Students tackle Mardi Gras waste with sustainable throws initiative

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Mardi Gras generates more than 2.5 million pounds of trash each year, much of it in the form of discarded carnival throws.

This semester, a group of Freeman School of Business students hope to change that, and they're using their business skills to do it.

The students are part of the Consulting EDGE, an extracurricular program of the business school that prepares students for careers in consulting by putting them to work on real-world consulting projects. This semester’s project focuses on reducing Mardi Gras waste by increasing the use of sustainable throws.

“Our goal as a program is to reduce Mardi Gras waste by 20% per year for the next several years,” says Jackson Havel (BSM ’29), one of the project’s team leaders. “By the end of the semester, we hope to have a comprehensive framework that we can present to the city. We want it to make a difference.”

“Being sustainable is a big thing today, and with Mardi Gras producing so much waste, this is kind of the perfect avenue for us to go down,” adds team leader Carter Immel (BSM ’28). “Mardi Gras is a such a big part of New Orleans culture, and we as Tulane students play a role in that, because we go out during Mardi Gras and we contribute to that waste.”

More than 40 business school students are participating in the project, with teams focusing on individual topics including materials and supply chains, financial analysis and business models, and incentives and partnerships. One of their first major tasks is conducting a market study using Five Forces analysis to develop a comprehensive business plan and market analysis report.

“We’re currently doing the research to find out what our options are,” explains Havel. “Are there businesses that are already developing sustainable throws? If so, what’s the market look like? If not, how can we develop those businesses? For example, could we partner with the School of Engineering to develop prototypes for sustainable beads?”



Consulting EDGE Managing Director George Henderson (MBA '96) says students hope to deliver a comprehensive plan to reduce Mardi Gras waste by up to 50% over the next five years.

The project’s scope goes beyond just research. The students are developing an integrated framework that addresses multiple dimensions of the challenge, including a materials sourcing report with sustainability metrics, a production process design with equipment specifications, financial projections, an operating model design with organizational structure, and a community engagement and marketing strategy. That comprehensive approach reflects the consulting mindset integrated throughout the EDGE program, with students applying professional frameworks to real-world problems.

"The goal of Consulting EDGE is to develop future consultants, and the best way to do that is by doing a real consulting project that uses the same tools and methodologies professional consultants do,” says George Henderson (MBA '96), Industry Executive-in-Residence at the Freeman School and managing director of the Consulting EDGE program. “By the end of the semester, we hope to have an

actionable plan to present to stakeholders that will help reduce Mardi Gras trash by up to 50% over the next five years.”

The students' deliverables for spring 2026 will include an integrated hypothesis based on their research insights, actionable recommendations organized by theme, and a concrete roadmap for implementation. And if that plan is well received, Havel says there's no reason it can't be adapted and applied elsewhere.

"They say New Orleans has more festivals than there are days in the year, so this plan could really be applied to events other than Mardi Gras, not just New Orleans but in any city in America," he says. "That's pretty exciting."