

West Life

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by **BRIAN LOVE**
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Lutheran West has business on its mind—and is offering a curriculum unlike any other at the high school.

Its Business Academy has a classroom unlike a traditional classroom, an instructor who doesn't watch over the students every second, and the opportunity to gain real business experience before getting out of high school.

The Academy began two years ago when the school hired Jim Heal to consolidate several business courses at the school. He also had plans for three student-run businesses.

The first, L-DubHub, opened in August to sell Lutheran West-branded attire to students, parents, and alumni.

"The students do everything," Heal said. "They have to take inventory, sell the merchandise.

"I've looked to see if there's anything like this in the state. There's one in the Cincinnati area. In fact, there's just a few in the country."

Like a business, there are managers. A student must take the introductory course to work up to becoming a manager. Narah Cuevas became interested in business, took that course and became one of the initial managers of the store.

"We started with the planning and just looking at all like, who our people were going to be, like, who would invest [their time and efforts] into the store," she said. "Compared to last year, when we started, just trying to figure out who would be able to put resources into this, and now seeing how far we've come with the actual store open and running is actually amazing."

Cuevas explained that a manager in L-DubHub has certain responsibilities similar to those in a regular retail store.

"We make sure the associates have everything done," she said. "We have product managers, making sure they have everything on the floor, if we have new inventory coming in, making sure that have it tagged, priced. We make sure when people put in an order, everything runs smoothly."

Denver Scott transferred to the school this past year because he was interested in the Business Academy. He works at L-DubHub, but he is not a manager until he completes the introductory course.

Longhorn-branded hoodies are his specialty. But the sales started off rough, not because of the product but a way to keep track needed to be devised.

"The sales were a little rocky at the start," Scott said. "We had to get our numbers right. We had to make a system that would work for us to be able to stay on top of things and be accurate and precise with our measurements."

Like everything else, a team of students got together to devise a plan.

When ideas of a student-run business were first introduced, the need for a store that sold clothing with the Longhorn logo was discussed.

"Students must wear clothing that is an approved uniform on Monday through Thursday," Heal said. "On Friday, they can wear something more relaxed, like a hoodie. But it needed to have the logo on it."

At the time, there wasn't a store that sold items such as that, Heal said. So the need for L-DubHub was realized.

Like any retail store, a profit must be made. But unlike a normal retail store, L-DubHub's is slight. For example, a pair of Nike shoes would cost about \$140 at a retail store, but at L-DubHub, those same shoes—customized with a Longhorn logo—cost \$110.

"The profit we make goes back into the school," Heal said. "Eventually, it'll be used to hire more teachers."

There are potential plans to open a coffee shop next year and other student-imagined businesses after that.

"Many people wanted the coffee shop first," Heal said. "They wanted to be able to get their coffee and not have to walk over to Target."

