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STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN THE INTERNATIONAL COLLEGIATE BUSINESS POLICY GAME COMPETITION

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ABSTRACT

This condensed paper provides comments from four students who represented Beaver College in the 1998 International Collegiate Business Policy Game Competition (ICBPGC). The full paper, available from the first author, provides the references; information about the competition and the simulation to provide a context for the students' remarks; as well as biographical data for the students and more of their comments.

THE STUDENTS' COMMENTS

The students were all enrolled in a senior-level business policy course. Two students worked full-time and went to school part-time and two were full-time students but both had part-time jobs. They finished first in the competition.

Michelle Duffy – Chief Financial Officer

The simulation is an excellent capstone course for any student majoring in any business field. It incorporates lessons learned in accounting, finance, economics, marketing, and management. It really was the first time that I saw these fields tied together.

Now that I have graduated from college and entered the "real" world, I realize how many important lessons I learned from competing in the simulation. One lesson is foremost in my mind - working with others. Even though we got along well, we eventually annoyed each other with our personal habits. We found ways to get through our problems and disagreements and it paid off in the end.

There were other lessons from the simulation that I find extremely useful in my career. I know that I can work under extremely tight deadlines. Another invaluable tool is public speaking. We had to present the results of our decisions and pitch our plans for the future to a panel of professionals. Business writing is an unspoken requirement in my job. I make purchases from vendors on behalf of the US Navy. Frequently, I have to justify, in writing, why I chose a certain vendor. These justifications have to be to the point. I certainly learned how to do this by helping to write a business plan and an annual report.

The policy simulation/competition was probably the most rewarding experience of my life so far. I never worked so hard for one class. It was frustrating and aggravating at times because it required so much effort and time. However, at the end of the competition, right before the winners were announced, the whole team felt such a sense of accomplishment of what we were able to do during the semester. No matter the outcome we had won. No trophy would truly reflect our accomplishments; it was icing on the cake.

David Leposa – VP for Marketing and Sales

I quickly learned that, as I devised my marketing strategy, I had to consult with the other members of the group. I had to determine whether or not we had the capital necessary to move forward and also if we had the production capacity necessary to produce the units that would be demanded as a result of the advertising campaigns that I planned.

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The competition allowed me to pull everything I learned throughout four years in college together and helped to make more sense of everything. Pulling all those things together made the simulation seem even that more real.

The experience of competing in the intensive phase of the competition was one I will never forget. It is hard for me to sit here now and put everything that went through my mind at the time into words. At the same time it was exciting, aggravating, depressing, and fun. I felt all these different emotions all at once while competing in San Jose. It seemed like there was never a moment to rest. There was always a decision to make, a new strategy to develop, a crisis to face, a report to write, a presentation to prepare for. It was constant competition from the moment we met the other teams at the opening dinner.

Andrew Milne – Chief Operations Officer

The logical first topic of my comments is teamwork. The ICBPGC is an extremely complex simulation containing vast amounts of data and information. A team must be able to allocate this information among its members and process it effectively to make decisions for the future.

During the Internet phase of the competition, the other teams were just a name on the reports that we received. In the second phase in San Jose we had the benefit of meeting our competitors. This gave us an insight into the other teams and how they presented themselves. Being together with your competitors for three days, teams cannot help but talk about the game since it is the strongest common bond.

Writing our business plan and annual report were the greatest challenges and also the most rewarding aspect of the competition. There were challenges in both the process of creation and in the editing of these documents. The more difficult of the two reports was the business plan. After working (arguing) out the details we were four people traveling the same path towards success. The competition is like anything else in life: it is what you make of it. The designers of the Business Policy Game produced an excellent product

that enables students to learn how top-level decisions in an organization are formed. There are several other benefits which include: meeting people from other colleges across the country (Globe), delegation of responsibility, understanding of corporate documents, watching team members improve their skills and the final look at what your team was able to accomplish.

Eleanor Schwartz - President and CEO

Participating in the Game was definitely the high point of my college adventure. The simulation experience evolved into real “on-the-job training” once the team members assimilated into their roles. I walked away knowing more about how a corporation fits together than by working in many different departments during my 30-year career.

We had to rely on each other extensively. In order for Finance to project how much revenue and expense to expect they needed immediate, and accurate answers from Production and Marketing. In order for Production to fill product requirements, they need to know how much we have to spend and how many we expect to sell.

Our team, like a jigsaw puzzle, was made up of many different personalities each of whom had different lifestyles. We came to understand each other’s needs and worked around the stresses that kept us apart, yet kept us together. We also enjoyed a collection of work styles. However, this goes on in the real business world, also.

I jokingly tell people at work that I successfully ran a company for three years - in three days – so nothing will ever be too difficult to do again. Particularly in regards to making presentations!

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the students learned about making presentations, writing reports, and integrating of business functions. The importance of the group interactions is also clear.