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UpFront: Faculty and Student Engagement in the Business Community, Part I

In our last issue we discussed the importance of partnerships with the business community. In particular, we focused on the significance of the Nance Applied Business Scholar program. In this issue, I will spotlight faculty who engage their students in real world business experience. These projects help faculty and students to develop a professional network, partnerships for our college, and keep our curriculum dynamic and contemporary.

In this issue we will look at two members of our marketing faculty who, like many of our faculty, challenge their students to apply their education. Dr. Rama Jayanti and Dr. William Lundstrom guide their students through projects with public, private, and not-for-profit organizations. In recent years, Dr. Jayanti has had her students work on projects for the Clean Air Conservancy and Lake Hospital System. Dr. Lundstrom has had his undergraduate International Business Consultancy class work on projects to assist companies that want to expand their overseas markets. In addition, he teaches the EMBA practicum course where students help an organization solve a strategic problem.

Dr. Lundstrom and Dr. Jayanti agree that having students work on real world projects gives them experience that cannot be found elsewhere. “Through their work on these projects, the students gain a practical application of the theoretical knowledge that they learn in class,” said Dr. Lundstrom. “Getting students out of the classroom and into the field establishes their confidence in real-world problem solving.” Involving students in these projects makes them more engaged in learning classroom material, and helps to better prepare them for their future careers. “By exposing students to real problems that managers face, they are motivated to learn about the content of the course more deeply. They are able to see a connection between what they are learning in class, and their ability to problem solve for the companies,” explained Dr. Jayanti.

Dr. Jayanti and Dr. Lundstrom have seen several positive outcomes result from engaging students in real-world projects. “The Clean Air Conservancy has gone forward with the recommendations of the students, based on their excellent team performance. They also have awarded two internships to students from Nance,” said Dr. Jayanti. “Lake Hospital has used student presentations to help them better understand their patients. They have said that students’ ideas will be used in their marketing plan,” she added. Dr. Lundstrom also cited past successes, “One of my previous International Business Consultancy classes researched whether or not the company Swagelok should expand into the Vietnam. Following the students’ analysis, Swagelok determined the project was a go, and is currently in the process of expanding into the Vietnamese market.” He explained that Lubrizol has also applied the advice of our EMBA students. “Lubrizol wanted to know if they should partner with a diesel oil
monitoring and recirculation system. The students’ assessed the worldwide market, determined that they should, and Lubrizol followed their advice.”

Real-world projects have brought benefits to all participants. As Dr. Lundstrom states, “These programs are a win, win, win situation. Our students gain practical knowledge and confidence, Nance is able to provide services to the business community, and the business community gets a professional business consultancy.” The confidence piece is essential. “Students learn that not all problems fit the theoretical model. They encounter problems, but they learn to cope with these frustrations, and when they graduate they will have the confidence to cope with such problems in their jobs.” Dr. Jayanti says that she always gets positive feedback from students who work on these projects. “The students have to get up in front of actual CEOs, present their findings, and answer questions. For the very first time they have to justify their decisions to real-world managers. Many students graduate without ever having done this. It not only provides students with an understanding of the complexity of marketing, but gives them a new kind of confidence.” Dr. Jayanti feels that these projects provide a learning experience for herself as well. “Like the students, I get to learn about current real-world business problems, and this allows me to modify my teaching style accordingly. When I see students succeed on these projects, it validates what I do in the classroom,” she said. We have seen a positive outcome for our college as a whole from the engagement of the students and business community:

- Students are fully engaged in their classroom study
- Students graduate with applied business experience and confidence in their abilities
- Faculty and students develop a professional network and partnerships for our college
- We provide value to our partner companies and our regional economy

In our next issue we will look at some faculty members who engage students in the entrepreneurial community.

