

Baking as business — and more

Class for teens, college students places social goals above profit

By Christopher Burbach
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A new Creighton University class blends baking with book learning to teach students about social entrepreneurship.

The class itself, Business 479, is a social enterprise. Ten Omaha high school students from the Avenue Scholars Foundation are enrolled along with 20 Creigh-

ton seniors. The class aims to give the high school students a window into the business world, an experience to help them with jobs and a glimpse at college.

Co-teacher Steven Michael Kelly, business development director in Creighton's College of Business, hopes to offset costs by selling separate cooking classes to the general public.

Social entrepreneurship is a

growing global trend that uses business to address social issues, placing social goals above profit.

The Creighton class grew out of a for-profit company that Kelly co-founded, Educated Baker. There, low-income high school students with a taste for enterprise helped bake such comestibles as cookies, which then were sold at Film Streams and other

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Teacher Steven Michael Kelly shows students what the batter for their lemon bars should look like during an Educated Baker class at the Mastercraft Building.

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Class: Students learn about baking and the basics of social entrepreneurship

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outlets.

Classes take place in the Mastercraft building, 13th and Nicholas Streets, in north downtown Omaha.

And the students in Business 479 bake. Kelly isn't selling their products, at least not for now, because of time constraints. Students will eat some, donate some and take others home. Cooking classes would help pay the rent and buy baking supplies.

An open house is scheduled for 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Educated Baker's space in the Mastercraft building.

"Profits are good for sustainability, but not the point," said Kelly, who in 2010 obtained his bachelor's degree in social and bioscience entrepreneurship from Creighton. "We're not driven to make \$3 million in the baking industry. We're driving to make social change."

The class meets for four hours each Monday night. Kelly co-teaches with Kate Linden, assistant director of academic initiatives in Creighton's Center for Student Success.

The students work on food business case studies, looking at the struggles commonly faced by food-based businesses and how they succeed.

They're using a couple of books. One is "Tattoos on the Heart" by the Rev. Greg Boyle, a leader of Homeboy Industries, which provides an array of employment opportunities that help Los Angeles gang members get on a better track.

Creighton students earn three credit hours for the class. Kelly is looking into credits for the high school students but hasn't nailed that down for this semester.

Student Amy Engle, a Creighton senior from St. Louis, said the first two hours focus on business, "the ins and outs of starting a business, of creating a business for social good."



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Creighton senior Amy Engle studies the recipe before adding vanilla to her brownie batter during Monday's Educated Baker class.

Then the students bake at one of 10 stations. The first week was chocolate chip cookies. The second was brownies. At each baking station are two Creighton students and one Avenue Scholar.

It's not just baking they're learning, though. There are details about producing food for sale. The first week's focus was sanitation, to be followed with a quiz and another focus the next week. Kelly also is looking to foster mentoring between the college students and high school kids.

"It's not just measuring and mixing and whisking and baking," Kelly said. "We see collaboration."

For Engle, it's also about exploration. A journalism major, she said she is one of only two nonbusiness majors in the class.

But she's an avid baker who has often wondered whether she could someday open her own bakery. She might have to be the businesswoman and not the actual baker, though — a prospective downside more palatable if the business were aimed at a social good and not just making money.

The opportunity to learn more about that drew her to the class, Engle said. "I was interested in finding out more about what it would take."

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