Undergrads help high schoolers build investment portfolios

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Freeman student and high schoolers from New Orleans' Rooted School celebrate after their financial literacy capstone presentations. Freeman students partnered with First Generation Investors (FGI), a national nonprofit that provides financial education for disadvantaged high school students, to lead a service-learning project to boost financial awareness among New Orleans youth.

Investing is a key tool for building wealth, but according to a 2025 poll by Gallup, 38% of Americans report owning no stocks. A group of Freeman students is trying to change that by teaching young people the fundamentals of personal finance and

investing.

As part of Mara Baumgarten Force’s Financial Management course, Freeman students partnered with First Generation Investors (FGI), a national nonprofit that provides financial education for disadvantaged high school students, for a service-learning project to boost financial awareness among New Orleans youth.

“Financial literacy and basic investing are subjects that everyone should master,” said Force, the Seymour S Goodman Professor of Business Administration and professor of practice in finance. “These skills lead to financial freedom and allow people to realize their potential.”

Throughout the eight-week program, tutors from Force’s class taught high schoolers the basics of investing, including where to find trustworthy investment resources, how to create diverse portfolios and which stocks have had historically high earnings. To prepare to purchase their own stocks, the high schoolers gauged their own risk tolerance and researched stocks they would like to invest in.

The program culminated with a capstone project and celebratory pizza party on Tulane’s campus, where students presented their investment knowledge to their teachers and Freeman tutors. After successfully completing the program, students were awarded $100 by FGI to put toward an investment of their choice. When they turn 18 and graduate, the students will receive full control of the investment to manage on their own.

Devin Singh (BSM ’28), who served as an investment tutor at the Rooted School, a New Orleans high school focused on helping underserved populations gain financial independence, said that being able to share his knowledge with young people was gratifying, especially given his interest in finance.

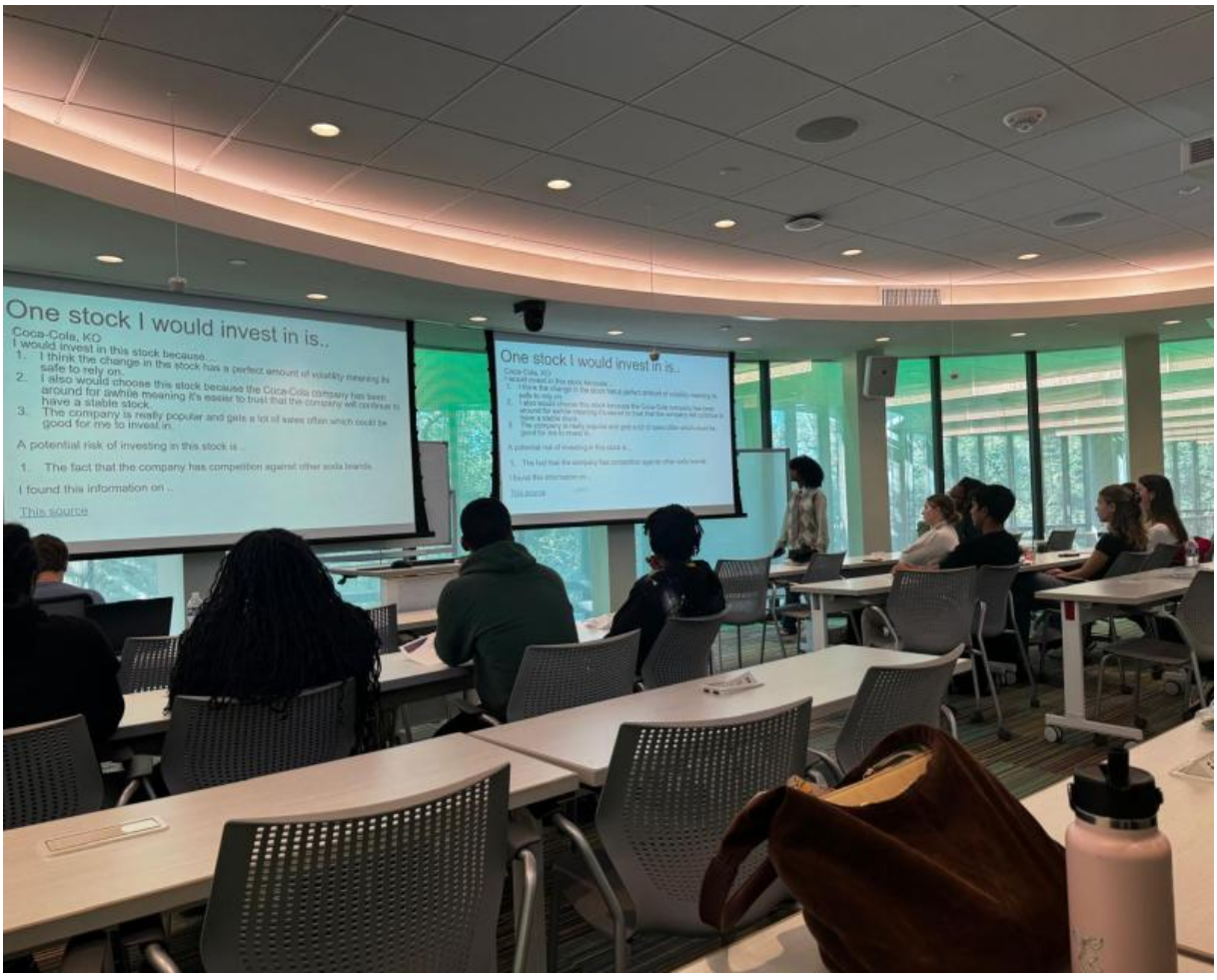
“For me, it was pretty cool to be able to be a part of the students’ financial journeys and teach them about stocks and smart investments,” he said. “It was a great feeling to know that I was using my education to help young people become more financially literate.”

