

## **FHSU announces Startup Weekend to encourage business entrepreneurs**

09/09/13 ks/mb local, area, key

HAYS, Kan. -- Fort Hays State University will host the first Startup Weekend in western Kansas and one of the first in Kansas on November 15 through 17. Led by FHSU's College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Startup Weekend is an event designed for entrepreneurs to meet, share ideas and launch new businesses. The three-day event is open to anyone with a great idea, and the desire to make that idea a reality.

Henry Schwaller, instructor of Management and leader of the event, said: "Startup Weekend is a global network of passionate leaders and entrepreneurs on a mission to inspire, educate and empower individuals, teams and communities. Participants come together to share ideas, form teams and launch startups."

The overall theme of Startup Weekend is "No talk, all action. Launch a startup in 54 hours."

Mark Bannister, dean of the college, said: "The College of Business and Entrepreneurship is dedicated to developing new businesses, particularly in rural areas, and Startup Weekend is the perfect opportunity to inspire, educate and empower individuals, teams and entire communities. Participants are invited from Kansas and elsewhere. If you have the dream of starting your own business and have an idea, this is a great opportunity for you to test it and to potentially put it into motion."

The Hays event is an officially sanctioned Startup Weekend. The Startup Weekend website states that "on average, half of Startup Weekend's attendees have technical or design backgrounds, the other half have business backgrounds."

Bannister pointed out, "In Kansas, we are likely to see a diversity of backgrounds and are likely to have people interested in starting businesses in areas of regional strength, such as energy services, agriculture value-added products, manufacturing and retail, as well as technology."

Beginning with open-mic pitches on Friday, attendees bring their best ideas and inspire others to join their team. Over Saturday and Sunday, teams focus on customer development, validating their ideas, practicing LEAN Startup Methodologies and building a minimal viable product. On Sunday evening teams demo their prototypes and receive valuable feedback from a panel of experts.

On Friday evening, Nov. 15, Dr. Edward H. Hammond, FHSU president, will greet participants. An entrepreneur with experience with the Startup Weekend process will challenge participants. U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., who has been a strong advocate of entrepreneurship, is scheduled to speak to the participants on Saturday. Most communication will be between

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participants. A volunteer team of business, legal and design coaches will be available throughout the weekend to provide assistance. On Sunday evening, Nov. 17, the participants will present their business plans to a panel of judges.

Participants must register. Partial scholarships will be available on a competitive basis for college students. Participant presentations will be open to the public free of charge at 5 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 17. Judging and awards will take place at 7:30 p.m. Events on Friday evening will take place in McCartney Hall and on Saturday and Sunday in the Robbins Center, all on the FHSU campus.

For additional information and registration, visit the StartUp Weekend Hays website:  
<http://hays.startupweekend.org/>

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