

THE QUARTERLY

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Meet the Fall 2011 WEI Team

Written by: Earl Kline

The Wood Enterprise Institute (WEI) has started its 2011-2012 business cycle and students are leading efforts toward gearing up for this year's activities. They plan to offer the customizable drink coasters again for sale this year but are also working on a new product design to see if it can be profitably added to WEI's product line. In the upcoming weeks, student activities will focus on replicating last year's WEI production process and apply their problem solving skills to analyze limitations of the business and then make appropriate improvements. The Wood Enterprise Institute is a student owned and faculty supported enterprise that is recognized and respected as a leading student learning environment for creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. During Fall Semester, the WEI team works together to develop a business plan which describes all of the market research, product design

specifications, operations, and cost assumptions. The team is then required to successfully demonstrate in the Spring Semester that the plan works. The score, in terms of business and financial metrics, is discussed each week to show how well operations progress. The Spring Semester is always challenging because the student team sets very high expectations in the Fall and they soon learn that no matter how carefully detailed their plan was, there are so many "little" things that can get in the way. How the team responds to the many challenges is where the true entrepreneurial learning occurs! In essence, the WEI business acts as a laboratory that provides many learning opportunities whereby students can practice a scientific problem-solving discipline to systematically find and apply knowledge in ways to adapt and improve the business.



2011-12 Wood enterprise Institute Team (L-R): Earl Kline (faculty advisor), Edmund Murray, Grant Vander Kolk, Kyle Simmons, Jeff Dolan, Patrick Smith, Andrew Blevins, Nate Slemph, Josh Hertzler, Kyra Schaeffer.

In this issue:

Meet the Fall 2011 WEI Team	1
Leaders in Training	2
Alumnus Returns to WEI Roots	3
Blakeslee Chase Visits WEI	4
Calendar of Events	4
SVHEC Trip	5
Letter from the Editor	6



Leaders in Training Written by: Earl Kline

The Wood Enterprise Institute Joins the Leadership Institute for Team Building Retreat

The Wood Enterprise Institute (WEI) and the Leadership Institute (LI) began the semester with a “Team Building” retreat at the Mountain Lake Biological Station on August 26-27, 2011. LI, under the direction of Dr. Steve McMullin and Dr. Brian Bond, is a two-semester leadership development study in which students with demonstrated leadership skills and academic ability work to further strengthen their talents through in-class discussion and hands-on leadership projects. WEI and LI share a common mission toward creating a learning environment that fosters leadership skills and joining the two student groups together for a retreat was a great opportunity to begin the semester. WEI and LI began the retreat socializing at a Friday afternoon barbecue followed by an evening team-building exercise. Saturday was spent getting to know how each other’s personalities can work together to form effective teams. By the students gained insight personality types that analyze information and insight is very important year’s WEI group to help a high performance team and completing a

end of the retreat, into 16 different drive the way people make decisions. This at the early stage of this facilitate the formation of that is critical for planning successful WEI project.



Pictured above - Wood Enterprise Institute/Leadership Institute Retreat participants. Front Row (L-R): Lorelai McKenzie, Megan Cochran, Scott Riley, Kara Dodson, Roxzanna Dalton, Helen Tripp, Steve McMullin (LI Faculty Advisor). Second Row: Lauren Cabral, Addie Jones, Paul Ngo, Patrick Smith, Nate Slemph, Kyle Dingus. Back Row: Earl Kline (WEI Faculty Advisor), Brian Bond (LI Faculty Advisor), Kalena Comer, Kyra Schaeffer, Grant Vander Kolk, Jeff Dolan, Andrew Blevins, Edmund Murray, Kyle Simmons, Jandir Santin





Alumnus Returns to WEI Roots

Written by: Earl Kline

A 2008 graduate of Virginia Tech's Department of Wood Science and Forest Products returned to his roots at the Wood Enterprise Institute on September 13, 2011. Mike Elebash, who now works as a Quality Manager at American Woodmark Corporation, was a founding student of WEI during its inaugural debut in 2007. Mike shared his past VT and WEI experiences and how they have formed his career path. "WEI gave me my first real taste of customer experience and the importance it has on product quality and company success" said Mike on one key learning point regarding the WEI experience. Mike said the customer experience gave him the opportunity to meet many prominent people at Virginia Tech, including Athletic Director Jim Weaver, while selling the WEI business. "Understanding the customer is what ultimately drives the business." Mike also shared other nuggets of information such as the importance of teamwork and how everyone must contribute to effectively work towards a vision. "Getting the right things done depends on people working together."

