EMBAs go global for international consulting project

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Executive MBA students pose in front of the iconic Table Mountain during their May 2026 class trip to Cape Town, South Africa. (Photo by Danielle Martin)

The Freeman School’s Executive MBA class traveled to Cape Town, South Africa, in May to present strategic recommendations to one of the world’s top consumer health brands.

The trip was part of Managing the Global Enterprise, an EMBA course designed to give students a deeper understanding of how global companies formulate and implement strategies to succeed in complex business and sociopolitical environments.

“It’s about how to configure the activities of a company to make the most out of global opportunities,” said Alex Sleptsov, professor of practice in management and instructor in the course. “The focus of the class isn’t just studying global strategy or visiting global companies but doing a consulting project with an output that’s useful to a real company struggling with a real global challenge.”

The class worked with Kenvue, the U.S.-based global consumer health company whose high-profile brands include Tylenol, Neutrogena, Listerine, Aveeno and Band-Aid. For the consulting project, the students were charged with developing recommendations to improve the regional strategy of the company’s Stayfree line of menstrual health products.

Initially uncertain about the project’s international strategy implications, Sleptsov said it turned out to be a fascinating challenge thanks to the diligent, insightful work of the EMBA student teams.

“Stayfree was stuck in a sense because it’s not seen as a high-end product that commands higher prices, but it’s also not cheap enough to reach the market that really needs it,” Sleptsov said. “And it’s not just an economic problem. It’s a societal challenge. One of our students discovered that teenage girls in South Africa miss an average of 40 school days per year because they lack the ability to manage their menstrual cycles.”



Executive MBA student Daniel Diaz (MBA ’26) presents his team’s consulting recommendations to executives with Kenvue at the international consumer health company's head office in Cape Town. (Photo by Danielle Martin)

The students began work on the project in March with an online meeting with Astrid Steely, Kenvue’s managing director, South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, to learn more about the brand and its operational challenges and spent the next six weeks developing recommendations to deliver in person during their trip to Cape Town.

“The trip gave us the opportunity to take the frameworks we learned throughout the program and put them into action with a real client and a real problem,” said Mohamad Masoumy (MBA ’26), service line chief for plastic and craniofacial surgery at Manning Family Children’s Hospital in New Orleans. “That goes far beyond any case study.”

Sleptsov said the project was an especially good match for executive MBA students, whose real-world knowledge and shared classroom experience gave them an advantage in developing recommendations.

“Because of their accumulated experience in class and because they went through the program in lockstep, they had an integral approach,” Sleptsov said. “They

brought a higher-level understanding of the organizational problems Kenvue was facing than a group of less-experienced students would have been able to."

"The Kenvue project was demanding but one of the most valuable experiences of the program," added Masoumy. "I came away with a more disciplined sense of what separates strategic from tactical consulting and, most importantly, a deeper appreciation for how much the cultural texture of a community and company shapes what good strategy actually looks like."

In addition to the consulting work, the students took part in a variety of activities in and around Cape Town. They kicked off the week with a company visit to Optix, a logistics and fleet management firm that uses AI to monitor more than 10,000 vehicles around the world, and followed that visit with trips to Oryx Desert Salt, a premium brand of salt harvested from the Kalahari Desert, and Nordex South Africa, one of the country's leading wind energy companies. They also visited BlueCape, a South African public-private partnership that supports regional ocean economy across the maritime manufacturing, superyacht and ocean sports industries, and toured Vondeling Winery, a historic boutique winery known for sustainable farming, minimal intervention winemaking and Mediterranean-style varietals. They closed out the week with a talk by Robert Williamson, Coastal Region general manager for Microsoft South Africa.

"The Cape Town trip was without question one of the most meaningful experiences of my MBA journey," said RoseAngel Taylor (MBA '26). "The itinerary was thoughtfully planned, and there was a real balance between academic exposure, cultural immersion and time to connect as a cohort. This trip will stay with me for a long time."