INTEGRATING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING INTO AGRIBUSINESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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Background

Major Entrepreneurship Education Approaches:

• Action learning (Leitch and Harrison, 1999)
• Experiential learning (Daly, 2001)
• Video role-plays (Robertson and Collins, 2003)
Course Objectives

• Gain a basic understanding of the subject (KNOWLEDGE) → Understand the basic theory and principles of entrepreneurship and small business development and management

• Learn to apply course material (APPLICATION) → Prepare a business plan

• Develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the relevant field (SKILLS) → Develop entrepreneurial skills and behaviors
Course Topics

1. The Foundations of Entrepreneurship
2. Ethics and Social Responsibility
3. Business Idea Protection and Assessment
4. Crafting a Business Plan and Building a Solid Strategic Plan
5. Forms of Business Ownership & Buying an Existing Business
6. Franchising and the Entrepreneur
7. Building a Powerful Bootstrap Marketing Plan
Course Topics

8. E-Commerce and the Entrepreneur
9. Pricing and Credit Strategies
10. Creating a Successful Financial Plan
11. Managing Cash Flow
12. Sources of Financing: Equity and Debt
13. Choosing the Right Location and Layout
Business Plan Groups

Fall 2016: 24 students

• Goat Breeders of East Texas
• Oasis Farmer’s Market
• Trailers On-the-go Inspection Services

Spring 2017: 23 students

• Cypress Creek Cellars
• Lonestar Crawfish
• Equine Express Dental
• Monte’s Bar & Grill
• Madisonville Feed and Farm

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Experiential Learning in Spring 2017

Student Groups

- Cypress Creek Cellars
- Monte's Bar & Grill
- Madisonville Feed and Farm

Local Businesses

- Zach’s Bar & Grill
- Huntsville Farm Supply
Students' Evaluation on Course Objectives

- **Knowledge**
  - Fall 2016: 3.41
  - Spring 2017: 4.11

- **Application**
  - Fall 2016: 3.5
  - Spring 2017: 4

- **Skills**
  - Fall 2016: 3.45
  - Spring 2017: 4.11
Students’ Overall Evaluation of the Instructor and Course

- Excellent Teacher: 3.64 (Fall 2016) vs. 4.33 (Spring 2017)
- Excellent Course: 4 (Fall 2016) vs. 4.33 (Spring 2017)
Comments from Students

• “This was the first course in college that I took where I applied what was taught in the classroom to business outside of school.”

• “We went on field trips and analyzed different local business and their business plans, as well as, interacted with business owners and received their input.”

• “I learned a lot in this course about what it takes to be an entrepreneur; not only from the field trips, but from our own business plan as well.”
Discussions

• After implementing experiential learning in the course, students’ knowledge of agribusiness entrepreneurship has significantly improved.

• Students’ entrepreneurial skills have been improved significantly.

• The summative score on Excellent Course and Excellent Teacher generated from IDEA student evaluations rose by 13% compared to the semester without the field experiences.

• Qualitative feedback showed that many students appreciated the opportunity to apply their knowledge outside the classroom for the first time in college.