

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

Students, volunteers believe in SBA's ACHIEVE program

One year after its introduction, ACHIEVE is living up to the promise suggested by its very name.

The professional development program for undergraduate business students, which teaches important skills needed to gain employment and be successful in the business world, is now a solid part of the SBA's core curriculum.

Approximately 150 students have completed SBC 199, the inaugural freshman course, and are taking the mandatory second-level SBC 299 this fall.

"We're very pleased with the responses we've gotten to this program," says Jill Lawson, ACHIEVE and Scholar representative. "After only a year, it's been embraced both by the students and business community volunteers, because it's bringing them both together."

Lawson says that OU students are learning firsthand how to network and create valuable contacts in the business world, which helps give them a leg up on the competition – no small matter in today's highly competitive job market.

"We want OU students to have the reputation for being ready to 'hit the ground running,' when it comes to employment and job performance," she says. "ACHIEVE is designed to give SBA students the skills that others may have to learn the hard way."

For students, ACHIEVE lays a good footing for the future. Freshmen learn the basic skills of interacting and interviewing with business peers, how to network and how to use OU Career Services to their advantage.

"What we're learning in the classroom can be applied directly to the real world," explains business major Eric Tawney. "By teaching us to network with local business professionals, research careers and gain greater knowledge on interviewing and interning skills, this program is helping to prepare us for the future."

"ACHIEVE doesn't replace the standard business curriculum; rather it supplements the curriculum with career and professional development," says Karl Majeske, associate professor, quantitative methods. "Ideally, ACHIEVE will enhance a student's ability to obtain employment within their field."

ACHIEVE also emphasizes involvement in OU student business organizations that ultimately may contribute to their growth as young professionals.

"These organizations also provide an excellent way for SBA students to meet and connect socially with others in the program," Lawson says. "That's especially important when you consider that the majority of OU students commute to campus."

For volunteers, ACHIEVE offers the chance to give something back to the academic world and stay connected with the emerging work force.

Beverley Emmerich, SBA '02, an administrative systems support coordinator at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., welcomed the opportunity to volunteer for ACHIEVE's inaugural year. She returned to OU last January in the MBA program and became involved immediately with the nascent program.

"It's really exciting for me to volunteer because I feel like I can relate to the students," Emmerich says. "I hope that, by sharing my experiences with them, it gives them ideas and helps prepare them for the future. I try to explain to students the steps I've taken to network in my career, from college to the present, and I'm always thinking of new examples to include in my presentation."

Emmerich adds that she is continuing her volunteer efforts for ACHIEVE for this fall semester.

OU's Lawson notes that volunteers sometimes find the ACHIEVE program handy when it comes to selecting candidates for internships.

"It ends up being a win-win situation for all," she says. "Volunteers help groom our students for success, and the business community then has a stronger pool of talent to draw upon."

By Kevin Knapp, OU staff writer

SUMMARY

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