Students help revive 100-year-old NOLA pie company

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As part of their senior capstone project, Freeman students visited the Hubig’s Pies factory in Jefferson Parish to see how the famous New Orleans confections are produced.

Head to the checkout counter of a New Orleans grocery store and you just might see them: Perched by the register and enveloped in crinkly wax paper emblazoned with the famous red and yellow Savory Simon logo, Hubig’s Pies have been a confectionary staple in New Orleans for more than a century.

These handheld pies first hit shelves in the 1920s when Spanish immigrant Simon Hubig founded a baking business in Fort Worth and expanded it to New Orleans. Over the years, the company weathered catastrophes like the Great Depression and Hurricane Katrina, but it was a 2012 fire that temporarily shuttered the business. Hubig’s reopened in 2022, and four years later is still staging its comeback.

To help revive this New Orleans tradition, a group of Freeman students partnered with third-generation owners Drew and Kathleen Ramsey to develop a business plan for increasing Hubig's profitability. The project was part of the students' senior capstone, an experiential learning course that puts students to work addressing a real-world business challenge.

"This was not an academic exercise but instead a quest to help Hubig's become more profitable and eventually expand territory," said Professor of Practice Larry Merington, who oversaw the capstone. "Over the course of the semester, the students realized how special these little pies are in New Orleans."

The challenge began with a consultation that introduced the students to the Ramseys, their company's history and its products.

"From our consultation we learned that there's a lot of nostalgia attached to the company," said Hannah Meyer (BSM '26). "They still mostly use the same ingredients and production processes as they did when they first opened."



Students got an inside look at how the pies are made.

"What stood out to me from our initial meeting was how deeply Drew and Kathleen care about their brand," said Isabella Rahi (BSM '26). "The company has been passed down from generation to generation. The company is their baby, and that motivated us to handle this project with a lot of care and intention."

The students also learned about the challenges the company has faced and continues to face. Following the 2012 Dauphine Street fire, Hubig's rebuilt its facilities in Jefferson Parish. Today, however, the company faces new challenges: The Ramseys hope to grow the company sustainably while increasing their profits.

"Individual consumers can be price sensitive," Rahi said. "So it's difficult for the company to just increase pricing, especially for what's normally an impulse purchase in the checkout line. That was part of the problem we were trying to solve."

For additional context, students had a chance to visit the company's pie factory in Jefferson and see the production process firsthand. They learned that Hubig's churns out over 30,000 pies a day using a time-tested process: First, the dough is rolled into sheets and molded into the pies' classic half-moon shape. Next, the pies are filled with apple, lemon, and blueberry compote or pumpkin, coconut and chocolate filling. After a dip in the fryer, the pies make their way through a curtain of icing, where they're christened with Hubig's glaze.

After seeing the factory in person, the capstone team set off to devise a growth plan, with Merington pressure testing their ideas along the way.

"In capstone, we press students," Merington said of the learning process. "We make them work harder and go beyond obvious shallow thinking. In the end, they can proudly say that they've developed real, defensible and vetted courses of action for the company."

"Throughout the semester, Professor Merington treated capstone like a business," Jane Manley (BSM '26) said. "We were more like members of a company than students. That's something I've never experienced before."



During their site visit, students sampled Hubig’s Pies for themselves.

The semester culminated with a formal presentation where the capstone team shared their work with their classmates and the Ramseys.

“Our recommendations were focused on streamlining Hubig’s operations and supporting sustainable growth,” said Rahi. “We thought focusing on those two things would be the best immediate course of action.”

The team recommended increasing wholesale prices to align with industry standards, amping up digital marketing efforts, expanding the company’s operational leadership team, and developing partnerships with local coffee shops and tourist organizations.

“The students recommended that we hire somebody so we can focus on other parts of the business, and that makes sense,” Drew said. “They also had some good ideas about where we could expand. We’ve talked about the venues and the sports arenas, but we would very much like to get into the coffee shops as well.”

“I was impressed with the students’ depth of understanding,” added Kathleen. “It can be really hard to understand some of the pain points without experiencing them firsthand, but the students were great, and I think the project really opened up their

minds to the intricacies of running a small business.”



Hubig’s Pies owners Drew and Kathleen Ramsey look on as the presenting team delivers their recommendations. From left: Carmen de Juan-Roncero (BSM ’26), Isabella Rahi (BSM ’26), Molly Johnson (BSM ’26), Jane Manley (BSM ’26) and Hannah Meyer (BSM ’26).

Following their presentation, the capstone team had a chance to reflect on their experience.

“I’m from a small town, and I know how important small businesses are to the life of a place,” said Carmen de Juan-Roncero (BSM ’26). “It was a big responsibility and a big honor to help the Ramseys.”

Molly Johnson (BSM ’26), who hails from Covington and knows Hubig’s well, agreed.

“I’m from the New Orleans area, and Hubig’s is a brand that’s just so deep-rooted in the community,” she said. “I was happy to help play a role in preserving it.”

For those not from New Orleans, the capstone was a way to give back to the city that welcomed them during their years at Tulane.

“Most of us have made New Orleans our home for the past four years,” said Rahi. “I’m grateful that we had this opportunity to make an impact on the community.”