Graduation Spotlight: Kobe Zagon (BSM '24)

April 15, 2024



Name: Kobe Zagon

Describe yourself in 15 words or less: Determined, witty, and evolving perfectionist, striving to make people laugh and buy mom a boat.

Fun fact: Growing up, my family owned and operated a small chocolate factory called “Mom ‘n Pops.” The factory, in Newburgh, New York, served as a strategic air command center during the Cold War.

Hometown: Cornwall, New York

Major: Finance

Favorite Business Course:

My favorite business course was the Aaron Selber Jr. Course on Distressed Debt taught by Professor Yest. The course supplemented niche lecture material with a

semester-long case competition, allowing us to work in teams to present a distressed debt investment thesis to a group of industry judges. The experiential learning component of the course and unique content provided our team with the opportunity to be creative and resourceful in learning how to model a distressed company and build compelling presentation materials. Additionally, Professor Yest and our industry mentor broke down an otherwise complex subject into understandable components, making the course equal parts challenging and engaging.

Extracurricular Activities, Community Work and Leadership Roles During College:

- President, Vice President of Administration, and Treasurer for the Green Bull Group - Tulane's Investment Banking Development Program
- Investment Research Manager for Burkenroad Reports
- Team Manager for Freeman Reports
- Independent Study (in-progress)
    - Developing an investment banking course track, designed to prepare Tulane students for the rigorous investment banking recruitment process through structured coursework and experiential learning opportunities
    - Working with Tulane faculty and administration to integrate the program into the Freeman finance curriculum
- Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business Fraternity
- Tulane Club Baseball
- Tulane Club Ultimate Frisbee
- Founder's Scholarship Recipient
- Dean's List: Fall 2020 – Fall 2023

Internships:

- June 2022 – August 2022: Summer Investment Analyst with the Tulane University Investment Office (Darien, CT)
- June 2023 – August 2023: Summer Investment Banking Analyst with Moelis & Company (New York, NY)

Post-Graduation Plans:

Investment Banking Analyst with Moelis & Company.

Favorite business professor:

My favorite business professor is Professor Mara Baumgarten-Force. Since my sophomore year, when I took Professor Force's course on Financial Management, she has constantly been there for me as a mentor and advocate. I've also taken her Aaron Selber Jr. Course on Hedge Funds, where her ability to apply her real-world experience at J.P. Morgan to the material she taught was incredibly beneficial to me and to the career direction I've chosen to pursue. In addition, I've worked closely with her as a faculty advisor to the Green Bull Group and my independent study. In both instances, she selflessly provided unparalleled support that proved to be invaluable. For example, when I approached her about helping with my independent study, despite health concerns and other commitments, she was excited to offer me any support I needed. Professor Force is an unwavering motivator and reminds me every day that the best learning takes place outside the classroom.

What is the biggest lesson you gained from studying business?

The biggest lesson I've learned from studying business is that people are generally friendlier than given credit for and curiosity is everyone's biggest strength. While a simple lesson, I think we often view business, and the financial industry in particular, as a cut-throat and competitive career path. While the industry is filled with intelligent and ambitious graduates, most are always willing to answer questions, review a resume, give a mock interview, or offer guidance. As a freshman at Tulane, I was torn between being a journalist and working for The Walt Disney Company. I had little experience in finance and knew nothing of investment banking. By the time I pivoted in my sophomore year, I had learned the power of networking as an educational tool, as much as a prerequisite in the internship recruitment process. I owe many thanks to the countless mentors I met on campus and the industry professionals who welcomed my questions.

What advice would you give to a student looking to major in a business-related field?

My advice to students looking to major in a business-related field is:

1. Find the right balance between taking the initiative and asking the right questions
2. Practice listening and taking notes
3. Set big goals and go for it with full force!

4. Read as much as you can (including for fun)
5. Network, network, network, and search for unique perspectives
6. Trust yourself, but recognize that there's a line between confidence and arrogance

What has surprised you most about majoring in business?

