

## STUDENT RUN BUSINESS

### WIGGLE BUTT

## SET FOR 2018 OPEN

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Truman State University's Student Run Business Initiative plans to launch its first student startup business as soon as 2018 — a non-profit animal accessory shop named Wiggle Butt.

With the goal of a 2018 opening date, Wiggle Butt is currently focused on fundraising and recruiting students who are willing to help set up the store. While much of the project is still in conceptual stages, organizers are hard at work setting up the budget for the store's future operating costs.

Sophomore Viviana Rodriguez — who manages the group's finances — shared a budget that broke down what exactly goes into the \$60,000 opening cost and the estimated \$6,000 of monthly expenses when the business will be operational.

Rodriguez said approximately half of the starting budget, about \$30,000, is allocated to inventory. In addition to the \$30,000, there's about \$8,000 SRBI has accounted for store displays such as signs and advertisements.

Next to inventory, Rodriguez said the heaviest chunk of the opening and monthly costs is going to be for the physical store itself, for costs such as rent and office supplies, while a smaller part of the budget will be allocated to the digital store.

"Financial startup for the online portion won't be as much as it will for the physical place because when you look at the \$6,000 monthly cost a lot of that is the rent we're paying on a physical location, which you just wouldn't be paying for just an online store," Rodriguez said.

Sophomore Andy Eckhard, head of internal and external communications, explained what goes into the larger picture of the budget.

"This would also include purchasing from art or graphic design majors, or other people designing things in the art department for us," Eckhard said.

Eckhard wanted to remind people the physical location is still just an idea on paper and that the group has not yet decided on a retail space.

"We haven't looked a whole lot into securing a physical location yet," Eckhard said. "Once we figure out the funding we'd need in order to even start thinking about a physical location, then we'd give it some more thought."

In response to concerns about reaching the fundraising deadline by 2018, Eckhard said as of right now the SRBI is just going to try its hardest to make that happen with what fundraising it can. Eckhard said the project will function as a means of "getting their feet wet" in the process of sales and inventory management.

Eckhard said the project has included cooperation from multiple departments and majors across

campus. The participants interact with faculty and students from different areas of expertise.

"[Dr. Datha Damron-Martinez] in the marketing department also helped us get our marketing plan together," Eckhard said. "We spoke with her around the time we were finishing up our business plan, and she gave us some ideas for securing the alumni's help with donations."

Sophomore Anh Bui, who currently runs the project, said the business plans to sell coloring books, posters and t-shirts ahead of the business's launch. The artwork for these products will be drawings from Truman's fine arts department, including whatever work graphic designers are willing to contribute for the project. Until the project is fully realized financially, the group still needs help with advertising and public relations.

Bui urged any communication majors who have an interest in hands-on experience to contact the group and help mold their presence in the campus spotlight. Those interested in providing pet-themed artwork are also encouraged to contact Bui at [anb4131@truman.edu](mailto:anb4131@truman.edu).

Junior Tony Anderson, vice president of logistics, said the prospect of a physical location has been more of an exploratory experiment for the group.

"We've been shown a couple places that could work, but we haven't pulled the trigger on anything without any money to work with," Anderson said. "The other angle of it is that we'll begin selling these products ahead of the opening of the business, as a means of soliciting that startup cost on schedule."

The project has received input and guidance from multiple professors, including business administration professors Damron-Martinez and Jeff Lingwall. Anderson said the group has worked with Lingwall to discuss getting non-profit status for the business, as well as how to acquire and properly fill out the required paperwork.

Working with Truman alumni and securing an initial investment is one of the last big means of meeting the fundraising goals, Anderson said.

The group is seeking the help of any computer science majors with experience in web design. The website for Wiggle Butt is currently being designed by a computer science major as a senior project. When this senior graduates, Anderson said Wiggle Butt's website would just need an experienced polishing, assuming the project is left in a near-finished state.

The startup has already collected \$150 after its first fundraiser, a "pay what you want" snack table in Violette Hall that offered cookies, Mexican hot chocolate, and an opportunity to donate toward the business' \$60,000 opening cost. The second fundraising event is scheduled to take place from 5-8 p.m. Feb. 7 at Colton's Steak House & Grill.

