Doctor earns MBA on 50th anniversary of med school graduation

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Dr. Peter Kastl, right, is congratulated by Freeman School Dean Paulo Goes after receiving his Master of Business Administration diploma at the Freeman School's 2025 Graduation Ceremony in Caesars Superdome.

For the 50th anniversary of his graduation from Tulane School of Medicine, Dr. Peter Kastl decided to do something special: Get another degree.

Kastl, professor of ophthalmology at the School of Medicine, received his Master of Business Administration diploma on May 16 at the A. B. Freeman School of Business Graduation Ceremony, exactly 50 years after earning his medical degree.

“I started off to take a class or two, learn a little bit, and got sucked into it,” he quips. “It’s like they said in *The Godfather*, ‘I tried to get out, but they kept pulling me back in…’”

A native of Alexandria, Louisiana, Kastl arrived in New Orleans in 1971 after earning an undergraduate degree in chemistry and mathematics from Centenary College in Shreveport. He enrolled at Tulane School of Medicine and was awarded his MD in 1975 followed by a PhD in biochemistry in 1978. Two years later, he joined the School of Medicine as an instructor in ophthalmology, and he's been there ever since.

"It's the only job I've ever held," he says. "It makes it really easy whenever I have to apply for something and they want my work experience. This is it."

Over the course of his career, Kastl distinguished himself as a clinical expert in cataract, refractive and corneal surgery, as well as contact lens technology and fitting, and took on a number of leadership roles, including two years as chief of staff of Tulane University Hospital. He thought about enrolling in Tulane's Executive MBA or Master of Medical Management programs around that time, but with two kids to put through college, he decided the timing wasn't right.

"Now that I'm 75," he says, "it was either this or sit at home and watch TV and eat bon bons."

Kastl was inspired to get his MBA in part by his former colleague Dr. Marc Kahn, who graduated from the Freeman School's Professional MBA program in 2010 and today serves as dean of the Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

"I remember thinking, 'You know, I really need to learn that stuff, too,'" Kastl says. "So I signed up for the PMBA."

The Professional MBA program offers classes on weeknight evenings, enabling working professionals like Kastl to earn the degree without impacting their full-time employment. Students in the program tend to be in their early 30s, but Kastl says he got along well with his classmates despite the age difference.

"I mean they teased me some," he says, "because not only was I older than them, but I was probably older than their parents, too."

All kidding aside, Kim Black, assistant director of graduate education at the Freeman School, says Kastl's story is a reminder of what everyone can accomplish.

“Peter is proof that learning has no age limit,” she says. “Completing his MBA wasn’t just a personal triumph. It’s an inspiration to everyone to keep striving, no matter where we start or how long the path is.”

“Most people in class with Peter never realized he was older than them,” says classmate Brandon Rogers (MBA ’25). “He didn’t carry himself like he was an older guy. He was just another student in class, and he brought a unique perspective, a more realist perspective.”

He was also, Rogers says, a lot of fun.

“If you’re looking for somebody to bring a little life into the classroom, Peter’s the one,” he says. “He always found a way to lighten the mood. I really enjoyed my time with Peter. Spending time with him is one of the things I’m going to miss most about the program.”

Looking back on the experience, Kastl has nothing but positive things to say about the program.

“It answered questions I didn’t even know I had,” he says. “It’s been really great.”

Since earning his degree, Kastl joined the board of directors of a medical device company in Alexandria, and he’s currently collaborating with his Supply Chain and Operations Management instructor, Associate Professor Claire Senot, to update an academic paper he wrote in 2014 for the *Journal of the Louisiana State Medical Society*.

And while he enjoyed his graduation, he’s already thinking ahead to his next challenge.

“I took six biostatistics courses at the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in the ’80s,” he muses, “so now I’m thinking, ‘Hmm, that’s half of a master’s right there…’”