

# Community Development Assignment Offers SWOSU Students Real-World Business Experience

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Sixty-five Southwestern Oklahoma State University Intro to Business students had the opportunity this spring semester to write and present community development proposals to Weatherford Mayor Mike Brown and Weatherford Economic Development Director Chuck Dougherty as part of a collaborative class assignment designed to empower student learning through hands-on experiences.

“We are so grateful that these community leaders served as clients for this project. Students gain so much when they are able to work on hands-on, real world projects,” SWOSU Assistant Professor Amanda Evert. “It changes the motivation and excitement in the room when students have the opportunity to work on projects which have the potential to be implemented.”

Students worked in teams of 4-6 students and were charged with developing proposals based on community needs and possible opportunities for growth. Their proposals included the justification, objectives and expected results of the project. Student were also responsible for developing a plan for project implementation and management as well as a comprehensive budget.

“One of the best things about Dr. Evert's Intro to Business class is that the students get a taste of the real world of business immediately,” said Dobson School of Business and Technology Associate Dean Dr. Patsy Parker. “The classroom experience isn’t just out of a textbook—they are involved in projects with professionals and often have industry professionals as guest speakers. I feel certain this course will be instrumental in recruitment and retention for our business programs.”

The students’ Weatherford Community Development Proposals covered a wide range of topics including the following:

- Building a 9-hole mini-golf course with each hole theme being selected by the local business sponsor and designed to represent that businesses’ industry.
- Recruiting Uber drivers to Weatherford to serve students and community members without reliable access to transportation.
- Building an outdoor amphitheater on the SWOSU campus to beautify and diversify the cultural landscape of the university.
- Growing attendance at the SWOSU rodeo with the goal of providing more economic revenue for the city of Weatherford
- Development of a dog park to increase property values, tourism of pet travelers, and improve community quality of life.

- Creating a four county business incubator in Weatherford to promote western Oklahoma industry growth
- Organizing a community-wide events with themes ranging from Oktoberfest to a Wind festival to a Celebrity Speaker event to a Mother's Day celebration.
- Opening a mini-botanical garden to bring tourism to Weatherford and serve as a venue for weddings, anniversary and other special events.
- Creating a fun center, activities complex to improve indoor entertainment options for families, college students and community members.

"I enjoy hearing all of the great ideas from the SWOSU students," Brown said. "They truly want to make this a better community and are suggesting plans that could be accomplished with planning, hard work, and money. I look forward to seeing a few of these projects being completed and compliment each of the students for dreaming of a better Weatherford!"

The students' final proposals will be completed April 27 and distributed to community members interested in considering the projects for implementation.

"The opportunity for me to work with these SWOSU business students is invaluable. The input we receive from SWOSU students in platforms like this help steer the management of City resources," Dougherty said. "It's important for city administration to hear fresh ideas that come from these bright minds. The SWOSU-City of Weatherford partnership becomes more successful with this type of interaction."

The Introduction to Business class is a general education elective which is recommended for all business majors and open to any interested SWOSU student.

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