First Part of Global E-Commerce Certificate Program Completed

Students from Nance completed the first part of the Global E-Commerce certificate program, which took place in Heidenheim, Germany from January 9-25. The program is a new tri-national initiative funded in part by a U.S. Department of Education title VI-B, Business and International Education Grant. It is different from any other study abroad program that faculty has led before. To expand on our global business offering, Nance leveraged its relationship with two of our partner universities, Berufskademie Heidenheim in Germany, and Universidad de Concepcion in Chile. Students’ from the three universities are working together to complete real-world global e-commerce projects for international companies.

Dr. Santosh Misra is the faculty organizer for the group of Nance students participating in the program. He explains that this program is innovative because the students get to learn about three very different global markets. When it comes to global business, American universities often only focus on programs with European universities. In the Global E-Commerce certificate program, students’ will gain firsthand experience in the European, US, and South American markets. In addition to completing applied projects, the students from each country will also attend classes together in Germany and Chile. They learn to interact with each other in an academic setting, on a professional level, as well as informally on sightseeing tours. The
program truly allows the students’ to develop a multi-cultural awareness at all levels.

While at Heidenheim, students took business classes together and were broken up into project teams. They had to overcome language barriers and challenges that come from cultural differences. The projects involve marketing research, product development, and marketing strategy.

Part two of the program is currently underway, with the students all back at their respective universities. They continue to work in their multi-national teams to complete the projects via internet and satellite. This requires them to be very organized. On April 24, for the third part of the program, they will reassemble in Chile and present their findings.

This program offers practical experience about emerging trends and global markets that go beyond what can be learned in the classroom. For their professional resumes, they will have experience completing real world projects on international teams. They also get to learn about three different international markets. In addition, they also have the opportunity to form international friendships, experiencing different cultures firsthand. Nance students interested in taking part in this program next year should contact Dr. Santosh Misra, at s.misra@csuohio.edu or 216.687.3784

New Entrepreneurship Opportunities at CSU

Exposing students to entrepreneurship education has become a major focus at the Nance College of Business. A variety of initiatives are underway to give business students and non-business students the instruction needed to become successful entrepreneurs. Instructor Jack Reece explains that getting the college involved in entrepreneurship “benefits our student body as well as the local community.” Through cross campus initiatives the student body at Cleveland State University will have the opportunity to participate in these new programs and acquire the tools and knowledge they need to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations.

One new program now underway, challenges students to turn their business ideas into practical opportunities. The CSU Business Concept Competition has students formulate a plan for a business idea, product, or service. Students define aspects such as what makes their idea unique, profitable and marketable. The contest is open to all undergraduate and graduate majors at CSU. Concepts are judged on the basis of creativity and innovation, as well as the potential for job and wealth creation. The top three winners will receive cash prizes and the top team will present their idea at a regional competition consisting of teams from the following schools: CSU, Kent State, Akron, Case, Ashland, Baldwin Wallace and John Carroll. The event will be held at John Carroll University in April. The goal of this competition is to develop students with the skills and confidence they need to realize their creative business goals.

The Second Annual Entrepreneurial Immersion Week (CSU hosted the first in 2007), an intensive one week exposure to study and participation in the entrepreneurial mode of life for 35 selected students, will be held again this August. This program was developed by the Entrepreneurship Education Consortium (EEC), an organization consisting of representatives from the above named institutions (Professor Reece represents CSU). Consistent with the EEC’s mission, the week brings students together to build a network of young people interested in entrepreneurship in Northeast Ohio. The EEC feels that if students have the tools they need to turn their business ideas into reality they will be more likely to remain in the
Northeast Ohio, leading to job creation and wealth for the region. The students work in teams developing business plans and attending classes or in-depth seminars conducted in part by successful entrepreneurs. The student teams are judged on the business concepts they develop, and the winning team receives a cash prize, which in 2007 helped the winning team from Case to establish their company which will go into operation this summer.

