For returning alumna, the juice is worth the squeeze

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Plenish founder Kara Rosen (BSM ’99) meets with a student during her visit to campus on Oct. 5 and 6. As an Industry Expert-in-Residence, Rosen returns to campus on a regular basis to share insights from her career as an entrepreneur and brand advisor. (Photo by Katie East)

Entrepreneur, author and Freeman School Industry Expert-in-Residence Kara Rosen (BSM ’99) returned to Tulane in October for two intensive days of panel discussions, guest lectures and one-on-one meetings with students, sharing insights from her more than 25 years in brand-building, marketing and growth strategy.

Rosen, founder of Plenish, an organic, plant-based beverage brand known for its almond, oat and other plant-based milks, drew on her experience in consumer brand management to guide students, including those in new product development, prototyping and entrepreneurial management classes.

“I’ve been through it all,” she said. “I help founders take a product from the kitchen to the factory, onto the shelf and into consumers’ baskets. Getting a listing is one milestone. Building the demand that keeps it there is the harder part.”

Rosen sold Plenish to Britvic in 2021 after building the multimillion-dollar company from the ground up. She launched the wellness venture in her kitchen to address her own health concerns, becoming an early pioneer of cold-pressed juices in the United Kingdom before expanding into plant-based milks.

“Building a business takes enormous energy. You live and breathe it,” she said. “Looking after your physical health matters because you need the mental stamina to make good decisions and keep going.”

Today, Rosen invests in and advises consumer brands. She is an investor and board member at OceanSaver, an ocean-friendly household-cleaning brand, and an investor and strategic advisor to Vero, an organic Parmigiano Reggiano brand imported from Italy.

Meeting with students in the Freeman School’s Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Rosen encouraged prospective entrepreneurs to understand the advantages their products offer, their position within the marketplace and the reasons customers would choose them over competitors.

“What are you adding to the consumer’s life?” she asked “Why should they spend their money on your product? What makes it better than the alternatives? If you can’t answer those questions clearly, there’s more work to do.”

For students eager to pursue entrepreneurship after graduation, Rosen offered guidance on how to use the early stages of their careers to gain perspective and practical knowledge.

“Go and work somewhere you can learn first,” Rosen said. “See how a business operates, what good management looks like and how decisions get made. That experience will make you a stronger founder.”

Rosen encouraged graduates to weigh the appeal of remote work against the opportunity to learn in person from experienced colleagues.

“Early in your career, remote-work flexibility may not be the gift it seems,” she said. “Find talented people you can physically work alongside. Seeing how they think, make decisions and solve problems can fast-track your learning.”

Before starting Plenish, Rosen built a successful marketing career in event partnerships and creative services at Condé Nast, where she worked for 10 years. Her experience with prominent magazines like Vogue, The New Yorker and Wired often attracts questions from students interested in publishing careers, but Rosen cautions students about committing to industries that are losing momentum.

“If you’re entering an industry under pressure, understand where the opportunity is,” she said. “Can you innovate, reach a new audience or create a new revenue stream? Think about how you can help move the industry forward.”

Rosen encouraged students to research industries with growth potential, whether they are developing a new consumer product or deciding which career path to pursue.

“Look for a market with room to grow,” she said. “Then spend time with your consumers. Understand what matters to them, what’s missing and why they would choose you. Keep the consumer at the center of your decisions.”