New Goldring Institute director hopes to expand international partnerships

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As Interim Executive Director of the Goldring Institute, Professor of Practice Alissa Bilfield hopes to expand the Freeman School's international partnerships and create a hub for international research at Tulane.

Professor of Practice Alissa Bilfield has been named interim executive director of the Goldring Institute for International Business. In that role, she'll guide the strategy and operations of the Freeman School unit responsible for administering dual-degree graduate programs for students at Freeman School partner institutions in Asia and Latin America.

The appointment, which was effective Aug. 1, reflects Bilfield's long commitment to international business, travel and education. Before arriving at Tulane, she worked in the government and non-profit sector on sustainability initiatives that took her to Southeast Asia, East Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, where she built

partnerships with community-based organizations. Today, as a professor of practice in management, her teaching and research explore the intersection of entrepreneurship and sustainability, with a focus on sustainability certifications across global supply chains. In conducting research on the tea, cacao and coffee industries, she’s traveled to Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, and parts of Latin America, among other destinations.

For more than 30 years, the Goldring Institute has designed and delivered dual-degree master’s programs for students across Asia and Latin America. Current programs include an International Executive MBA, an International Master of Management, and an International Master of Finance. Students in these programs typically complete half of their coursework at their home institution under the direction of that institution’s faculty and half under the direction of Freeman School faculty members. Most programs also feature a two-week residency in New Orleans. While the specifics vary from program to program, Bilfield says the Tulane name is what attracts most students to the programs.

“If students are in the job market and looking to work for international corporations, having that stamp from a U.S. institution of Tulane’s caliber really goes a long way,” she says.

This year, Goldring will welcome 192 new students into its programs, bringing the total number of students currently enrolled in Goldring programs to 422. Bilfield says she hopes to grow that number by strengthening Goldring’s existing partnerships and expanding its network of partner institutions.

“Most of the students in Goldring partnership programs are career professionals and executives who wouldn't normally have the ability to come and join the community here on campus,” she says. “By partnering with universities across Latin America and Asia, the Goldring Institute enables them to access the Freeman educational experience while staying in their home country.”

She also hopes to find new ways to connect Goldring’s international students with students in Freeman’s domestic graduate programs.

“There are so many opportunities to collaborate,” she says. “We want to bring our domestic and international cohorts together because we know international education is so important for business today.”



In 2023, Bilfield (left) traveled to Leh Ladakh, India to teach a travel course on social entrepreneurship. Here, she poses with undergraduate students from the United States and Ladakhi social entrepreneurs who received the Naropa Fellowship.

There are also new teaching and research opportunities for faculty she'd like to explore. Bilfield recently taught a course on entrepreneurship at CENTRUM PUCP Business School in Lima, Peru, and she thinks other faculty might be interested in similar opportunities.

"For faculty members, getting to work with graduate students in another country is so exciting because you get to engage with students operating in a completely different cultural context," she says. "We get a lot of seasoned executives who have been working for a long time, and they really appreciate the U.S. perspective on business. I teach entrepreneurship, and students around the world want to know about the secret sauce that American entrepreneurs use.

"Students have a chance to travel to Tulane's campus for a two-week intensive," she adds. "When I speak to them about the program, they almost unanimously say they're most excited about the international week."

She also hopes to make the Goldring Institute a hub for international research at Tulane.

“So many of our faculty do work around the world,” she says, “I want the institute to support them, and I hope to create forums with other units on campus to showcase the work our faculty are doing.”

Ultimately, Bilfield says the institute’s most important role is to highlight the importance of international experience in all its forms.

“International education is so important,” she says. “It promotes better understanding and communication, and I think those are two skills that everybody needs to level up on, regardless of whether they’re involved in business.”