In addition to these intensive, hands-on programs, The Nance College of Business is collaborating with the College of Science to develop a certificate program in entrepreneurship. The course work for the certificate program will take place at both colleges. Students will complete specified, cross listed elective courses, including one to be offered this fall which features science and business students together on teams to convert a bioscience idea into a business concept or plan. Additionally, Nance is developing an entry-level course in entrepreneurship and innovation (MLR 193) for the fall semester 2008 which will be open to all CSU students. In offering joint educational opportunities between the College of Science and College of Business, Cleveland State is helping to position its students for entrepreneurial leadership while remaining in Northeast Ohio’s rapidly expanding bioscience industry.

The Nance College will continue to expand our educational programs to help develop our region’s pipeline of entrepreneurs. Capitalizing on the diversity across campus and providing access to a variety of entrepreneurship education opportunities increases the chance of future success for aspiring entrepreneurs.

**Featured Student: Nick Rhea**

Nance is proud to recognize student Nick Rhea who has shown dedication to his academic and professional life. Nick is a finance major who will graduate in May. He maintains a 3.6 GPA, and is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma and Alpha Lambda Delta National Honor Society. He was also the exclusive recipient of a 2007/2008 scholarship from the Ohio Realtors Charitable and Educational Foundation in Columbus, Ohio. Nick is a former marine who proudly served in Afghanistan and Iraq from June 2000-June 2004.

![Nick Rhea](image)

Nick has enjoyed his academic experience at CSU. “The Nance College of Business has a really serious student population,” he said. Nick also had positive experiences with the professors at Nance; in particular he enjoyed taking real-estate classes with Dr. Webb, who he said “really cares about his students.” Nick was born and raised in Solon, and he has enjoyed being back in the Cleveland area after serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Nick feels that his experience as a marine provided him with analytic, leadership, and problem solving skills that have been useful in his college career. He advises students to apply themselves academically because it teaches dedication, which will be useful in future careers. In his spare time, Nick enjoys doing martial arts and weightlifting. Nick plans on going into the finance field after graduation. He is particularly interested in real estate, and is considering going to graduate school after he gets some career experience. An extremely dedicated individual, Nick is sure to do well in his future career.

**Featured Alumnus: Ian R. Williamson, EMBA 2004**
Ian Williamson enrolled in Nance’s Executive MBA program in 2002 to enhance his professional career, and today has a rewarding job as CEO at Pines Technology. Ian and his family moved from Worcestershire, England to the Cleveland area in 1981. Previously, he had earned a full Technological Certificate in Mechanical Engineering from BrOMSgrove College UK, and enjoyed a career in engineering. Ian became interested in consulting while working as a manager at AJAX Technologies. He began working at a full time consulting company, Joel Strom and Associates, and it was this position that made him “want to put my consulting into action.”

Ian was attracted to the EMBA program because it was structured to let him expand on his professional career without relocating or interrupting his job as a growth management consultant. Ian liked that the EMBA program was filled with experienced professionals, who progressed through the program together. He said that this allowed for a shared learning experience, allowing one to draw on the previous career experience of others and teaching the importance of successful team building first hand. Ian said that being able to build a new professional network while taking classes was a strength of the EMBA program.

The classes in the EMBA program provided Ian with the tools he needed to become a high level executive. Ian said that the EMBA program advanced his performance as a professional because he took “the formal information from classes to help fill in the cracks of traditional thinking,” that he had used in his previous jobs. The emphasis on applying coursework in a practical way helped boost his confidence as a professional. Ian said that in accounting, finance, and marketing classes he not only learned about the subjects, but had to perform real world projects that solidified how to apply those processes in the working world. He said that he learned valuable information from all of his professors, particularly from Dr. Tukel, Dr. Borokhovich, and Dr. Meier.

After completing the EMBA program Ian was contacted by the Chairman of Pines Technology who requested his help with the current financial state of the company. To summarize the problem, “Pines had a lot of debt and was in really bad shape. The shareholders and the bank kept losing money.” In 2005-2006 Ian worked on getting the company in financial shape so somebody would buy it for a viable profit. By 2006 the company had improved to the point that Pines was able to buy the company from the shareholders and the bank. Today Ian is CEO of the company, and says that they are starting to see the fruition of their efforts. He attributes this success to the development of a new product line and the formation of strategic partnerships. To accomplish this company turnaround, Ian used a variety of skills he acquired from the EMBA program on a daily basis.

