

FSU's student entrepreneurs put ideas to work

By [Dave Hodges](#) • BUSINESS MATTERS EDITOR • Published: November 17, 2010

They are student CEOs with ideas, energy and big plans. They started out the work week with a trade fair at the Florida State University College of Business to display a wide assortment of products and services.

Partners Matthew David, Sydney Ochart and John Sears founded Ignition Apparel, a company that develops and produces screen-printed shirts with an eye for what appeals to students.

"We see our advantage as customer service," David said. While most screen printers close at 5 p.m., Ignition Apparel is reachable after hours to brainstorm design concepts. "We can go the extra mile," he added.

A few feet away at another exhibit during the Student Entrepreneur Expo, College Kitchen was promoting cooking classes for students. Chef Adam Tiffany said the service is perfect for those who need some additional cooking skills, meal ideas and inspiration.

Lessons are taught at the nutrition department's kitchen in the Sandels Building on campus. A session is \$15, said co-founders Julie Bruens and Elisabeth Martone.

Business professor Jim Dever, the entrepreneurship students' faculty adviser, praised their creativity and determination.

"What this is and what makes it so unique is this is a group of sophomores who have not even been accepted into the business program yet," Dever said.

To get in early, they have to apply and write an essay on their business aspirations. "They are operating under the gun. It's tough," Dever said. The students must maintain their grades and do well in some of the College of Business prerequisite courses.

The students come up with ideas, work in groups of three, and the faculty evaluates their business plans for viability. "It's absolutely amazing what they are doing," he added.

Those who need startup capital can get a loan from FSU's Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship, which they repay with revenues the companies generate. They are expected to repay their loans by the end of the year, and profits go to charity. After that, they can keep the business and continue operations.

Taxi Tab enables students who have registered for a rider's card to use a cab for rides home at night, then be billed for the service. Co-founder Eric Fritz says it solves the problem of getting home after hours, or when someone needs a ride to the airport or other destination.

Kappa Delta had a similar arrangement with Yellow Cab, but it was limited to members of that sorority. "We figured why not offer it to everybody," said Kristina Ross.

The customer response?

"They think it's a great idea," Ross said. "Everyone says they go out at night, but don't want to take a cab because they are out of money, or they want to save the cash they have." Students signed up for the service are only billed by Taxi Tab if they use it.