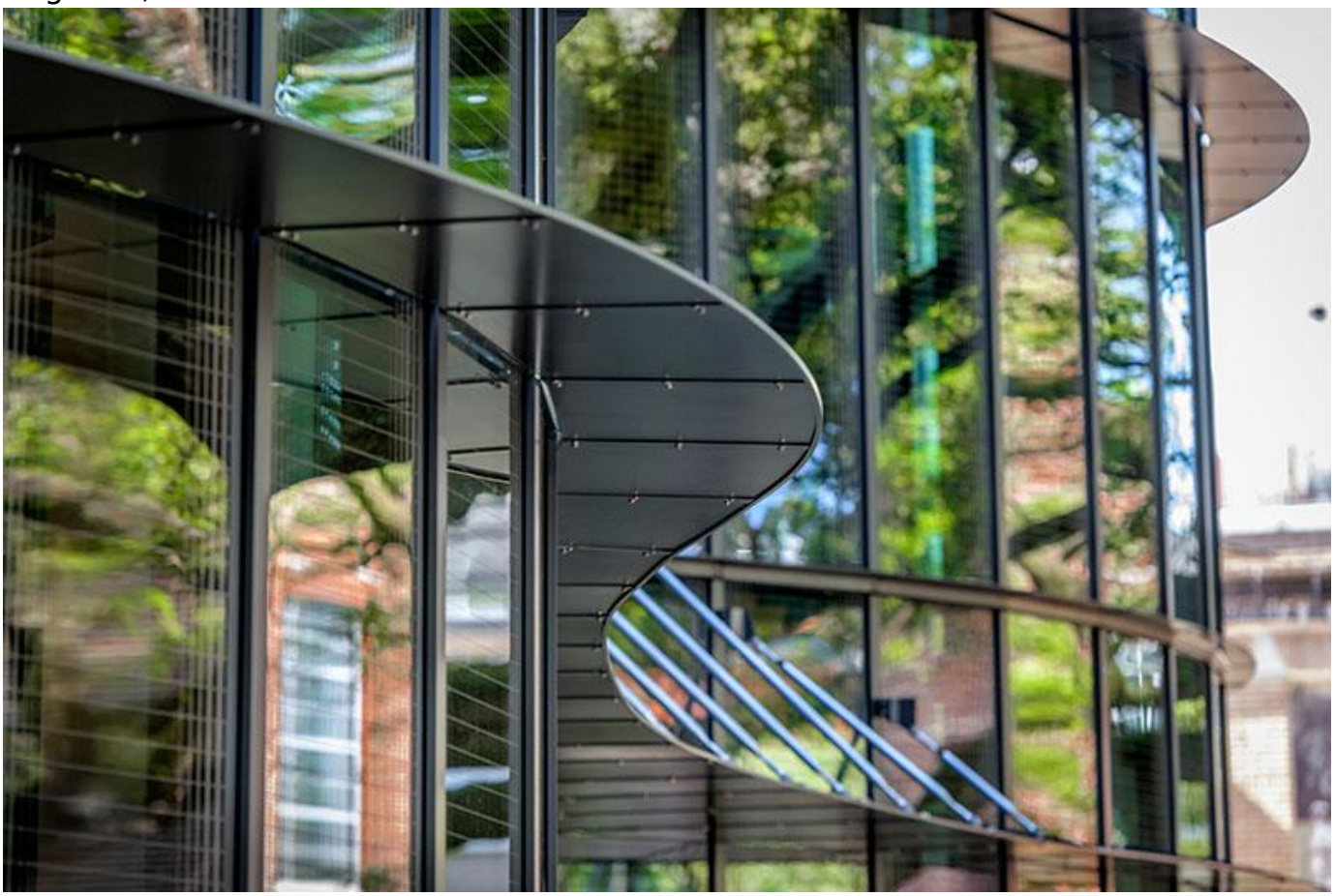
Freeman welcomes new faculty for 2025-26

August 6, 2025



Tulane University’s A. B. Freeman School of Business is pleased to announce the addition of eight new tenure-system faculty members for the 2025-26 academic year. The appointments were effective July 1 unless otherwise noted.



Matthew J. Higgins joins the Freeman School as Earl P. and Ethel B. Koerner Chair of Strategy & Entrepreneurship and Professor of Management. He will also serve as Director of the Freeman School's Levy-Rosenblum Institute. Additionally, he is a Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and an Affiliated Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition in Munich, Germany.

Prior to joining the Freeman School, Higgins served as Emma Eccles Jones Chair and Professor of Entrepreneurship & Strategy in the David Eccles School of Business at the University of Utah. He also served as the Director of the Sorenson Center for Discovery & Innovation Studies, where he led the creation of a unique post-doctoral fellowship program. From 2020 to 2023, he served as Chair of the Department of Entrepreneurship & Strategy. Prior to his tenure at the University of Utah, he spent 14 years at the Scheller College of Business at Georgia Institute of Technology.