In addition to his career, Ian also has written and published numerous articles in international trade publications and for many global conferences about a wide range of manufacturing subjects. He has developed and presented several training courses, including a presentation that he gave to current EMBA’s about past problems, and new results at Pines Technology. Ian and his wife Pamela have three children and five grandchildren.

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*Additional News*

**Dr. Gross Collaborates with Current and Former Nance Graduate Students**

Professor Andrew Gross who has been on the faculty of the
Nance College of Business for 40 years now has been an active researcher and consultant. While an MBA student at CWRU in the early 1960s, he was the first employee of a group called Predicasts, Inc. and has done market research for that small venture firm between 1961 and 1981, eventually becoming a senior consultant and a member of its Board of Directors. He has written numerous monographs for Predicasts and then subsequent articles focusing on specific U.S. and world markets for publications such as the *Columbia Journal of World Business*.

Subsequently, after Predicasts, Inc. was sold, a successor firm has emerged in Cleveland, called The Freedonia Group. Dr. Gross does not consult for this group and does not write in-depth monographs for this group, but he has actively collaborated on scholarly articles based on studies published by The Freedonia Group. He has also assisted placing graduates of CSU and the Nance College at this company. One of the CSU alumni who works there is Mr. Michael Deneen, MBA 98 (CSU), a senior industry analyst. Dr. Gross and Mr. Deneen have written several articles for the journal, *Business Economics*, the most recent being on the topic of the world market for power tools. Recently, Prof. Gross and Mr. Anand Mehta, an MBA candidate at CSU and a staff member of The Freedonia Group, also co-authored an article for the same journal on the topic of the global market for agricultural machinery.

Dr. Gross has been active in the field of international business for many years and recently has co-hosted seminars for foreign visitors, jointly with Dr. Elad Granot at the request of the Cleveland Council on World Affairs and the Cleveland International Program. For many years he was also involved with the Cleveland World Trade Center (which is now part of MAGNET). He can be reached at a.gross@csuohio.edu.

**Nance Students Excel in L’Oreal’s Ultimate Business Game Competition**

A team of three undergraduate students made it to the semi-final round of the The *Ultimate Business Game*, sponsored by L’Oreal, StratX, Business Week Magazine and Google. The international competition is an internet-based simulation of an actual business environment where teams are responsible for selling L’Oreal products. The competition lasts for five rounds, 1,700 teams were entered in the first round. Out of those teams, Nance students Shadie Andraos, Erin Eurenious, and Maria Sedano were one of the two undergraduate teams from the United States that made it through to the semi-final round when only 300 teams were left in the competition.

The goal of the competition is to increase product ROI and Share Price Index (SPI). Teams consist of three students each, and are divided into undergraduate and graduate levels. Students are responsible for marketing research using marketing data from L’Oreal, product development, and marketing campaigns. All of the business decisions that the teams make have to be explained, and are then reviewed by judges. This provides the students with practical experience in managing the complexities of product development and marketing for a global company like L’Oreal.

In the competition students’ were given an initial SPI of $1,000. Our team from CSU was able to earn a return of 35–40%. Part of this success was due to the team’s focus on global sustainability. Upon completion of each round the teams had to submit a business plan.
According to Erin, “Sustainability was among our primary focuses. We invested heavily into renewable resources, employee satisfaction initiatives, as well as diversity and equity programs. We feel that these investments emulate current trends and best practices in modern day business.” The team also developed three products that they marketed through the simulated environment. Shadie, Erin, and Maria outplayed undergraduate teams from top universities such as Stanford and Dartmouth. In fact, they came in tenth place out of all the teams from the United States that competed, including both graduate and undergraduate teams.