Kaitlin Karpinski, executive director of the Rooted School, said the program helped students understand money management, investing, and long-term planning in ways that feel relevant, real and empowering.

“For many of our students, this is the first time they envision themselves as investors and builders of wealth,” Karpinski said. “That shift in mindset can change the trajectory of their financial futures.”

The fact that Tulane students were willing to share their financial knowledge made the experience even more meaningful.

“Learning directly from Tulane students allowed our high schoolers to go straight to the source, to the people who are actively studying these concepts at the college-level,” said Karpinski. “Working one-on-one with a Tulane student boosts their confidence, deepens their engagement, and helps them see themselves not only on a college campus but also in control of their financial futures.”



To prepare to purchase their own stocks with a $100 award given by FGI, Rooted School high schoolers researched stocks they would like to invest in. To cap off the experience, they presented their learnings at the Freeman School.

To ensure they are providing their high school mentees with accurate information, Freeman student-tutors received training from program veterans like João Laceroa (BSM ’26), who previously served as a financial literacy tutor at McMain High School.

“I'm very passionate about social service and community impact as a whole,” Laceroa said. “So I was excited to continue my work with FGI in a coordinator role.

“During our training sessions, we went over best practices and taught the Freeman teams how to tutor in the program. The tutors completed assignments every week and they had weekly quizzes to help them prepare for their teaching responsibilities. We also had a private equity firm come to campus last semester to do two training-the-trainer sessions. They went over the basics of finance like stocks and bonds to empower the tutors to go out and teach.”

Force said she was proud to see her students share their knowledge while leading with confidence and authority.

“I love that the program is truly run by Freeman students themselves,” she said. “It is fantastic to see the students seeing themselves as the ‘adults’ in the room, the ones with the skills and the important information to share.”

By the end of the program it was clear that in the process of teaching others, Freeman students learned important lessons themselves.

“Working with underrepresented high school students gave me a broader view of New Orleans,” said Jason Parker (BSM ’28). “I’m from New York, so for me the program is also about learning how people in New Orleans live. It gave me a chance to give back to the community.”

Singh agreed, adding that the program changed his view of New Orleans as well as his future career.

“The program is really transformative,” he said. “It taught me that you can play a huge role in people’s lives. Going forward in my career, I hope to try to continue spreading awareness about financial literacy.”