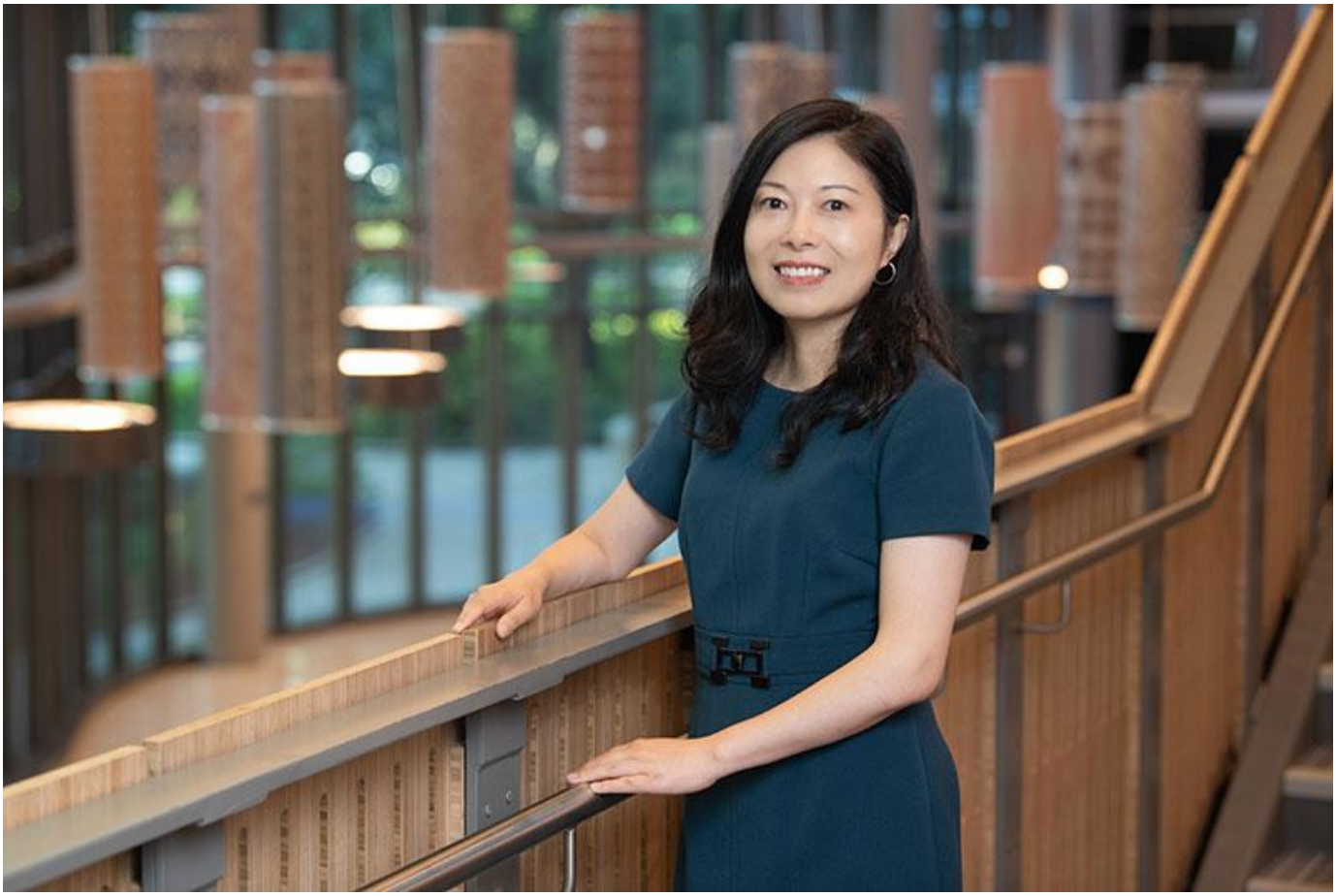
As an innovation scholar, his research interests center primarily on firm responses to productivity changes and challenges and the performance implications of these decisions. This includes understanding the interrelationship between internal R&D

and the use of external technology markets through acquisitions, alliances, licensing and corporate venture capital. He is keenly interested in how firms build and dynamically optimize their R&D portfolios. More recently, Higgins has explored the impact regulation has on innovation and productivity.

Most of his research has been conducted within the context of the pharmaceutical industry and has been published in a wide range of leading journals including *Science*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Financial Economics*, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, and *The RAND Journal of Economics*. His research has received funding and support from the Georgia Research Alliance, Kauffman Foundation, Rich Foundation, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF), Pfizer Inc. and IQVIA Inc. (formerly IMS Health, Inc.)

Higgins is the recipient of numerous awards for his undergraduate, MBA and Executive MBA teaching. In addition to his research and teaching, he also consults with governments and global pharmaceutical companies. He previously served on the NSF SBIR/STTR Advisory Subcommittee in Washington, DC.

