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Students Break Record for Earnings in Business Class

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — A group of Illinois Wesleyan University students have achieved a new record by earning more than \$15,000 in revenue from a business created through a class project in one semester.

Assistant Professor of Business and Marketing and Director of Entrepreneurship Tara Gerstner '01 teaches [Business 340: Starting a Business](#) — a class that allows students to experience first-hand the value of problem-solving, teamwork skills and the ups and downs of starting a business.

“My teaching philosophy is strongly rooted in real-world experiences, giving students an opportunity to learn by doing through experiential learning,” said Gerstner. “Allowing students the opportunity to fail in a safe environment and learn from their mistakes is extremely important to their entrepreneurial journey.”

At the beginning of the fall semester, every student in Gerstner’s class proposed a business idea and the class voted to pick the top four ideas. The students then broke into teams to make each idea a reality, receiving \$500 in seed money to get the business going over the course of 13 weeks. Students also received mentorship and guidance from [entrepreneur-in-residence, Marc Talluto '94](#), throughout the semester.

Groups created and signed a founders’ agreement for their business. After the initial \$500 loan was repaid, any additional revenue was distributed among students in the group according to their founders’ agreement.

A team including Grace Rosinski '23, Parker Penn '23, Jen Kuhn '25, Randy Krygowski '23 and Chirathi Jayasinghe '24 launched a custom T-shirt printing business called Blooming Designs.

By the end of the semester, the group brought in a total revenue amount of over \$15,000, an achievement that Gerstner said was highly impressive since the students were also involved in athletics and working jobs with full course loads. Gerstner said the highest revenue she has seen from this course in the past was \$3,000.

“We each spent countless hours packing orders, making designs, reaching out for sales, physically making the shirts,



A group of students broke school records for earnings in a business course with Assistant Professor of Business and Marketing, Tara Gerstner. From left to right, Parker Penn '23, Randy Krygowski '23, Professor Gerstner, Grace Rosinski '23, Jen Kuhn '25 and Chirathi Jayasinghe '24.

delivering orders and organizing sales,” said Rosinski. “We sold a total of 563 items and we made each and every one ourselves. By the end, and after breaking the record, it made all of the hard work we did during the semester worth it.”

Gerstner said each student used their personal strengths throughout the project, including local student Jen Kuhn, who used community connections to partner with high school athletics departments for shirt printing needs. The team also found support from IWU faculty and staff who ordered custom apparel.

“This particular class was very interdisciplinary – not just entrepreneurship or business majors,” said Gerstner, adding that other students are studying physics, environmental studies, art and design. This is a unique aspect of Illinois Wesleyan's

entrepreneurship program that Gerstner promotes, [allowing students from a variety of interests to turn their passion into a business](#).

Rosinski said she was inspired to pick up an entrepreneurship minor after taking the class.

“This course helped myself and my team members gain core skills that can be applied to all different areas of study and work. Learning how to run a business, the complications that come with it and learning how to navigate through those all teach more valuable skills than just business and entrepreneurship,” said Rosinski. “Without the support of our professor and the support we had from each other and everyone who made orders, we would not have been able to go as far as we did.”



Some of the designs created and sold by a student group who created the T-shirt printing business Blooming Designs in a business course taught by Assistant Professor of Business and Marketing, Tara Gerstner.