Mara Baumgarten Force, Professor of Practice, A. B. Freeman School of Business

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Mara Baumgarten Force is the former Managing Director and Head of Private Client Trust for JPMorgan, where she managed 150+ trust professionals serving 13,000 clients with more than $13 billion under management. Previously, Force led the Investor Relations team supporting JPMorgan’s US Private Wealth Management Group where she played a key role in launching structured products for Private Wealth Management and was instrumental in building the partnership between Investor Relations and the Trust & Estates practice.

Force received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Yale University and an MBA with a major in Analytical Finance from Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management. In 2011 she received the Davis, Gidwitz & Glasser Young Leadership Award from the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Chicago. In 2012, she was named a “40 Under 40 to Watch” by Crain’s Chicago Business in 2012. In New Orleans, Force serves on the boards of the Jewish Federation, The Jewish Community Center, and Jewish Family Services. Additionally, she was honored to complete the Zin Fellows program at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in 2015. She is currently a Young Leadership Fellow at the National Committee on U.S./China Relations.

Elizabeth Livingston de Calderón, Clinical Instructor, Tulane Law School

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Elizabeth Livingston de Calderon started her career in private practice, focusing on commercial bankruptcy, finance, and litigation, first with Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts in New York City and then with Pepper Hamilton in Detroit. She moved to New Orleans in 2002 to teach Legal Research & Writing at Tulane Law School, and directed Tulane Law School’s international graduate legal studies program from 2004 to 2006. Ms. Calderón earned her J.D. magna cum laude from Tulane Law School, where she was a member of the Tulane Law Review. She also earned an M.A. in classical languages from Tulane University and a B.A. from Connecticut College. She has been clinical faculty with Tulane’s Environmental Law Clinic since 2006. In 2017, Ms. Calderón was nominated to the City of New Orleans Ethics Review Board by Tulane University and appointed for a seven-year term.

John F. Clarke, Associate Dean, A. B. Freeman School of Business

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Professor Clarke’s extensive international work experience distinguishes him as an advisor and collaborator with a global reach. He brings a robust international academic and professional background to his work at Freeman, as well as a dedication to preparing students for their careers with cutting-edge instruction that ties theory to the realities of the business world.
As a North American based management consultant he worked extensively in Europe and Asia. He began taking students abroad in 2005 and has since led more than 1500 students on international experiences in Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Israel, South Africa, South Korea, and the United Kingdom. Clarke holds a Bachelor of Engineering in Material Science, PhD in Physics, and an MBA.

Onnig H. Dombalagian, Vice Dean, Tulane Law School

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Onnig Dombalagian specializes in U.S. and international regulation of securities and derivatives markets and the relationship of federal and state law in the governance of public companies. Prof. Dombalagian worked as an attorney fellow at the Securities and Exchange Commission and in private practice as an associate at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton. He also served a three-year term a member of the National Adjudicatory Council of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority and acts as an arbitrator with FINRA Dispute Resolution. His book Chasing the Tape: Information Law and Policy in Capital Markets (The MIT Press) debuted in April 2015.

Lester Alexander, Adjunct Lecturer, A. B. Freeman School of Business, Partner, Jefferson Capital Partners

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Les Alexander is a partner with Jefferson Capital Partners where he provides mezzanine and equity capital for growth and buyout transactions. Before becoming a private equity investor, Mr. Alexander served as president of Ferrara Fire Apparatus, a leading fire truck and emergency vehicle manufacturer. As an investment banker for 15 years with such firms as Howard Weil, Southcoast Capital, and J.C. Bradford, Mr. Alexander completed numerous public offerings, private placements, and merger and acquisition transactions for public and private companies in a variety of industries. Mr. Alexander is the board president for Benjamin Franklin High School, a public charter school in New Orleans. He was the Chairman of Finance for the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG) and served on the global Board of Directors. Mr. Alexander is a founder and former president of the Louisiana chapter of ACG.

Mr. Alexander is an adjunct professor at Tulane University and Loyola University where he teaches executive, graduate and undergraduate classes in investment banking, private equity & venture capital, advanced financial management, and entrepreneurship.

Sherif Ebrahim, Professor, Strategy & Innovation and Director of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Education, A. B. Freeman School of Business

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Professor Ebrahim brings more than 27 years of high-profile professional experience to his work at Tulane. Among other accomplishments, he is a board-certified health care executive, the president and CEO of Strategic Management Group, and a managing partner of SMG Capital.
Throughout his career, he has owned 22 businesses, and he draws on his experience in corporate strategy and healthcare to inform his work.

Professor Ebrahim appreciates working at Tulane, where the confluence of faculty, students, alumni, and the NOLA environment is large enough to encompass diverse backgrounds and experiences, yet small enough to feel like a community.

Rob Lalka, Professor of Practice, Executive Director of the Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship an Innovation, A. B. Freeman School of Business

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Rob Lalka is Professor of Practice at the A.B. Freeman School of Business and the Executive Director of the Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Lalka is the co-founder of Medora Ventures, a consulting firm that supports investments with returns for shareholders, the local community, society overall, and generations to come.

He moved to New Orleans from Washington, DC, where he was a director at Village Capital and a senior advisor at the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. Before that, Lalka served in the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Global Partnerships and was on the Secretary of State’s policy planning staff.

Lalka graduated from Yale University and holds his master’s degree in global public policy from Duke University. He and his wife, Lynn, reside in New Orleans' Broadmoor neighborhood, where he serves as a Commissioner for the Broadmoor Improvement Association.

