Freeman partners with Venture for America to host fellows, mentors for New Orleans Entrepreneur Week

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Recent New Orleans Venture For America Fellows (above) at The Shop at the CAC, a co-working space downtown. VFA has been in New Orleans since 2012 and has been home to 99 Fellows to date, 49 of whom are still living in the city

The Freeman School's Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation will partner with Venture For America (VFA) to host a select group of 2020 VFA Fellows along with leaders from university entrepreneurship centers across the country during New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW) in March.

VFA Fellows and their mentors will participate in dedicated programming designed by the Lepage Center, VFA and leaders from the New Orleans business community. These will include design-thinking workshops, sharing best practices and sessions with current and former VFA Fellows. Participants will also attend the NOEW summit,

a two-day conference featuring opportunities to network with thought leaders, entrepreneurs and investors from around the country.

“As a co-producer of New Orleans Entrepreneur Week, the A. B. Freeman School of Business is committed to supporting the city’s startup community,” said Ira Solomon, Freeman School dean. “Hosting these outstanding fellows and educational leaders is an excellent opportunity to introduce them to our entrepreneurial community and connect them with local entrepreneurs.”

Venture For America is a two-year fellowship program for recent graduates who want to work at a startup and create jobs in American cities. Fellows learn important startup skills at a month-long Training Camp, apply for jobs within VFA’s company network and work for two years as full-time, salaried employees in one of 14 cities. The program aims to attract talented college graduates to work in cities not traditionally known for startup activity. If Fellows want to start businesses of their own, VFA helps them get their ideas off the ground with programming, an accelerator and an investment fund. VFA has been in New Orleans since 2012 and has been home to 99 Fellows to date, 49 of whom are still living in the city.

“New Orleans was one of the very first VFA cities, and we are committed to supporting the entrepreneurs here,” said Amy Nelson, CEO of Venture for America. “We’ve had so many awesome Fellows who are Tulane grads and we are excited to partner with the university to showcase New Orleans and its vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. I know our incoming Fellows will leave this week inspired.”

VFA Fellows who travel to New Orleans for NOEW will get a "behind the scenes" look at entrepreneurial ecosystem development, which will help them understand the critical role they will play in the communities they will join during their fellowships. These students, who come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, will learn how collaboration amongst institutions, organizations and companies is the best way to develop a healthy city for entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship center directors are often rewarded for research and teaching, but seldom for being great mentors and creating a great student experience. Welcoming these educators to NOEW creates a unique and wonderful opportunity for Tulane to upend that dynamic and encourage faculty to share how they are nurturing the best generation of entrepreneurial talent.

“We want to reward and celebrate these great mentors,” said Rob Lalka, executive director of the Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. “As leaders helping to shape the next generation of entrepreneurial talent, they will add to the NOEW experience and gain from it, too, by making connections, gaining new insights and discovering the entrepreneurial spirit of New Orleans.”