFM relationship?

I see us expanding the programs we currently have but also launching new programs. For example, we are exploring new programs related to energy. Tulane is very strong in energy, and in Latin America, the energy sector is growing rapidly, so I think that's an opportunity for us. Executive programs are another opportunity. Right now, most of the programs we offer are for-credit programs — for example, master's programs — so we are exploring executive certificate programs in Latin America — short, non-credit-type of programs.

In closing, is there anything about the UFM-Tulane partnership you'd like to emphasize?

We have several alliances at UFM, but Tulane is the strongest. I think the focus that Tulane has on Latin America is very important. Some U.S. institutions see Latin America just as another opportunity for growth, but for Tulane, Latin America is a strategic region, and we feel it's important to have a close relationship with Tulane. There are also a lot of Tulane alumni in Guatemala, and they're the ones promoting these programs. We have alumni saying, "I want to tell my story about how my Tulane degree helped me in my career, and I want to encourage students to take the opportunity to get this degree." There's a strong Tulane community in Guatemala. We feel close to Tulane, and we're grateful to have this alliance.