

Barbed wire fences contain inmates, not their dreams.



from the classroom to prison

| BY BECCA BROADDUS

Each semester since 2007, Hankamer School of Business MBA and graduate students, as well as graduate faculty and staff, are invited to offer their skills to help inmates create business plans through the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP).

The PEP is prison outreach from a business perspective. Baylor students volunteer their business knowledge to teach inmates the skills needed to run a business when released from prison. PEP follows 10 driving values: a “fresh start” outlook, servant-leader mentality, love, innovation, accountability, integrity, execution, fun, excellence and wise stewardship.

“We want [the inmates in the program] to be serious,” Gary Carini, associate dean for graduate business programs, management professor and PEP governing board member, said. “We take character into account—how consistent is his character with the 10 driving values of PEP? We get to see God work with these men.”

Baylor Business students help inmates at the Cleveland Correctional Center in Cleveland, Texas, and, most recently, the Sanders Estes Unit in Venus, Texas.

The program lasts 10 weeks. For about one hour of each of those weeks the inmates work on a business plan with the assistance of MBA candidates.

The employment rate among PEP graduates exceeds 93 percent and the recidivism rate is less than 5 percent. Both students and inmates emerge from this experience changed.

“My nervousness and initial hesitation to shake the hands of these men gave away something in me that I hadn’t expected,” Lauren Moser, PEP volunteer and MBA/MDiv candidate, said. “These are good men who deserve to be looked in the eye and told that each and every one of them is valuable. I experienced a paradigm shift the day I went to prison. I came in feeling that I had something to offer these men when it was truly the men at Cleveland Correctional that had something much more valuable to offer me.”