

Undergrads Take 1st Place at Wake Forest Case Challenge

Gainesville, Fla. – Four students from the Warrington College of Business Administration earned a first place finish at the 18th Annual Undergraduate Marketing Case Challenge, which took place February 7-10, 2008. Team members Sarah Anassori (marketing '08), Matthew Kuhl (economics '09), Sashi Mylavarapu (finance '09), and Catherine Nguyen (finance '09) were named winners of the competition, held during the annual Marketing Summit hosted by Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC.

Teams participated in a three-phase challenge over the course of five months, submitting recommendations that addressed pressing issues facing the event's corporate sponsor, Alltel Wireless. Students were asked to evaluate Alltel's response to Hurricane Katrina and then suggest ways to strengthen the company's future response to natural disasters within the U.S. and abroad. Following the storm, many low-income residents were unable to communicate with family and relief organizations, so teams were asked to be especially sensitive in developing solutions that would appeal to underserved communities and demographics.

The highest-scoring teams – which also included Vanderbilt University, The University of Maryland, and Wake Forest University – were invited to attend the Marketing Summit to present their finalized solutions before a judging panel of MBA faculty and corporate representatives from Alltel Wireless, AVAYA, HanesBrands, Lowe's, Wachovia, and AirTran.

The WCBA team's winning solution included development of an affordable Emergency Readiness Kit – which included a waterproof cellular phone, voice and data service, and "First-Priority Calling" to ensure that phones found within the kits were able to place calls post-storm.

The WCBA team also recommended developing Mobile Relief Hubs capable of traveling through the affected regions to ensure that residents forced into shelters had the ability to reconnect with family members.

The final piece of the winning solution was the development of an online Relief Database, modeled after social networking sites like Facebook. Using the database, displaced persons would be able to find lost family members, and necessities such as housing and employment.

The winning teams were announced at an Awards Gala held at the Millennium Theatre on Saturday evening. Alltel's Chief Marketing Officer, Frank O'Mara, presented the \$1,000 award to the WCBA team and commented that he was particularly impressed with the integrity of the team's solution and the poise exhibited by the WCBA presentation team.

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