

A Testament to Versatility & Drive

James Freeman's journey from Lexington, Kentucky, to a significant role in the business world is a testament to his versatility and drive. Born with a focus on being well-rounded, James's early ambition was in the medical field, specifically to become an oral maxillofacial surgeon. However, influenced by his parents' advice to gain business skills, he discovered a newfound passion for business that redirected his career path.

James' academic journey at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was pivotal. He earned a Bachelor of Science in biology with a minor in chemistry, and a Masters in Accounting before completing his MBA at Duke University. The UNC community played a crucial role in his development, where he balanced academic rigor with fostering lifelong relationships. His time at UNC helped him develop a broader perspective and adaptability, qualities that continue to serve him well in his diverse career.

After starting his career at Arthur Andersen in Atlanta, James ventured overseas despite not speaking the language or having connections. His time abroad was marked by significant challenges, including navigating the aftermath of the September 11 attacks from afar and dealing with anti-American sentiment. These experiences provided him with a better understanding of global perspectives and resilience.

James' career evolution led him from tax to a leadership role at a global oil company, where he managed the business in Germany. This role allowed him to deepen his understanding of core business functions and further challenge himself for success. He repatriated to the U.S. in 2008 where he started a boutique consulting and investment firm, the Strategic Group, with a former colleague from Arthur Andersen. James and his wife have four children and reside in Atlanta, Georgia.

James' passion for UNC endures, evidenced by his active involvement with the UNC Tax Center Leadership Council, where he contributes to UNC Tax Center events and initiatives. His real-world experience helps guide tax research and curriculum. He values strong connections with fellow Tar Heels and views the alumni network as a significant asset.

To current UNC students, James offers practical advice:

- Challenge yourself
- Persevere
- Act and pivot
- Admit your mistakes

Looking ahead, James hopes for continued success for UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School and envisions a dynamic Alumni Advisory Council to propel the university forward. His commitment to both his alma mater and the broader business community reflects his belief in continuous growth and collaboration.