As one of the premier business colleges in the nation, OU’s Price College is renowned for providing its students with top-notch educational opportunities. Now, multiple divisions in the college are reaching out to students by implementing creative and challenging programs aimed at young business leaders of the future.

One of these programs, the Center for Entrepreneurship’s inaugural E-Week, was held June 7 to 11 on the OU Norman campus and sponsored by BancFirst, Chesapeake Energy Corp. and Sonic Corp. Twenty-four exceptional high school students from across Oklahoma had the opportunity to experience life as a college student while learning about entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership. 

Jim Wheeler, co-founder and Stanley White Executive Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship, emphasizes the value of piquing students’ interests in entrepreneurship before college. “It is so important that the idea of starting a business be embedded early,” he says. “This is particularly important for students who do not major in business. Life science, engineering and journalism, among other interests, are many times the catalyst for new ventures. By reaching these students early, they can now plan for an entrepreneurial outcome that coincides with their interest.”

Each morning of the camp, students begin the day with classroom sessions following such themes as leadership, innovation, commercialization, and launch and growth. Harvard Business School case studies — based on actual business scenarios — along with lectures and other activities, provide hands-on learning opportunities.

Lexington Halbert of Edmond feels she learned a lot from the real-life exercises in which she participated during E-Week. “We had to come up with a business name, a technology that we based our business on and a business plan,” she says. “We then gave a presentation going over the details of this at the end of the week. Although this process was stressful, it was exciting and allowed us to experience the challenges faced by entrepreneurs before their business is even in operation.”

Along with their classroom activities, attendees also enjoyed social activities and lunch sessions with Oklahoma entrepreneurs. In addition, students spent time each day at such entities as BancFirst, Sonic Corp., Chesapeake Energy Corp. and Cytovance from the Presbyterian Health Foundation Research Park, learning first-hand from these organizations’ leaders and creators about entrepreneurial skills.

E-Week is not the only exciting program the college has created for high school students. This past spring, the Division of Management Information Systems held its Second Annual “I.T. is HOT” camp for students from Norman, Norman North, Moore and West Moore high schools. The goal of the camp was to offer students insight into MIS, which marries traditional business theory with information technology, and the careers and opportunities this course of study has to offer.

Student teams competed to develop an imaginary mobile phone application, offering presentations to a panel of judges that included representatives from ConocoPhillips, Devon Energy Corp., Deloitte Consulting and the Science Applications International Corp. Each team was mentored by a member of OU’s MIS Student Association.

“What makes this year’s camp particularly noteworthy was the participation of so many stakeholders— from the high school students to their parents and teachers; our faculty, staff and administrators; plus, our corporate supporters and MIS majors—who were all instrumental in its tremendous success,” says Laku Chidambaram, director of the MIS Division and W.P. Wood Professor of MIS.

The top prize at the competition went to the five members of the Norman North High School team. Each student was awarded a scholarship of $1,000, payable upon their acceptance to OU and the MIS Division, and made possible by ConocoPhillips.

More Price College programs are in the works. In spring of 2011, the Division of Marketing and Supply Chain Management plans to offer a Supply Chain Management Boot Camp, aimed at teaching OU freshmen more about the major and career opportunities in its field. The event will be hosted by the division’s faculty, alumni and advisory board, and is one more of the many innovative initiatives the college is undertaking for younger students.
Elby Beal, managing partner of Hillcrest Investments, Price College alumnus and adjunct instructor of entrepreneurship, teaches the Growth Strategies for New Ventures class during E-Week using the Giro Sport Design case developed by Stanford Business School. High school students from across Oklahoma enjoy the visit to Sonic Corp. in Oklahoma City during the inaugural E-Week. The Moore High School team presents the group of technological applications they created for teenagers and young adults. They identified the applications, built a screen "mock up" and described how they worked together on the project.