He holds a PhD in economics from Emory University, a master’s degree in economics from the University of Akron, and bachelor’s degrees in economics and political science (international relations) from the University of Akron.



Yuan Zhang, who joined the Freeman School in January 2025 as the Albert Lepage Professor of Accounting, brings to the role over 20 years of experience in research and teaching. She previously taught at Columbia University and the University of Texas at Dallas. She specializes in capital market-based accounting research, with a particular focus on financial reporting, disclosure and corporate governance, and she has published extensively in top accounting journals. She currently serves on the editorial boards of *The Accounting Review* and *Contemporary Accounting Research* and is an editor for the *China Journal of Accounting Research* and an associate editor for the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Accounting & Economics*. A highly regarded educator, Zhang has taught accounting courses and seminars at both undergraduate and graduate levels and is an award-winning instructor, receiving the Teaching Award in the MBA program at Columbia University. She holds a PhD in accounting from the University of Southern California and a bachelor's degree in accounting from Tsinghua University.



Associate Professor of Marketing **Daniel Walters** comes to the Freeman School from INSEAD, where he served as an Assistant Professor of Marketing. As a scholar, he is interested in improving consumer and investor judgment and decision-making, with a focus on understanding how people interpret missing or unknown information and how overconfidence and memory biases influence behavior. He also examines the role of generative AI decision aids in shaping confidence, calibration and choice quality. His research explores the effects of these factors on product evaluations and investor behavior. He applies a range of methods, including incentive-compatible lab experiments, field studies, theoretical modeling and large-scale data analysis. His research has appeared in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Management Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences and Psychological Review.* Walters holds a PhD and MBA from UCLA's Anderson School of Management and a BS from New York University's Stern School of Business.



Larisa Cioaca brings a blend of academic and industry experience to her role as Assistant Professor of Management. She recently earned her PhD in strategy from Duke University and previously taught at the University of Maryland. Her research explores how government procurement and public science influence private sector innovation. Her work is forthcoming in *Management Science* and has been supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Institute for Humane Studies. Before entering academia, Cioaca held communications management roles at Lockheed Martin, AES Corp. and W. R. Grace & Co. She holds an MBA from the University of Maryland and a bachelor’s degree in economics from the West University of Timisoara in Romania.



Assistant Professor of Marketing **Nicholas Herzog** joins the Freeman School from the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business, where he recently earned a PhD in marketing. He teaches Marketing Fundamentals and primarily studies consumer financial decision-making. His recent research focuses on how consumers manage their credit cards, including how they monitor balances and determine payment amounts. Across his projects, Herzog uses a variety of methods and data sources, including surveys, experiments, meta-analysis and observational data. He holds a master’s degree from the University of Chicago and a bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.



Assistant Professor of Finance **Renping Li** comes to the Freeman School from Washington University in St. Louis, where he recently earned his PhD in finance. His research interests include corporate governance, financial intermediation and fintech. Prior to earning his PhD, he studied at the Ohio State University and earned a BS in applied mathematics and a BBA in finance from Peking University.



Assistant Professor of Finance **Navid Neshat** joins the Freeman School from Indiana University’s Kelly School of Business, where he recently completed his PhD in finance. His research explores topics in empirical corporate finance, political economy and banking. He holds a master’s degree in economics and a bachelor’s degree in petroleum engineering from Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, Iran.



Assistant Professor of Management **Sandeep Pillai** comes to the Freeman School from Bocconi University, where he served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Management and Technology. Pillai is a scholar of strategy and entrepreneurship who investigates the antecedents of entrepreneurial outcomes in contexts characterized by fundamental product, production, market or regulatory uncertainty, as well as their consequences for industry agglomeration. He relies on historical methods to combine traditional econometric analysis and qualitative archival analysis to study a wide range of contexts, such as the early American automobile industry (1895-1918), Maoist China (1964-1978), the Italian fashion industry (1945-1980), China's Treaty Port Era (1842–1949), the U.S. medical devices industry (1990-2015), and the Finnish pulp and paper industry (1934-1975). In his second stream of research, he leverages recent work in the philosophy of science to explore how scholars can enhance modes of reasoning, methods and testimonial structures to improve the veracity of claims made in management research. Pillai has published three articles in the *Strategic Management Journal*. He holds a PhD from the University of Maryland, an MBA from the University of Toronto, and

bachelor’s and master’s degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Waterloo. Prior to beginning his academic career, Pillai worked for seven years as an electrical engineer.

In addition to the above tenure-system appointments, **Vinh Tran (PhD ’25)** was named to a one-year term as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Finance.

"I'm thrilled to welcome these exceptional scholars and teachers to the Freeman School community, where they'll play a vital role in providing our students with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in today's rapidly changing business environment," said Paulo Goes, dean of the Freeman School. "These appointments reflect our ongoing commitment to building a world-class faculty that enhances both our educational offerings and our reputation as a leading business school that serves as an innovation engine for Tulane University and the Gulf South region."