Building Bridges Across Borders

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As a professor of practice in strategy and entrepreneurship, Alex Sleptsov draws on insights gained through nearly 15 years of international teaching in Latin America and Asia to enhance his classroom discussions.

Before he taught corporate strategy to students around the world, Alex Sleptsov worked in an environment with zero margin for error: the Soviet space program.

In 1989, fresh out of engineering school, Sleptsov got a job designing thermal heat exchangers for orbital space stations. While he eventually traded his engineering career for a doctorate in corporate strategy from the University of Michigan and more than a decade advising biotech firms in North Carolina's Research Triangle, Sleptsov never lost his appetite for navigating complex systems. Today, as a longtime faculty member at the A. B. Freeman School of Business, Sleptsov channels that curiosity across thousands of miles of international travel on behalf of the Goldring Institute for International Business.

"Traveling itself is definitely not fun — flying to Xiamen with connections takes more than 15 hours," Sleptsov says. "But I value these opportunities a lot because I learn for myself and I learn for my classes back in New Orleans. These are things I bring back that I could not possibly have known if I didn't travel there."

Since his first international teaching assignment in Colombia in 2012, Sleptsov has taught executive cohorts across Latin America and Asia, including programs in Guatemala, Peru, Chile, Mexico, and China. The teaching format is demanding: highly compressed, four-day weekend intensives totaling up to 32 classroom hours. Yet the payoff, Sleptsov says, lies in the caliber and perspective of the students.

"The students, because most of them are executives, give me insights I couldn't have gotten otherwise," he says. "In Xiamen, our students are founders, directors, presidents and CEOs. I get exposed to the ideas of international executives that I can bring directly back to my classes at Freeman."

Those international case studies and interactions with top international executives end up enriching the courses he teaches in New Orleans. Rather than teaching abstract theory, Sleptsov draws on firsthand discussions with South American and Asian executives to explain nuanced regional dynamics, such as contrasting corporate governance frameworks between Santiago and Lima, or how Chinese business leaders navigate shifting tariff policies.



Sleptsov, third from left, with faculty from Xiamen University at the launch ceremony of the sixth Tulane-Xiamen Master of Global Management program in 2025.

For Sleptsov, the institutional foundation laid by Freeman School Dean James McFarland and Senior Associate Dean John Trapani in the 1990s created a network that remains uniquely valuable today. By partnering with premier Latin American universities like Universidad ICESI in Colombia and Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala, the Freeman School established deep regional brand recognition and lasting academic ties.

In an era marked by shifting trade policies and geopolitical polarization, Sleptsov views these educational exchanges not just as academic exercises, but as vital cultural touchpoints.

"The Goldring programs are a gem because they create connections in a world that is breaking apart," Sleptsov says. "These touchpoints actually have more meaning today than they did 10 or 20 years ago when everybody took globalization for granted. The more we build bridges, the better off we are."