A typical college course does not measure its success by the number of families positively impacted by its students. But the First Fidelity Integrated Business Core program at the Price College of Business is anything but typical.

IBC is a unique, semester-long collaboration of courses that combines principles of management, marketing and legal studies by requiring student teams to produce and then market and sell a product. After conducting extensive research and focus groups, students determine their product for the semester. Once their product idea is approved, the students have a myriad of decisions to make: pricing, packaging, marketing strategy, selling locations and times, product storage and inventory controls. Each student company must present and defend their business plan in hopes of receiving a start-up loan of up to $5,000 from the program’s partner First Fidelity Bank. Companies must effectively execute their plans and adapt to the challenges that inevitably occur in everyday business.

Shelly Grunsted, instructor of marketing and supply chain management, has been the director of IBC since 2005, and knows well the amount of hard work that is put into the program. “We hit the ground running on day one and keep on running, and don’t stop until the very last day of annual reports,” says Grunsted. “From the course content to
the ways students design, develop and deliver products, IBC continues to be innovative, technologically advanced and student driven.”

So what keeps these students motivated to hurdle over the many obstacles they face as they continue to push their products? It is the fact that each company’s profits, as well as the students’ sweat equity, will benefit two local charities of their choice. After a fast-paced semester, each IBC company is able to present its donation to the organization and individuals they have helped in front of an audience of stakeholders and the many faculty and staff who enjoy learning about the students’ philanthropic efforts. Since IBC’s inception in 1995, the program has donated more than $948,000 and 44,000 service hours. Grunsted says they are “cautiously optimistic” that they will reach the $1 million mark during the fall 2011 semester.

“At the end of the semester, when the students are able to sit back and really take in what they have done in 16 short weeks, it is amazing to watch their reactions. It is also exciting to watch some of the charities receive a lot more money than they ever anticipated and to see them break down and cry is so emotional,” says Grunsted. Last semester, a company called Sooner Suits gave more than their members ever imagined.

By selling translucent, waterproof OU playing cards, Sooner Suits was able to raise $17,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. During the students’ final presentations, they informed everyone that they were able to send 3-year-old Asher Cole Edelen and his family to Disney World this spring. However, at the end of the presentation, Sooner Suits’ vice president of philanthropy, Kelsey Gray, announced that the company would actually be sponsoring two children’s wishes. The room was instantly filled with gasps of excitement and tears since this was a surprise to everyone, including the members of Sooner Suits.

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