

# Alumni Profile Todd Wackerman (B \*18)

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Once a teacher, doesn't mean always a teacher. But with an MBA from the A. B. Freeman School of Business, former educator Todd Wackerman (B \*18) was able to use his entrepreneurial talent to connect teachers with the resources to make them successful. Called the [STEM Library Lab](#), Wackerman's idea has continued to grow and evolve.

Wackerman knew firsthand of the challenges educators face because he worked as a teacher in New Orleans and Brooklyn for six years before enrolling at Tulane.

“I knew that teaching was not the right path for me, but I had this idea springing up in my brain of how to better support our teachers in the New Orleans area,” Wackerman says. His Tulane MBA gave him the education and experience to successfully launch the entrepreneurial idea he envisioned.

His academic courses were instructive, Wackerman says, as was the “wealth of resources that Tulane has to offer across the school. ...Both professors and my classmates were full of knowledge and good ideas.”

Wackerman is thrilled to be part of his fifth Freeman reunion committee this year, eagerly anticipating the opportunity to return to campus for Homecoming and rekindle connections with friends and professors. He firmly believes in giving back to the community that has significantly contributed to his growth and development.

While at Tulane, he found funding opportunities to pilot his idea and test it out at the International Business Model Competition and Global Social Venture Competition.

At its outset, STEM Library Lab was envisioned solely as a lending co-op of science equipment for teachers to use in their classrooms. The library, which contains about \$250,000 worth of equipment, is still going strong.

But now, the organization has grown into so much more and has expanded beyond only STEM-related education.

The program launched as a pilot while Wackerman was at Tulane in 2017 and served about 20 teachers, working out of his co-founder’s closet. In 2021, the company moved into their current 10,000-square-foot home off Causeway Boulevard near Interstate-10, which they call the STEM Ecosystem Hub. STEM Library Lab has six full-time staff members with that number expected to grow to ten in September, and the operating budget is close to \$1 million per year.

STEM Library Lab works with between 600 to 700 teachers and close to 100 schools each year through the various programs it offers. In addition to the equipment lending co-op, the organization offers a free store for teachers, a service-learning program, professional development for teachers and an educational opportunities

database. Wackerman also recently launched a capital campaign to build out an Innovators Lab.

The organization focuses on helping students who are attending under-resourced schools. Says Wackerman: “We are committed to examining and solving the problem of how to make sure that schools that are under-resourced and serve underserved students are able to get access to the same things that our best-resourced schools have access to.”

The facet of the venture with the highest potential for growth is the Ed Opportunities Database, which is working to connect any organization that has resources for teachers with those teachers.

“There are nonprofits and businesses and universities and museums and hospitals and professional organizations all over this region that want to be working with schools and teachers and students but don’t know how to, and there are teachers and classrooms and schools and students and families that want to be doing the programs offered at nonprofits and businesses and universities and hospitals and museums, but don’t effectively know how to find them.”

The organizations can upload their offerings to the database, which teachers can search. “The database connects all the amazing things that everyone is doing,” Wackerman says.

Though Wackerman says STEM Library Lab “is probably still a long way off from fully grown,” he is thoughtful about what future growth looks like. “When you run a for-profit company, your goal is to sell as much as possible, and therefore your goal is to grow as quickly as possible. When you run a nonprofit, your goal is to help people in the most effective way. So, if that means growing and selling more, great, but what it deeply means first is making sure that our programs are the best versions of themselves that they can be.”