



# BEHIND THE SCENES

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, concentrating 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 skills 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."

## OWNERSHIP FROM THE START

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.





# “THEY ALL JUST STARTED TO BELIEVE IN EACH OTHER.”

“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 roommate of his and an alumnus 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.

The Oiler 10 have since provided services such as building an interactive map for Right to Win that reflects what pay-to-participate programs look like in Ohio, and conducted taste tests at gyms for a product produced by Body Art Protein, as well as

completed marketing strategy and execution for DNC Hydraulics located just south of Findlay. They meet in-person once each week as an entire team to update each other on the progress of projects that they’ve split into groups to work on according to their interests, but otherwise collaborate virtually using Google Docs.

The group also built its own website ([www.oiler10.com](http://www.oiler10.com)) and wrote blog posts, with videos they also conceptualized and created, so that they could better synthesize their challenges and experiences. Some have also voluntarily enhanced their learning by, for instance, becoming certified in Google Analytics and Adwords, as well as Adobe and Hubspot program elements. Grant also secured grant funding for students to attend a leadership conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, a storytelling workshop in Cincinnati, and to purchase software such as Hootsuite and Basecamp to better assist with client management.

Aside from practical experience gained, another one of Grant’s goals for the Oiler 10 has also materialized. “They all just started to believe in each other,” he said, as well as in themselves. The original group developed a strong rapport that was separate from their usual groups of friends outside of the classroom, he explained, and fine-tuned their professional aspirations.

“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.”

## NEVER SAY NEVER

Grant knows first-hand about the value of professional transformation. As an undergraduate, he became disillusioned with the goal of becoming a teacher, but fate 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.

An adjunct gig at UF within the Sport Management Program developed into a full-time position within the College of Business, where Grant’s focus remains on



## SCOTT GRANT, ED.D.

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Bowling Green State University – Ed.D. Leadership Studies; University of Findlay – M.B.A. Sport and Event Management and B.A. Education (Adolescent/Young Adult/International Social Studies)

helping students reach their full potential. Along with mentoring The Oiler 10, he now primarily teaches management and leadership courses.

“I recently told my students that when they go home for spring break, they’re likely going to get grilled about, ‘What do you want to do?’” Grant said. “And I told them it’s OK if you don’t know a solid answer. Because if you had told me that I was going to live in Findlay for the rest of my life and be a college professor, I would’ve said, ‘It ain’t gonna happen.’”

Grant has now taught at UF for five years, and partially credits the Oiler 10 with his pedagogical progress. His initial intention with the course, he said, was comprised of “one part what I thought students needed and one part what I thought I needed to reinvigorate my teaching.” The experience has since taught him that some of his experiential learning ideas within the classroom structure are, in fact, not only applicable, but invaluable in the long run; recent graduates can attest to that.

Grant can easily rattle off accomplished students’ progress within the workforce. “Rob Book graduated and took a full-time job with Ologie, which is a digital marketing company in Columbus. Sydney Jameson graduated and took a job with

Young and Larimore, an advertising agency in Indianapolis. Page was accepted into a fellowship position at Ohio University in its MBA/MSA program. Adam Twining went to Chicago and took an internship with Navigate Research, and just took a job with Sparxoo, a digital marketing agency in Tampa.”

When asked about Grant’s influence on his schooling and career, Book responded with more than 1,300 written words of praise. When it came to starting The Oiler 10, Grant’s biggest strengths, Book said, were providing real-world experience and stepping aside to let students find their way.

“He managed to set us up with real clients, operating real businesses that needed our assistance on a daily basis,” Book explained, and then “let us learn by failing, recalibrating, trying again, and then succeeding. He provided us with the resources we needed, believed in us, and let us help businesses and learn along the way.”

According to Book, his Oiler 10 experience was invaluable to him professionally and personally. During the first few months of involvement, he said he discovered a passion “for analytics and utilizing data to make strategic decisions that drive business results and brand awareness.” Additionally, Grant encouraged him 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.

“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 being around them and watching them take full ownership,” said Grant.

“They definitely did way more for me than I ever did for them, and I could never thank them enough for that,” he concluded.