

Making the connection: Tulane to Hollywood

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From left, “Tulane to Hollywood” panelists Ben Levine, founding partner of LINK Entertainment; Holly Shakoof Fleischer, publicist, 42West; and Andrew Karpen, CEO of Bleecker Street Media, give words of advice to students who are interested in careers in the entertainment business. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Some of Tulane University’s own Hollywood success stories returned to campus on Friday (April 22) to teach undergraduates how to succeed in the entertainment industry.

The [panel](#) of Tulane alumni and parents included Ben Levine, a 1992 alumnus and founding partner of LINK Entertainment; Curtis Colden, a 1995 graduate and consulting producer for NBC; Holly Fleischer, who graduated in 2002 and is a publicist for 42West; Andrew Karpen, CEO of Bleecker Street Media; and Jeff Wachtel, president and chief content officer of NBCUniversal’s cable operations. The panel was moderated by James MacLaren, dean of Newcomb-Tulane College.

Their résumés reflect films such as *Saw* and *Brokeback Mountain*, TV shows including “Two and a Half Men,” “Mad Men,” “Suits,” “The Amazing Race,” and “Big Brother,” and clients such as Lady Gaga, Michael Jordan, Sofia Vergara, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tobey Maguire and Tyra Banks.

The panelists noted that the road to Hollywood is paved with dedication. They advised students to seek out internships and to begin networking from the start.

“One of the greatest parts about college is the resources that are available to you,” Wachtel said.

He and his fellow executives suggested that students advocate for themselves, keep up with past contacts, conduct research prior to interviews, monitor their social media persona, write thank you letters, take on difficult tasks and go the extra mile at work.

“You should put one foot in front of the other, but move in a direction that you’re passionate about,” Levine said.

Karpen explained that the hiring process changes with time and that those who wish to work in entertainment can learn a lot from members of the company who were hired recently.

“We are in an incredibly challenging business,” Wachtel said. He explained that companies have begun to feel an increasing pressure for innovation. Because of this, creativity has become one of the most valued traits in the industry.

The event is part of the [Career Wave](#) series of programs hosted by [Newcomb-Tulane College](#) for Tulane students.

Jamie Logan is a junior majoring in English and classical studies with a minor in psychology at Tulane University.

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— Ben Levine, founding partner, LINK Entertainment