Something needed to change. So, during fall semester 2017, it was not uncommon for Scott Grant, Ph.D., and a handful of business students to be wide awake at 2 a.m. on a weekday, working on tasks such as client relations and, in Grant’s case, providing mentoring and writing his own dissertation. It was also not uncommon for them to be gathering on campus each week for early morning meets at 5, 6 or 7 a.m. to collaborate on marketing and other strategies for external businesses.

What brought them together and proved to be mutually beneficial was an experiential learning course, titled “Professional Business Solutions,” but informally known as The Oiler 10 for the number of students involved.

The course, which is now in its second year, was born out of a desire to shake things up. Grant was seeking inspiration for alternative teaching methods that featured more hands-on learning. Ultimately, he wanted to create an environment in which students from different backgrounds and skill sets, as well as many who had less time to take advantage of internship opportunities during the school year, could apply and take ownership of actual work, and use it to land jobs after graduation.

“The Oiler 10 was my crash course in seeing if I could not teach, but mentor,” said Grant. “Every single kid has a different story and a different desire,” he explained, and pointed out that not all course work during their college careers seamlessly meshes. “It’s hard, because we give them a grade and then we move on to the next project. I wanted to try to figure out a way that I could help mentor and let them fail in an environment where I could help pick them back up and they start to figure out what they are truly passionate about, while gaining real-world experience. I’m definitely all about telling them, ‘let’s run and see what we can do.’ I don’t have all the answers.”

Grant said he looked to models like Minnesota State University’s student-run business, called B507, while he was developing the ideas for the course. B507 offers services ranging from logo creation to film and animation. The Oiler 10 has modeled that approach, albeit in a limited fashion due to its start-up nature and participation numbers.

A total of 50 students enrolled in the University of Findlay’s College of Business were initially invited last summer to participate. Ten responded.

OWNERSHIP FROM THE START
And those 10 kids absolutely ran with it, to the point where they owned it from the start,” said Grant.

The Oiler 10 launched at 7 a.m. on a Friday morning. “I walked in and I said, ‘I want to do an external consulting agency and do education differently. I want to do work with companies that are lean, that have projects that can provide value on both ends,’” he said. He directed them to come up with mission, vision and values information, and said he’d see them the following week. Then he walked out.

Grant began finding companies to help by reaching out to his friend, Mark Inkrott, a former UF classmate of his and an alumna who owns and operates UpField Group, a Chicago-based marketing and consulting business. Grant also picked up a few more clients for students, such as the New York City-based Right to Win, a nonprofit that financially assists students with enrolling in schools’ pay-to-participate programs; Right to Win reached out to Grant after coming across his doctoral research on this activity.

“Some of them are starting to understand that what they thought they wanted to do isn’t really what they want to do,” noted Grant. “I had a student who was all about creative marketing and then she realized she really liked accounting, and it marketing doesn’t necessarily fit for her anymore. So she’s moving into different experiences because that’s the space for her.”

Grant knows first-hand about the value of professional transformation. As an undergraduate, he became disillusioned with the goal of becoming a teacher, but fair intervened. He earned a Master of Business Administration from UF, yet returned to the classroom, teaching sociology and economics at Findlay High School. A few years later, as a high school’s athletic director, he was charged with building a pay-to-participate policy, which led him to pursue a doctorate from Bowling Green State University in educational leadership and policy studies.

“Hey, they all just started to believe in each other.”

Grant’s influence, and his tenure with The Oiler 10, has since taught him that some of his recent graduates can attest to that. “They care so much for each other, both past and present, and it’s absolutely made me a better person being around them and watch them take full ownership,” said Grant.

Scott Grant, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Business and Coordinator of Undergraduate Initiatives

“While Scott will downplay this statement every time, I truly credit the entirety of my post-graduate success to him,” said Book.

“He believed in me, offered encouragement during moments I had doubt, pushed me, and all around just made me want to be a better version of myself every day.”

Grant is quick to note that the benefits of The Oiler 10 have been more than reciprocal.

“They care so much for each other, both past and present, and it’s absolutely made me a better person bringing them around and watching them take full ownership,” said Grant.

“By the way, the only job I ever did for them, and I could never thank them enough for that,” he concluded.

Grant encouraged them to get out of his comfort zone and build relationships. “If Scott had never pushed me to start networking, I likely never would have met up with my current boss for coffee, and likely would not be working where I am today,” the payoff was Book landing a job as an analytics coordinator at Ologie.

To this day, Book and Grant keep in touch.

“They all just started to believe in each other.”

Scott Grant, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Business and Coordinator of Undergraduate Initiatives