

# PBL Tours Federal Prison

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Phi Beta Lambda members at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford recently visited the federal prison in El Reno to see the business side of running a large scale prison. Among those attending from the SWOSU School of Business and Technology were (front from left): Joshua Goldman, Heather Leach, Sara Thomas and Kelsey Boone. Standing from left-Rita Hays, Andy Hill, Dr. Les Crall, Marci Grant, Dr. Tami Moser, Dalton Holdge, Jennifer Osorio, Dr. Patsy Parker and Kelsey Zybach.

Phi Beta Lambda members at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford recently visited the federal prison in El Reno to see the business side of running a large scale prison.

As with all industries, there is a business aspect to every institution and this one in particular had some very interesting and sometimes surprising business ventures, according to Heather Leach of PBL.

The PBL group was given a tour of the medium security section of the prison and was able to see firsthand the businesses that are run within the facility. The first business toured was the commissary where the inmates are able to purchase a wide variety of products including shoes, a deck of cards, soft drinks, popcorn and even fish.

"What makes this beneficial to the prison is that everything has a 10% markup," Leach said.

The profit made from these purchases is used on the upkeep of the facility. Each prisoner is allowed to spend \$300 per month at the commissary with the money coming from the inmates' family members and on-site jobs.

The most coveted job among the inmates is working at Unicore making \$1.25 an hour. Unicore is the prison's steel company that primarily makes warehouse-style shelving and bunk beds. The shelving is similar to what a person might see in a Home Depot and the bunk beds similar to what the military uses.

Because the prisoners who work here make so little money, the prison is able to keep most of the profit to offset its costs. According to the head warden, the prison makes enough money to support itself without using any taxpayer money.

Leach said it was a very interesting and educational trip for the PBL group.