Undergrads find mentors in alumni

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For business school students, getting a good internship is the first step toward landing a great job after graduation, but for students lacking previous professional experience, that’s often easier said than done.



Barrett Cooper (MBA '13) gives Jason Dunleavy, a sophomore majoring in finance, a tour of the Orpheum Theatre, which is currently undergoing a multimillion-dollar restoration. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

To help ease the transition from classes to the professional world, the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University introduced a new program during the fall semester that enables students to “shadow” an alumnus on a typical workday.

Program developer Jade O’Dell says the NOLA Professionals Job Shadowing Program can give students practical knowledge of jobs and careers while helping them to become more comfortable with networking.

“This is something to do before you start applying for internships,” says O’Dell, a counselor in the business school’s Career Management Center. “You can talk to professionals in the field, get an idea of what different professions are like and then figure out where you want to go from there.”

Jason Dunleavy, a sophomore majoring in finance, was matched with Barrett Cooper (MBA ’13), chief operating officer of ERG Enterprises. The venture capital firm’s holdings include the Windsor Court Hotel, the Pontchartrain Hotel, Tipitina’s and the Orpheum Theatre, which is currently undergoing a multimillion-dollar restoration. Dunleavy spent the day with Cooper visiting properties and learning more about how the company chooses its investments.

“I was amazed at how smart Jason was and how knowledgeable he was of the industry,” Cooper says. “ERG Enterprises believes very strongly in the importance of mentoring and networking, so we were happy to be able to help Jason get a better understanding of what the workplace is like.”

O’Dell hopes to make the program available to more students during the spring semester, with the help of additional alumni volunteers. Any Tulane alumni interested in participating in the job shadowing program may contact O’Dell at 504-865-5417.