Chris McCusker, Colleen and George McCullough Professor of Business, A. B. Freeman School of Business

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McCusker specializes in executive coaching, executive education and business consulting. In 1994, he received a Ph.D. in Industrial-Organizational Psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For ten years, Dr. McCusker served on the faculty of Yale University’s School of Management and has taught at Columbia Business School. He is currently on the faculty of the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University. His university courses center on organizational behavior, human resource management, leadership, negotiation, business ethics, power and politics, and organizational design.

Dr. McCusker has also co-taught full semester courses on leadership with CEOs from Procter and Gamble and PepsiCo. In addition, he currently teaches executive education at Washington University in St. Louis, Yale University, and Tulane University. Dr. McCusker conducts executive seminars on a variety of topics including leadership, negotiation, managing change, and cross-cultural competence. His seminars have been delivered in many regions of the world, including the U. S., Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia; and they have been tailored to meet the needs of specific companies as well as diverse professional groups, including CEOs and executives, medical doctors, lawyers, and architects.
Ashley Nelson, Professor of Practice, A. B. Freeman School of Business

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Professor Ashley Keller Nelson is currently the only person in the school who has spent time as a graduate student, a staff member, and a faculty member with Freeman, where she is an exceptionally dedicated teacher.

Born and raised in New Orleans, Ashley Nelson’s life is highly intertwined with her work at Tulane. Not only does she have a long history with the University – her mother was one of just four women in the business school when she graduated in the early 60s - many in her extended family hold degrees from several schools in Tulane including Newcomb during the early 1900s. Also, while growing up in New Orleans, she had excellent role models who taught her to give back to the community. Since 2006, Professor Nelson has partnered with dozens of local non-profits enabling her students to act as consultants on a variety of projects gaining marketable skills in the workplace.

On nearly her third career as she says, Professor Nelson loves teaching and forms long-lasting connections with many of her students, writes countless recommendation letters, connects them with local businesses and friends, and stays in touch long after graduation. Barely a week goes by when she does not get an email or text saying, "this is --, remember me?"

Guest Faculty

Bill Carter, Chief Executive Officer, ALM

ALM is a business-to-business integrated digital media company that delivers premium content to professionals in the legal, financial services, benefits, consulting, property and casualty insurance, and real estate industries. ALM is publisher of The Asian Lawyer, The American Lawyer, and several other legal and real estate news titles.

Michael Morse, President and Chief Executive Officer, Louisiana Fish Fry

US-based snack brand Louisiana Fish Fry recently appointed former McCormick executive Michael Morse as its new CEO. Mr. Morse has over 20 years of experience in the food industry, most recently serving as the vice-president of operations and marketing at Reily Foods Company. Before joining Reily, Mr. Morse spent nine years at McCormick & Company, including four years as General Manager of its Zatarain’s division.
Julia Lennox, Business Strategy Consultant

Ms. Lennox is a consultant specializing in strategy, marketing and insights development. Her clients include MetLife, AXA and Hello Products, and she is seeking to engage in lo bono and pro bono work in her new home, New Orleans. Prior to New Orleans, Julia was the Chief Marketing Officer for MetLife’s B2B focused divisions, which represented over 60% of MetLife’s global business. Before MetLife, Julia had an extensive global career with Pfizer in general management and marketing, based in Canada, Brazil and the USA. She has worked extensively to promote diversity and inclusion – she was the Diversity Officer for Warner Lambert, was on the board of PFLAG National and was a fellow of the International Women’s Forum. In New Orleans, Ms. Lennox is on the Board and works closely with Bastion, an intentional veterans community in Gentilly. She is also on the board of City Year New Orleans and has served as a mentor with Propeller and Idea Village. Julia was born in Vancouver, and graduated Summa Cum Laude from Queen’s University, Canada.

Brandon Nelson, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, JetBlue

Mr. Nelson joined JetBlue in 2005. He became General Counsel and Corporate Secretary in July, 2018. Before serving as General Counsel, Mr. Nelson served as Vice President and Associate General Counsel for the airline. Before that, he acted as the airline’s Director, Corporate Counsel and Assistant Secretary, where he was responsible for oversight of corporate contract review policy and handled various corporate governance matters. In addition, Mr. Nelson acted as lead in-house counsel for Deutsche Lufthansa AG’s purchase of 19.0% of JetBlue’s outstanding common stock in 2008, the company’s issuance of approximately $300 million of debt and equity in June 2009, and the company’s entrance into several aircraft and parts maintenance agreements over the years.

Mr. Nelson holds a Juris Doctorate from New York University School of Law and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Howard University. Born and raised in Southern California, he practiced corporate and business litigation law at law firms in Orange County, California and New York City, including Shearman & Sterling LLP.

Jim Hnat, Former EVP, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, JetBlue

In July 2018, James G. Hnat retired from his role as General Counsel, Executive Vice President, and Corporate Secretary at JetBlue Airways. He had joined the airline in June 2001, was named General Counsel in February 2003, and Executive Vice President and Corporate Secretary in March 2007. He was responsible for Legal, Government Affairs, Compliance, and Sustainability. Mr. Hnat previously served as an attorney at the New York office of Milbank, Tweed, Hadley and McCloy, LLC. His aviation legal practice began in airline defense litigation at Condon & Forsyth’s New York office.

Mr. Hnat is a member of the board of directors of JetSuite, Inc., a California-based aircraft private and scheduled charter operator (jetsuite.com). He is a member of the Bob Woodruff Foundation board of directors (bobwoodrufffoundation.org) and sits on the board of trustees of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (marinesanctuary.org).
Mr. Hnat is admitted to the bar in New York and Massachusetts and belongs to the American Bar Association Forum on Air & Space Law. He is admitted to practice in the United States Supreme Court, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, US. District Court for the Southern District of New York, and the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Political Science from Boston University and earned a Juris Doctorate degree from Notre Dame Law School.