

SWOSU Students Collaborate with Sales Professionals in Online Community of Practice

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An online course model that had 34 sales professionals from two countries mentor graduate and undergraduate students at Southwestern Oklahoma State University's Everett Dobson School of Business and Technology turned out to be quite successful.

The Sales Skills and Management course held this summer on the Weatherford campus included a final project where students and mentors co-developed tips for careers in sales and made a smart phone video of their conversation for other students to enjoy.

The mentors were from industries ranging from tourism to pharmacy to agriculture and were based at locations in the United States and Canada.

According to course developer Dr. Amanda Evert, sales professionals from insurance, financial planning, medical sales, retail, pharmacies, hospitality, livestock merchandising and real estate shared insider sales tips related to their specific industry and advice for getting into the career field.

At the beginning of the course, students were asked to select a sales mentor in their future career field to conduct a four-hour sales shadow. The final deliverable of the sales shadow was a brief video presentation where students interviewed their sales mentor about major themes from the course textbook and interesting concepts that were discussed during the sales shadow. The students then uploaded the video presentation to the online course for all their classmates to review and discuss.

"Participating in the sales shadowing program was one of the most beneficial educational experiences I've had at SWOSU," MBA student Stacey Bailey of Cherokee said. "This assignment allowed me to develop meaningful relationships with professionals in my industry that I may not have had the opportunity to contact otherwise. Working alongside my sales mentor gave me the chance to apply what I was learning in the classroom directly to real-world scenarios, and I learned so much through that process."

Bailey shadowed Lauren Fisher, group coordinator for Baniff Lodging Company in Canada.

"Having been a student in the past, I understand the true value of work experience," Fisher said. "It gives students the opportunity to apply theory to real life work scenarios and see the outcomes, test their knowledge and learn new things that cannot be taught by reading a text book."

Students were able to not only learn about their career field but also extend their understanding of sales in other new industries.

"I really enjoyed going to the OKC West Livestock Market and having the opportunity to shadow," Pharm.D/MBA student Jessica Merdvelt of Okarche said. "I got to meet some great people and learned a lot about how the business is run. I'm so thankful they allowed me ask questions while they were working."

"I was lucky enough to be a part of this project with one of the students. The student who asked to shadow me is interested in a career in higher education teaching," said Everett Dobson School of Business and Technology Associate Dean Dr. Patsy Parker. "He spent a morning with me doing an enrollment session for freshmen students. He and I also had a great conversation about his aspirations and goals. Assignments such as this one are what help students decide on their future."

For more information about the project, please e-mail Evert at amanda.evert@swosu.edu.