New dean sees opportunity in changing business environment

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Paulo Goes took office as the 14th dean of Tulane University's A. B. Freeman School of Business on Aug. 23.

Paulo Goes had one special request for his first day on the job as dean of the A. B. Freeman School of Business.

"I needed a doorstop," he says with a laugh. "I asked [Assistant Dean Sharon Moore] to leave my door open when she left my office, but it kept closing. We had to find something to prop it open."

The new open-door policy says a lot about Goes and the style of leadership he hopes to bring to the Freeman School.

“I am a person that enjoys listening to what people are thinking, so I think communication is extremely important,” says Goes, who officially began his tenure as dean on Monday [Aug. 23]. “I like to keep my door open. Sometimes those serendipitous moments where you run into somebody, that’s how you build the team and get to know people.”

Goes was announced as the Freeman School’s 14th dean in June, replacing Ira Solomon, who recently stepped down after serving 10 years in the role. Goes previously served as dean of the University of Arizona’s Eller College of Management, where he built nationally recognized interdisciplinary programs in entrepreneurship and innovation, digital transformation, economics and business while prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

Under Goes’ leadership, Eller’s online MBA was ranked as a Top 10 program by *U.S. News & World Report.* He also invested in building the college’s online Bachelor of Science in Business Administration program into one of the university’s most popular online degree offerings. The resulting forward-looking portfolio of academic programs greatly enhanced the school’s fundraising, alumni relations and corporate relations programs.

A native of Brazil, Goes earned an undergraduate degree in civil engineering from the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Brazil and a master’s degree in production engineering from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He worked as a civil engineer in Brazil before immigrating to the U.S. to earn a master’s degree in operations research and a PhD in business administration from the University of Rochester.

A nationally recognized expert in the field of information systems, Goes’ research has appeared in leading academic journals, and he has presented and delivered keynote addresses at numerous conferences. From 2013 to 2015, he was editor in chief of *Management Information Systems Quarterly*, the field’s most prestigious journal.

Before becoming dean of Eller College, Goes headed the nationally ranked Department of Management Information Systems and served as the Salter Distinguished Professor of Management and Technology at the University of Arizona.

Goes comes to Freeman at a volatile time in business education, with schools across the nation grappling with a rapidly changing business environment, shifting

consumer preferences and global uncertainty in the wake of the pandemic.

While these trends may bring some pain in the near term, Goes says Freeman has the potential to thrive in this new environment.

“Because of the speed of change, you have to learn fast, and the way you learn fast is by doing,” he says. “Experiential learning is going to be extremely important, and Freeman already does a lot of that in finance, investments, and entrepreneurship and innovation. I think that will continue.”

Rapid change also necessitates lifelong learning and programs that address the needs of working professionals interested in gaining new skills. Goes says Freeman will need to think about its graduate offerings and how well they’re meeting the changing needs of students.

“Full-time MBA programs are going through a lot of challenges,” he says. “People don’t want to spend two years going to a full-time program if they can be working and the economy is strong. We have to rethink a lot of those things, and this is the right time for us to be thinking about what’s next.”

One area Goes hopes to develop significantly is interdisciplinary programs and initiatives. Freeman currently offers a number of joint-degree programs and specializations, but Goes sees potential for additional programs in collaboration with partners from across the university.

“Business schools need to be more like connecting hubs for the entire campus” Goes says. “That’s what business does – it connects different disciplines. There is no innovation without a viable business model, and there are many ways we can enhance what the campus does and they can benefit from associating with us.”

Research is also an important part of Goes’ vision for Freeman.

“There are amazing, grand challenges that we have to solve as a society, and that’s where research comes in,” he says. “And if you’re good at research, that’s where the three Rs come in: reputation, recognition and rankings. You need a strong research component to drive those three Rs.”

While experiential learning, interdisciplinary programs and research will likely play a big role, Goes says developing a comprehensive strategy will take time.

“I don’t want to jump the gun and say we have a strategy from day one, because the strategy has to be from the ground up,” he says. “I have some thoughts about what business schools today should be doing, but we need to have buy-in and energize our people first.”

For the next several weeks, Goes says his plan is to do a lot of listening.

“The first 100 days will be about listening, learning and sitting with people to understand better what our identity is and where we should be going,” Goes says. “We’re going to be formulating strategies and putting the teams together — designing new programs, reinventing existing programs or taking advantage of what’s already working and running with it. That’s the fun part, and that’s what I’m looking forward to.”