

Derek Franks
Public Relations
Class of 2007



By: Shailin Kennedy

Derek Franks, general manager of Triple-A baseball's Fresno Grizzlies and a Central Valley native, is no stranger to change. The 2015 baseball season was full of that. Not only was it his first season in the GM position, the Fresno Grizzlies' affiliation changed from the National League's San Francisco Giants to the American League's Houston Astros. It was at this point that Franks became very thankful for his background in public relations from Fresno State.

"My PR experience and degree couldn't have been more critical than when we were changing affiliation," said Franks. "A lot of people thought this was a death sentence for the Grizzlies."

Unbeknownst to all, this would be the ultimate opportunity for Franks to apply his educational background and experiences by initiating the rebranding of the entire Grizzlies organization.

Franks began his undergraduate study at Reedley College and later transferred to Fresno State as a mass communication and journalism student with an emphasis in public relations. It was a family friend that worked in professional baseball PR that piqued Franks' interest in the field, and ultimately pushed him to pursue his current career. He graduated in 2007, the same year he obtained his first position with the Grizzlies organization. He believes the real world experience gained from his time at Fresno State is what prepared him for his career in professional baseball.

"Everything I learned in MCJ has been beneficial to my job here," he said.

In fact, he still remembers his PR Cases and Campaigns course. His class developed a campaign called Caught Green Handed. Students partnered with PG&E to educate the public about becoming

more environmentally conscious. This type of real world experience is what Franks feels sets the Fresno State MCJ department apart from other MCJ programs out there and prepared him for his current position.

In Franks' opinion, the rebranding and marketing changes could not have come at a better time for himself and the Grizzlies. The team would go on to win the PCL Championship and the Triple-A Baseball National Championship for the first time in franchise history. Franks would also be named PCL Executive of the Year.

His advice to future MCJ students is to take advantage of all the real world experience provided by the Fresno State MCJ department.

"Do whatever you can do to gain experience in the industry you want to work in," he said.

Franks is married with one daughter and a son on the way.

He is proud to be a Fresno State MCJ alumnus and was recently inducted as an MCJ Fellow into the Fresno State MCJ Alumni and Friends Hall of Fame.