

Case study on a Newbury Park social business earns national award for CSUCI instructor and graduate student

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“I used to explain legal structures for social enterprises but students couldn’t relate to the topic. When using this case in class, Cindy’s story engages them and they connect to her process and analysis. They get it now,” Ballesteros-Sola explained.

“We have an Instructor’s Manual and the students read the Case Study,” Forrester, 24, explained. “We created a guide for what the class can discuss after the students read about the case. It can be used for a course on nonprofits, social business or a course involving disabilities, for example.”

Black Sheep Food Co. is still being developed by Newbury Park entrepreneur Cindy Liu, who plans to employ people with disabilities to make non-perishable food that customers can purchase either over the internet or from a store.

“My dream location is to have a bricks-and-mortar space where we can manufacture products and do some packaging,” Liu said. “There would be a window into the commercial kitchen where people can see our employees working, and a tasting room in front.”

Ballesteros-Sola explained that a social business is a for profit business created to address a social cause while being financially sustainable. In the case of Black Sheep Food Co., the social good is two-pronged.

“They would make preserves and other non-perishable food,” Ballesteros-Sola. “They would use perfectly edible food that would otherwise be discarded by farmers and stores. This reduces food waste.”

Ballesteros-Sola and Forrester also liked Liu’s personal story. Liu and her husband’s first child, Samantha, now 5, was born with Down Syndrome. Looking ahead to her daughter’s future, Liu developed a passion to help those with disabilities, whose unemployment rate is about 60 to 70 percent, she said.

“We want to shift cultural attitudes,” Liu said. “There is a prejudice when it comes to individuals with disabilities. When we had Sammy, the only thing I could think of that would be available as an occupation for her was as a bagger in a grocery store. The culture needs to shift and the laws need to shift.”

Liu, who plans to launch her company in late 2017, is a community partner with the California Institute for Social Business (CISB) at CSUCI.