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Innovative video project helps Poly students bridge classroom to business world

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Lakeland, Fla.

Using the newest video equipment and editing software.

Interviewing central Florida's leading executives.

Presenting completed videos to top academics for evaluation.

Sounds like the makings for a documentary or news program, but it is actually a classroom assignment that helps students at the University of South Florida Polytechnic gain a stronger connection between classroom content and what executives practice in the real business world.

Dr. Richard Kelso.

Dr. Richard S. Kelso, an instructor in USFP's College of Technology and Innovation, asked graduate students from his Human Resource Management and Human Behavior and Organization classes to produce a 30-minute video that applied course concepts to behavioral interviews of local managers and executives.

The assignment was part of a pilot project for USFP's newly opened Digital Media Innovation Studio. Kelso's students had access to the studio's state-of-the-art video equipment and editing software and received training on taking and editing video. In teams of three, students interviewed invited business managers and executives, asking them behavioral-based questions that would elicit answers about how they deal with key employee issues in their workplace, such as motivating employees, handling bad news, planning and strategizing, etc.

Students then spent time in the DMI Studio editing their interviews down to 30 minutes. The resulting finished videos were shared with classmates at a "premier" screening. To further validate that the students were bridging the concepts from classroom to the realities of business, a multi-disciplinary panel of USFP faculty experts were invited to evaluate the videos.

"This applied learning technique is a prime example of how programming at USF Polytechnic prepares its MBA students for real-world business environments," Kelso said,

"The project gave students access to state-of-the-art technology, to successful business leaders, and to faculty experts, all the while giving them a firm understanding of the central concepts found in today's working world. And they had a lot of fun in the process."

MBA candidate Michael Cheeseman agrees, saying that Kelso's project allowed him to gain a lot of insight into how to work well with employees.

"I found the most common themes for running a successful business are the importance of communicating with employees and allowing for feedback," Cheeseman said.

"And it was an interesting project, giving me a lot of insight into video production and it demonstrated that professional looking videos can be created using inexpensive cameras and software."

Ben Hall, another MBA candidate in Kelso's class, sees the experience as an opportunity to talk with successful business leaders, access he might not otherwise have had.

"It was really neat to talk to them about their business philosophies," Hall said.

"This was a unique project, and the classroom topics fit what we heard from management nicely. The video was a good way to do it, too, instead of a report or written interview. For my generation, we are very visual, and the concepts and nuggets taught by Dr. Kelso are easily transferrable to video. And it was a really cool thing to be a part of a pilot."

Executives volunteering to help with the project represented an array of local business, including the Polk County Sheriff's Office, Publix, Bank of America, and others.

For more information about USF Polytechnic's MBA program, visit www.poly.usf.edu or call 863-667-

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