Mission Possible: Six weeks, five dollars, no experience

Edmonton—What could you do with $5? The sky’s the limit if you’re as innovative and hardworking as students enrolled in BUSN 200/201. The business students were assigned the Mission Possible project, which takes a first-year course and introduces a community service learning component. Faculty member Leo Wong introduced the concept – in which students set up their micro-venture – and decided to implement it in the BUSN course.

Each student receives $5 to start their business venture. With money in hand, students broke into groups and were responsible for coming up with their own idea for a business. Micro-ventures included raking leaves, selling chocolate bars and making homemade products like knitted scarves, spring rolls and baked goods.

A key component of Mission Possible is the charitable element: teams choose a charity to receive 10 to 100 per cent of their profits. “Most teams chose to donate 100 per cent to charity,” says Wong. When the project came to an end the students had raised and donated $23,000 – having started with simple $5 bills. The faculty members admit they were not expecting this outcome. “We were thinking two, three or four thousand dollars would be good,” say Wong.

“A lot of students come to business school because they want to make money and be successful,” added Wong. “Now they’re making money and being successful, but also seeing the charity side and how business can help the community.”

The Mission Possible aspect of the introductory business course will now be a regular part of the class and the hope is that this year will be just as successful. “Last year the total raised for charity was $56,772. The most successful semester we raised $31,643, and for this fall semester we are on track to meet that pace,” said Wong. “As of week five, we’ve raised $23,208 and hope to finish the final week on the six-week campaign strong.”