

Jordan Rhodes sits in his office on the first floor of Sage at UW Oshkosh answering emails, with music playing from his computer, before he gets ready to head to a meeting with UWO students to help them plan and grow their businesses.

Rhodes who grew up in Neenah said that he never planned on going to college when he was in high school.

“In high school I grew up in the bad kid crowd,” Rhodes said. “I didn’t think I would make in to college. Eventually all the kids I used to hang out with either got kicked out of school or dropped out. That’s when I started to do better in my classes. I just applied to UWO to see if I could get in, and I did.”

After Rhodes was accepted to UW Oshkosh, he was unsure of what his major should be.

Rhodes’ mother, Michelle Bauer, influenced his decision for becoming a business major.

“She grew up with nothing and out of everyone in her family, she was the only one who graduated from high school, except for one of her brothers,” Rhodes said. “She came in with very low expectations for herself but then she found a few mentors very young and then she was just very self driven. She taught herself the business... I wouldn’t be here without her.”

Rhodes said that reading different entrepreneurs magazines also pushed him towards a business degree. Those magazines are also what inspired Rhodes to start the Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization.

“I would always flip to the stories about the young entrepreneurs,” Rhodes said. “Whenever I read their stories they would always say ‘Oh we meet on a college campus and we started this business’ or sometimes they would even say how they met at the entrepreneurs club and it made me think ‘oh why don’t we have a club’? I was in an entrepreneurship class at the time and I just decided to start the club.”

When Rhodes was a junior in fall of 2011 at UWO, he started the Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization. Rhodes said that he felt the CEO would be beneficial since other colleges have been successful with entrepreneurs’ organizations.

“From the first meetings we were having 20 to 30 people and then it grew to 40 to 60 people,” Rhodes said. “It was getting a lot of momentum, and a lot of students were interested in it.”

Rhodes graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration with his major being marketing in fall of 2012. Rhodes then spent a year working for Bauer.

The same time that Rhodes graduated from UWO with his undergrad, Colleen Merrill was creating the Alta Resources Center for Entrepreneurship Innovation.

I received a large donation from Alta Resources which then gave me the funding to hire someone to help me run this center," Merrill said. "So that's when I hired Jordan. So he has been working here for almost a year."

After Merrill created the center she hired Rhodes on to be the faculty advisor. Rhodes took on the job while he works on his Master of Business Administration with an emphasis in marketing.

"It was a great decision," Merrill said. "I think I'm still seen as a figure head and they think that they have to be on their best behavior, but with Jordan he is seen as a peer."

Merrill said that the CEO that Rhodes started at UWO, now has great ties with the center.

"Our center now supports the CEO club financially and then we have been using them as a marketing arm, so because of his relationship with the board over there, it's been a really great synergy. There has been some really great relationships."

At the center, Rhodes works close with business students, or any student who has an idea for an emerging business. One student that Rhodes works closely with is Dan Brosman. Brosman worked with Rhodes to create a nightlife App called Sizzle and is also the President of the CEO.

"Jordan and I work together pretty much every single day or hour, when I am not in class and he isn't working," Brosman said. "He is very approachable and after only meeting him earlier this year, we have developed a great friendship."

Brosman said that he is happy to have someone he can confide in and help him through earning his degree.

"Since meeting Jordan earlier this year, he has helped to keep me motivated and stay on track to pursue my goals and entrepreneurial passions," Brosman said. "We have created a close relationship through our like-minded tendencies and determination to succeed."

Merrill said she couldn't be happier with having Rhodes be a part of the center and the CEO.

"Jordan being here was the absolute perfect fit," Merrill said. "Jordan, he is dedicated, that's what his role is, is to meet up with students. He gets it, he's that age, and he has that perspective. He is very relevant to what they're doing."

Rhodes is planning on graduating with his MBA in spring of 2016 and hopes to then move to a larger city to expand his businesses.

“Part of me wants to help grow the Oshkosh community and economy with entrepreneurships but then again, it’s 30 degrees nine months of the year here,” Rhodes said. “I think that right after my master’s degree I’ll go somewhere warmer,”

****This story was a class assignment****