What surprised me most about business is just how creative the industry can be. While often receiving a reputation for being a number- and process-driven industry – which is, indeed, a large component of the work – my coursework and internship experiences have proven to me the strategic and inventive side of the field as well. For instance, Professor Force in the Aaron Selber Jr. Course on Hedge Funds encouraged teams to think out of the box while designing our investment strategies and strategically when identifying the best way to pitch our proposed funds to the set of judges. Even for junior employees in the financial industry, recognizing the bigger picture of the project behind some of the tedious assignments can often expose the interesting strategy involved.

Looking back over your experience, what is the one thing you'd do differently in business school and why?

I wish I had taken the opportunity to study abroad. Following my high school graduation, my family planned a trip to London; however, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our plans and I've still yet to be on the other side of the Atlantic. I would have loved to travel to Switzerland or Vienna during school, but chose to stay at Tulane to continue building the Green Bull Group and participating in my other extracurricular involvements. I have a trip planned following graduation and hope to travel more later in my career to meet new people and experience unique cultures and perspectives, however, I wish I had taken the opportunity during college as well.

Which academic, extracurricular or personal achievement are you most proud of?

I am most proud of the leadership position I've taken with the Green Bull Group and the mentorship we've been able to offer to Tulane students. I joined the club at the end of my freshman year and quickly found it to be a place where I was comfortable asking questions and learning more about the financial industry. At the time, the club was a broad finance organization, covering topics in everything from equity research to investment banking. Given its influence on my recruitment process, I

was excited to start as the Vice President of Administration and Treasurer in my sophomore year, before taking over as President in my junior year. Over the 2022 summer, we reorganized the program, with added financial and administrative support from Tulane, from an informal club into a structured, competitive investment banking recruiting program, designed to provide mentorship and professional and technical development to a cohort of 15-20 sophomores. Within the first two years of restructuring, our executive board and student leaders have mentored more than 50 students, expanded our offerings to include a separate weekly freshman curriculum, completed what will hopefully be an annual networking trip to New York City, and coordinated a formal mentorship program. I've loved mentoring and learning from the students in our program every day and have met some of my best friends through the leadership position. I hope the program, combined with my current independent study, will continue to serve as a community for students interested in finance to learn from each other, find a mentor, and make new friends.

Which classmate do you most admire?

The classmate I most admire is Alexa Fuhrer. I've had the privilege of working with Alexa through the Green Bull Group and in our Aaron Selber Jr. Course on Hedge Funds team. I've known Alexa since freshman year and have watched her constantly take on new challenges, ask insightful questions, and make the right decisions in difficult situations. In her senior year, she once again took on a new leadership position, leading the experiential service-learning opportunity for A.B. Freeman School of Business students to tutor New Orleans charter high school students in financial literacy concepts. With this year being the program's first in operation, Alexa has set the bar for the program's future student leaders and took the challenge in stride. She has consistently inspired me to step out of my comfort zone and set my goals high, and I'm excited to see all that she accomplishes at Santander next year.

Who would you most want to thank for your success?

The person I most want to thank for my success is my mom for her unconditional love, support, and calming advice throughout these exciting and often stressful four years. While I can often get overwhelmed by the smallest mistakes, she has constantly kept me grounded and focused on the bigger picture. No matter how chaotic my goals became or the steps I took to achieve them, she was always there

to check my emails for spelling errors, listen to my stories, or offer advice and encouragement. As I got more involved at Tulane and focused on my future in the financial industry, she continually reminded me of the importance of finding a balance, living in the moment, and exploring the most unique city in the country. She also emphasizes to me every day the importance of continued learning and curiosity - no matter how confident I may feel, there is always more to learn. Her unwavering commitment to me and my siblings has proven the importance of family, being a good listener, and having a strong work ethic. She is my best friend and always a driving factor in any of my successes.

What are the top two items on your professional bucket list?

- Start and manage my own investment firm
- Teach a college course in finance or strategy after many years of professional experience or lead the Freeman School Dean's Business Council

"Kobe is amazingly brilliant, insanely dedicated and hardworking, and has been a tremendous mentor for students seeking investment banking roles as the president of the Green Bull investment banking group. He is so fantastic that one of the students asked me if they could nominate him for an honorary degree from the university."

Mara Baumgarten-Force, Seymour S. Goodman Professor of Business Administration and Professor of Practice in Finance
A. B. Freeman School of Business, Tulane University