Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

Northumbria alumnus Chris Jones returns to the University to meet current students

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International Northumbria alumnus and tech investor offers advice to business students

A US-based entrepreneur and start-up investor has returned to Northumbria almost 30 years after studying at the University, to meet current students and share his experiences in business.

Chris Jones studied business accounting at Northumbria in 1989 as part of an exchange programme set up with the College of New Jersey in the US. He went on to become co-founder and Chief Financial Officer of Durante Rentals,

a business specialising in construction equipment. The company has more than 105 employees, and bases throughout New York, Connecticut and New Jersey.

A passionate entrepreneur, Chris is also an early stage investor in tech start-ups and a donor to Northumbria's own Entrepreneurial Fund. He was named Chief Financial Officer of the Year in 2014, and again in 2017, by the Business Council of Westchester in New York State, and in 2016 he received a *"Person of the Year Award"* from the Small Business Administration. Chris is also a former winner of a *"State 40 under 40 Award"* – recognising dynamic business leaders in the US under the age of 40.

During his visit to Northumbria, Chris met with students from Northumbria's pioneering Entrepreneurial Business Management (EBM) course where students set up and run their own enterprises as part of their degree. He also spent time at the Business Clinic to hear how students gain real-world experience by working in teams to offer free consultancy services to clients.

Chris said: "It was exciting to come to back to Northumbria after almost three decades, and to meet with so many talented and entrepreneurially-focused students. Speaking with them about my own career and the lessons I have learnt by founding and building a business was a huge privilege – and hopefully useful for them as they develop their own business ideas and plans."

Nigel Coates, Business Clinic Director at Northumbria University, said: "We were delighted to welcome Chris back and to show him around our new offices. A lot will have changed since he was last here. As a highly successful entrepreneur and active investor in tech start-ups, sharing his knowledge and business skills was an incredibly valuable learning experience for our students."

The Business Clinic at Northumbria's Newcastle Business School, is an education scheme whereby business students provide advice for real clients, including all types of businesses from SMEs and multinationals through to not-for-profit organisations. Since it started five years ago, the total value of the students' free consultancy advice and reports has been estimated by 220 client organisations to exceed £1.2m.

The EBM programme at Northumbria focuses on independent, real-world

learning, with students launching their own businesses. Commercial ideas are developed as a central aspect of the programme and students are encouraged to explore how to manage and grow their businesses independently. The programme is based on a Finnish model of education, called Team Academy, and Northumbria was one of the first two universities to pioneer this approach in the UK.

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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