**Course Syllabus**

**AREC 213 Starting an Ag/Hort Business**

Instructor: Ralph Vaughn

Office Hours: By Appointment

Email: [vaughnr@linnbenton.edu](mailto:vaughnr@linnbenton.edu)

Meets: Monday/Wednesday 10:00 – 11:50am, MKH-207

**Description**

This course provides a high level introduction to starting a business in agriculture or horticulture. Business goals and strategy, structure/models, marketing, sales, financial management, tax planning and funding sources are among the topics that will be discussed. Students become familiar with the business planning process and will produce a start-up business plan for their business idea. Students leave this class with a basic knowledge of the elements of starting and running an ag/hort-based business. Agricultural and horticultural case studies and examples are emphasized.

**Goals**

1. Teach future business owners the basics of sound business management and the basis of informed decision making that will increase the odds that they will be successful in their business goals.
2. Introduce a structured business planning approach and process that sets a solid foundation for successful business management launch and/or growth.
3. Identify resources available to the agriculture/horticulture entrepreneur and how best to access and implement them.
4. Introduce future business owners to the Small Business Development Center and the resources it offers.

**Learning Objectives**

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to

1. Describe their venture idea in business terms.
2. Assess the appropriate business structure and consequences.
3. Quantitatively articulate break-even and profitability forecasts.
4. Write a start-up business plan.

**Methods to Achieve Objectives**

Learning activities include lecture, seminar-type discussion, small group exercises, one-one discussion, guest speakers, individual resource, and preparation of a business plan.

Required texts are *How to Start a Business in Oregon* and *Employer’s Guide for Doing Business in Oregon*. Both are available on-line at [www.business.oregon.gov](http://www.business.oregon.gov) (select Start-up Tool Kit and click on Oregon Business Guide to find both publications.

Supplementary readings will be provided by the instructor throughout the course. Students are required to use the SBA Business Planning Template found at <http://www.sba.gov/business-plan>

Basic understanding of Power Point and Excel assumed.

**Grading Guidelines**

The following is an approximation of points for each respective category, and is *subject to change*, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

**On-Time Attendance & Participation: 25 pts**

Your attendance and participation in class is essential. Business planning is a very broad and diverse field. Your discussion contributions will assist in customizing the lecture materials to unique situations and your own work and interests. **Punctuality is a business leadership attribute**!

**Quizzes: 15 pts**

There will be a weekly quiz, generally on the Wednesday class meeting. The quiz will focus on the most recent topic of discussion, but may also incorporate questions from previous topics.

**Business Plan: 40 pts**

The basis for this course is the development of a business plan for your business idea. Half of total points will be awarded for content, half for the effective formatting and presentation of the material in your business plan. Plans will NOT be graded on how successful the business appears to be, but rather on the thoroughness of the planning process. Plans must follow the SBA Business Planning Template found at the above link.

**Business Plan Presentation: 20 pts**

The culmination of the course is student presentation of their business venture. Presentations will be no longer than 10 minutes and will use key findings/segments from your business plan to answer the question: “Can a reasonable person, under the conditions described, achieve the stated goals of this business?” Presentations will end with a “go/no-go” decision for this business idea.

**Total: 100 pts**

Ordinary A-F Grading Scale (also available as Pass/No Pass)

90-100% A

80-89% B

70-79% C

60-69% D

<60% F

**Revisions to your business plan may be turned in up to the final week of class for feedback and re-grading to improve your score.**

**Special Accommodations:** Students who may need accommodations due to documented disabilities, or who have medical information which the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in an emergency, should speak with the instructor during the first week of class. If you believe you may need accommodation services, please contact ​​Center for Accessibility Resources, 917-4789. If you have documented your disability, remember that you must make your request for accommodations through the ​​Center for Accessibility Resources Online Services web page *every term,* in order to receive accommodations.

**Learning Center:** LBCC has many free programs to help you be successful. The Learning Center is the campus place for academic support and tutoring. The Learning Center will help with issues that get in the way of your success. It is located above the Library in Willamette Hall.

**Incomplete Policy**: An incomplete (IN) will only be issued when a student is unable to complete the last chapter submission by the end of the term, but has otherwise completed 75% of the work in class prior to the final exam. Each incomplete grade will be accompanied by a signed contract specifying the conditions necessary to complete the course. This contract will be signed by the student and the instructor and placed on file in the Division office. The Y grade can only be issued if the student has attended no more than 25% of class time and less than 25% of the course work was submitted.