Shadie Andraos, Erin Eurenius, and Maria Sedano decided to submit an application to join the competition after Shadie saw an advertisement for it on Google. All three students’ are in the honors program, Shadie is a finance and information technology major, Maria is an accounting major, and Erin is a triple major in international business, accounting, and finance. Although the competition is referred to as “the Game,” participation is a serious commitment. The team spent at least four hours a week on the program, devoting more time as they progressed through each level.

For CSU’s team, competing in the competition was a challenge that was also enjoyable. “We had a really good time and I think we all benefited tremendously,” said Shadie Andraos. “Having the experience of competing on an international level has exposed me to current practices in the area of global business.” The winners of the program receive a prize of 10,000 euros plus a trip to anywhere in the world. Those who do especially well in the competition are often encouraged to apply for internships with L’Oreal and SraX. Shadie, Erin and Maria will attempt to enter the contest again next year, and undoubtedly they will do well. Congratulations to our students for their accomplishments and representing Nance well in The Ultimate Business Game.

**International Trade Assistance Center and Nance Global Business Center form Partnership**

The Nance Global Business Center has partnered with the International Trade Assistance Center (ITAC) of Northeast Ohio to collaborate in developing U.S. export activity through assistance and counseling to Northeast Ohio businesses.

ITAC works to promote economic growth through exports. It is a division of the Northeast Ohio Trade & Economic Consortium. The organization offers counseling assistance at no cost to small and medium-sized businesses in Northeast Ohio that are interested in developing international markets. It also offers support to existing exporters wishing to expand markets. ITAC services include export readiness assessment, market research, international business development, internal training, as well as assistance with export compliance and procedures, documentation requirements and international logistics issues.

The Nance Global Business Center sustains education and training programs to promote global competitiveness for Northeast Ohio. The Global Business Center offers a variety of services and programs to help entrepreneurs expand into the global market. The GlobalReach Program is a series of one day practical programs that helps suppliers in Northeast Ohio develop global strategies, improve international operations, and increase competence in global markets. The GlobalTarget Program assists local companies that are trying to expand into the global market. The Global Business Center also provides cost-effective market research and business assistance. In addition, academic certificates in Global Business are offered at the
undergraduate and graduate levels. The Global Business Center has received a program excellence award from NASBITE (North America Small Business International trade educators) and the Ohio Governor’s prestigious E-Award for excellence in International Business and Outreach activities.

Together, ITAC and the Global Business Center will help local companies achieve their goals of international exportation. Specifically, they will assist companies in providing research assistance and market information, offering technical assistance and counseling, coordinating business assistance activities and programs, and jointly promoting information regarding trade events. This allows small and mid-sized companies to expand their growth potential, resulting in economic growth for the regional economy. “This partnership will not only benefit our students who will gain practical insight into the world of international business, but will enable CSU to positively impact the economic landscape by contributing to the success of exporting in our country,” said Robert Scherer, Dean of the Nance College of Business.

The ITAC program is funded in part through grants from the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Ohio Small Business Development Centers. Its parent organization, NEOTEC, is a regional economic development partnership of 10 Northeast Ohio counties. In addition to the ITAC program, NEOTEC administers Foreign-Trade Zone 181 to assist companies engaged in international commerce, and the Northeast Ohio Logistics Network to help improve regional market access. The president and CEO of NEOTEC Ron DeBarr expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership. “NEOTEC and ITAC are grateful to have Cleveland State’s Global Business Center as a partner in our efforts to increase export activity in the region.”

The ITAC will be located in BU 327. You can also reach them at 216.687.4750.

Students Pass the PHR Exam

Recent graduate Shirley Hunter and current student Alexis Lancaster recently passed the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) Exam. This means that they are recognized for comprehending the required knowledge of the Human Resources field. Shirley Hunter graduated with her BBA in December; she is currently working as a Human Resource Research Specialist at Employer’s Resource Council. Alexis Lancaster will graduate with a BBA this summer; he is currently working at an internship with RTA while he finishes his degree.