Downtown expansion on the menu as Freeman joins planned hospitality hub

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The Freeman School plans to offer executive and professional programs and launch hospitality entrepreneurship initiatives in space at the New Orleans Culinary & Hospitality Institute, located at 725 Howard Ave.

New Orleans is world-renowned as a top destination for food and tourism, but can the city's excellence in hospitality offer winning insights for entrepreneurs and executives in other industries?

That's the idea behind one of several new education programs the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University plans to launch late next year in a high-profile space downtown. The Freeman School will be a tenant in the New Orleans Culinary & Hospitality Institute (NOCHI), a new culinary and hospitality industry education hub planned in the former Louisiana ArtWorks building at 725 Howard Ave.

The Freeman School will lease one and a half floors for classroom, office and programming space in the five-story facility, which is under renovation. The venture will give Freeman space to create new programs for graduate and undergraduate students as well as working professionals in close proximity to the city's central business district in an area of the city is currently undergoing a rapid transition dubbed as the Downtown Innovation Corridor.

"We are planning to create and offer executive education, non-degree programming to serve the needs of the growing New Orleans business community and the many visitors to our city," said Ira Solomon, Freeman School dean.

NOCHI backers include restaurateurs Ti Martin of Commander's Palace and Dickie Brennan. It will feature two culinary teaching labs, two baking and pastry labs, a restaurant lab, a wine and spirits lab, a large event center including a banquet kitchen, a café open to the public and traditional classroom and office spaces.



In December, the New Orleans Culinary & Hospitality Institute hosted the final presentations in John Clarke's New Product Development in the Hospitality Industry class, one of several new hospitality entrepreneurship related initiatives.

Freeman is planning a new hospitality entrepreneurship initiative at NOCHI unlike traditional hospitality management programs. Instead it will use the hospitality industry to gain new insights and solve problem across business disciplines and industries.

The Freeman School believes that the hospitality context can be used as a mechanism to understand interactions between companies and their customers and employees. The insights can be translated and generalized to other industries, said John Clarke, Freeman associate dean for graduate programs.

“Our non-traditional view of hospitality, as a context for learning and research, extends its relevance and applicability beyond travel, tourism and hospitality to a wide range of other important industries including health care, retail, consumer products, financial services and professional services,” Clarke said. “In the Freeman School, we believe that the hospitality context applies whenever an organization is focused on user experience and customer satisfaction.”

NOCHI is expected to open by Fall 2018.