**Cell Phones**: As a courtesy to your fellow students and instructor, please turn off all cell phones and pagers during the instructional period. Please do not talk or text-message on your cell phone during a class session. Anyone who answers a phone in class is creating a disturbance.  Anyone who needs to have a phone connected (e.g., spouse close to labor, a child sick at home) must clear it with the instructor at the beginning of the class period.

**Course Outline & Schedule**

All assignments are due by 10:00am Monday (unless otherwise noted). Submit them at the beginning of class or via e-mail to [vaughnr@linnbenton.edu](mailto:vaughnr@linnbenton.edu). Assignments will be returned in class or via email with instructor feedback by the following Wednesday.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Monday**  **Topic** | **Wednesday**  **Topic** | **Assignments**  **Due Start of Next Class** |
| **1** | 1. Student / Instructor Introductions 2. Syllabus Review 3. Lecture: Intro to Business Planning, Goals, and Company Description 4. Login: [www.sba.gov/business-plan](http://www.sba.gov/business-plan) 5. Start SBA Cover Page section | Lecture: Business Value Proposition  Classwork:   1. Quiz #1 2. Budget Basics 3. Finish SBA Cover Page 4. Start Value Proposition write-up | * SBA Cover Page section * Value Proposition |
| **2** | Lecture: Value Proposition, Company Name, Legal Structure  Classwork:   1. SBA Cover Page Discussion 2. Value Proposition Discussion | Lecture: Business Pitch  Classwork:   1. Quiz #2 2. Legal Structure research 3. Mission Statement & Staffing 4. Start SBA Company Description 5. Start Business Pitch | * SBA Company Description section * Business Pitch presentation |
| **3** | Lecture: Products and Services Descriptions, Features, and Benefits  Classwork:   1. Business Pitch presentations 2. Features and Benefits exercise 3. Products and Services | Lecture: Assessing your Market  Classwork:   1. Quiz #3 2. Start Market Research section 3. Industry Research 4. Detailed Description of Customers 5. Regulations | * Competitor Analysis Worksheet * SBA Products and Services section * SBA Market Research section |
| **Week** | **Monday**  **Topic** | **Wednesday**  **Topic** | **Assignments**  **Due Start of Next Class** |
| **4** | Lecture: Pricing, Sales Forecasts and Break Even  Classwork:   1. Pricing Structure 2. Life Cycle Stage 3. Intellectual Property, R&D | Classwork:   1. Quiz #4 2. Product Pricing Exercise 3. Start SBA Product/Service Line section | * SBA Product/Service Line section |
| **5** | Lecture: Marketing Plan and Strategies  Classwork:   1. Product Placement 2. Advertising 3. Distribution | Lecture: Selling your Product/Service and Sales Planning  Classwork:   1. Quiz #5 2. Sales Plan Exercise 3. Start SBA Marketing and Sales section | * SBA Marketing and Sales section |
| **6** | Lecture: Business Finances  Classwork:   1. Earnings vs Cash Flow 2. Accounting Methods 3. Business Expenses, Taxes | Classwork:   1. Quiz #6 2. P&L Exercise “Operating Cycle” 3. Start SBA Profit and Loss in Financial Projections section | * Profit and Loss in SBA Financial Projections section |
| **7** | Lecture: The Basics of Cash Flow  Classwork:   1. Cash Flow Projection Exercise 2. Start SBA Cash Flow section | Lecture: Budget Applications  Classwork:   1. Household v. Business | * Cash Flow in SBA Financial Projections section |
| **8** | Lecture: Understanding Financial Statements  Classwork:   1. Variable and Fixed Cost Analysis section 2. Start Balance Sheet section | Lecture: Financial Scorecards  Classwork:   1. Quiz #7 2. Balance Sheet section | * Balance Sheet and Break Even Analysisin SBA Financial Projections section |
| **9** | Lecture: Operations and Employees  Classwork:   1. Operations Plan 2. Staffing Plan 3. Hiring Employees | Lecture: Pulling it all Together, the Executive Summary and your Business Plan Presentation  Classwork:   1. Quiz #8 2. Start Executive Summary section 3. Business Plan Overview | * SBA Executive Summary section * Business Plan Presentations      * Submit Final Completed SBA Business Plan * Business Plan Presentations |
| **10** | **Business Plan Presentations** | **Business Plan Presentations (cont.)**  Classwork:   1. Submit Final Business Plan |  |
| **11** | **Finals Week – No Class** | **No Class** |  |