Mike ended the discussion talking about his company, American Woodmark Corporation and that the culture there is very much like that at WEI; a learning culture that strives to be the best at coordinating people, processes, and equipment to deliver value to the customer.

Mike Elebash (WEI 2007 Alumnus, Virginia Tech B.S. 2008) returns to give this year's student WEI team advice on creating a learning culture in a business.





Blakeslee Chase Visits

WEI! Written by: Earl Kline

Blakeslee Chase visits the Wood Enterprise Institute. Front Row: Edmund Murray, Kyle Simmons, Kyra Schaeffer, Blakeslee Chase, Earl Kline. Back Row: Patrick Smith, Andrew Blevins, Josh Hertzler, Grant Vander Kolk, Jeff Dolan, and Nate Slem.



On Tuesday, September 20, 2011, the Wood Enterprise Institute was honored by a visit from Blakeslee Chase. In memory of her father, Charles Nettleton, Blakeslee has been a strong supporter and contributor to various programs in the College of Natural Resources and Environment related to forest products and business. Recently, Blakeslee has been a contributor to WEI to help promote student creativity and entrepreneurship. Blakeslee said that her father was ingenious at innovating in ways that led to a vibrant forest products business. Through her support of WEI, Blakeslee hopes to cultivate this same ingenuity for students through the WEI experience.

During the visit, Blakeslee participated in a classroom discussion regarding the team's progress in new product development activities. Blakeslee had an opportunity to visit with the WEI students and to get a first glimpse of the new product offering being developed. Blakeslee was impressed with the prototypes noting that "similar to the desktop bookshelf (made by WEI teams in 2007/2008), these designs are unique and functional with styling that makes it a showpiece."

Thanks Blakeslee, for all your support!

Calendar of Events:

August 26-27 - Team Building Event, Mountain Lake Biological Station

August 30 - Dr. Richard Daugherty: Writing successful business plans

September 8 - Mathias Schmidt: Creating a Learning Organization with A3 Thinking

September 13 - Mike Elebash Visit

September 20 - Blakeslee Chase Visit; Trip to SVHEC, South Boston, VA

October 13 - Brooks Whitehurst Visit

November 13 - WEI Open House

December 6 - Presentation of Business Plan



WEI Team Visits the Innovation Center at the SVHEC

Written by: Earl Kline

On Tuesday, September 20, 2011, the Wood Enterprise Institute traveled 3 hours to the Innovation Center at the Southern Virginia's Higher Education Center (SVHEC) in South Boston, Virginia. The innovation Center houses state-of-the-art equipment including today's most advanced and progressive manufacturing technology such as 3-axis and 5-axis numerically controlled (CNC) equipment. David Kenealy, Director of Research and Development at SVHEC, said that the strength of their program is their ability to build things using a "Smart Factory" approach to demonstrate how emerging trends in industry and advanced technology can be adopted and mastered. During the visit, the team studied the various research and teaching projects to give them ideas to help improve WEI's capability in design and innovation. The big take away from the visit was that every detail of the Innovation Center inspired creativity. The WEI team stated "with cool stuff like they have at South Boston, we could create a top notch facility here in the Department of Wood Science and Forest Products that would be a huge attraction for students."

Top: The WEI team studies various student projects in progress and discusses ideas with Clint Johnson.

Bottom: Travis Buchanan explains the use of CNC technology at the SVHEC Innovation Center.





Letter from the Editor

The student of the 2011-2012 class of the Wood Enterprise would like to let all of the donors of the program know how much we appreciate them. Without your support, this class could not happen. With a new year comes new motivation and we are hoping to take this class to unseen heights. With the recent purchase of two new workbenches as well as a new multi-router table, rough prototyping is at full speed. Look out for product prototype information in our next issue! All nine members of our group have been working hard in marketing, financing, and production to bring a quality forest product to life. The current goal is to develop prototypes and then get customer feed back with surveys. From there, we will determine if we need to move forward or go back to the drawing boards.

We have decided that the best way to keep our supporters and affiliates informed on our milestones is to send out a quarterly newsletter, thus the birth of "The Quarterly". Our intention is to give you an update on our progress and upcoming events. If you have anything that you'd like for us to include in our newsletter, please contact our marketing team and we will do our best to accommodate you.

Again, to all of the previous donors to the Wood Enterprise Institute, we thank you. We have a hard working team dedicated to their work. We hope you're as excited to see how we progress as we are!

Kyra Schaeffer

Wood Science and Forest Products

Business Option, 2012

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WEI can do it.

