LEAD Case Competition Raises the Bar

By Mel Walter

On Friday, March 1, eighteen college teams and three local high school teams from DeKalb High School and Rockford Lutheran High School met in Barsema Hall to compete in the Third Annual NIU BELIEF Ethics Case Competition.

College competitors were given an ethical dilemma written by Sam Kunde that had to do with picking a supplier for a high quality product, WindsorWear, which is comparable to Under Armor. Competitors were asked to put themselves in a purchaser's shoes and decide on whether or not to do business with a company that would greatly increase Windsor's profit margin but would tarnish the brand name because it has been known to utilize child labor in overseas sweatshops.

Our High School competitors were given a different dilemma written by Melissa Daciolas. In this case, a high school flutist was unfairly chosen for a scholarship trip to Washington D.C. due to her mom's interference in the selection process. Students were asked to create a presentation and determine if the flutist should have said or done anything before accepting the offer to go on the trip.

The day started at 8:45am with Check-In and the Judge's Orientation. Once the judges were told what to expect for the day, the first round of competition

See Competition on page 3
LEAD Alumnus Spotlight: Curtis Batterton

By Liz Klawans

At the last BELIEF Board Meeting, I got the chance to sit down with Curtis Batterton and talk to him about LEAD. Curtis is a Northern Illinois University and LEAD Alumni who currently works for McDonalds. He is considered one of the “Founding Fathers” of LEAD, joining when the LEAD organization began in 2008.

Curtis originally interviewed to be a competitor in the Eller Case Competition. After that, he really wanted to continue his involvement with the BELIEF Program and chose to join LEAD. When I asked Curtis what he liked about LEAD and the BELIEF Program, he emphasized how fortunate NIU is to have such a great ethical framework to follow.

In the future, Curtis said he would like to see the BELIEF Program and LEAD continue its growth and increase awareness throughout the College of Business as well as the university. Curtis currently sits on the Advisory Board for the BELIEF Program and represents alumni on the board.

“The Grey Areas” with Bart Sharp (FFE Spotlight)

By Melissa Daciolas

Assistant Professor Bart Sharp of the management department has been involved in the BELIEF program for about three years. He first got involved when reading about the program via e-mail, and knew it was an important part of the working world. He first learned about ethics as an undergrad in a class at Case Western Reserve University. He did not realize how common ethical dilemmas were until he entered the working world. He said that the stakes are a lot higher, and people are relying on you. You have more responsibility in the working world, and have to make the most ethical decisions. He explained that there are a lot of gray areas, where the decisions are not clear. Dr. Sharp has his own personal code of ethics that he sticks to, holding his beliefs and values close.

As an assistant professor, he handles ethical dilemmas daily. The biggest one he said he deals with is fairness. He has to grade each individual fairly and equally. All teachers have difficult students at times and sometimes bias is hard to overcome. When I inquired as to how he tries to avoid being biased, his response was that he flips the cover page with the student’s name and grades the document without knowing which student completed it. This way, he is focusing on the content of the document and not the individual. Dr. Sharp has a good system, and so far has been effective in avoiding biased opinions to give his students fair grades.

LEAD interviews

Becky Meggesin of NICOR/AGL at the Corporate Sponsor meeting

Q. How did you get involved with BELIEF?

Becky: My former manager and I had a relationship with Dr. Terry Bishop [Professor of Management at NIU and a member of Faculty For Ethics (FFE)]. Dr. Terry Bishop approached NICOR before the founding of the BELIEF Initiative at Northern Illinois University.

Q. What do you like about the BELIEF Program?

Becky: The most admirable thing in NIU’s BELIEF Program is that it is a marriage between academic education and corporate America. NICOR, as a company, is very appreciative of this marriage between theory and application.

The level of engagement of BELIEF in NIU’s College of Business which encompasses faculty and students is very impressive. Dr. William McCoy, in particular, and his commitment to embed ethics into business students is very inspiring.

See Meggesin on page 3
On the Agenda

Time for Transitions
By Sam Kunde

As with all organizations in the College of Business, LEAD faces the ever-present issue of personnel transition. Those who have been in LEAD leave, handing the reins to the next group of LEADers to take over. If done inadequately, it can feel as if you’re treading water; as soon as people and plans finally get organized, it’s time to transition again.

However, transitioning smoothly can add momentum to the organization. The new generation of LEADers is already making waves. For example, Marketing major Theresa Van Den Eeden, OMIS major Luis Sandoval, and Business Administration major Mel Walter will be the presenters for our UBUS 310 appearance on April 22. They will have the notes and files we put together in the fall, but I look forward to watching them personalize it in their own way.

More importantly, the new group of LEADers brings fresh ideas. Not having seen how everything was done before can free them from a “how did we do this last year” trap. It should be noted how we prepared for our events in the past, but doing so shouldn’t limit what new projects they can take on in the future. New things we did this spring included a workshop for the high school participants in our ethics case competition, a qualifying process for Eller candidates, a new survey and data for the UBUS 310 presentation, and t-shirts for our case competition competitors. Potential projects on the horizon include a revised revival of the LEAD Discussion Series, an exciting new classroom presentation unlike the UBUS 310 “Ethical Feud”, and, from the creative mind of OMIS major Marty Barrett, maybe some type of “ethics carnival.”

There’s also the less-than-thrilling logistical part of the transition, like who’s going to keep track of Sharepoint, who’s going to take minutes in meetings, and who’s going to set the agenda each Tuesday? Those duties are being handed off this spring. April is a month where those positions will be taught and passed on so LEAD can hit the ground running in August. Finally, we have adopted Dr. McCoy’s suggestion to have a summer retreat to schedule our events for the year. LEAD will be heading out to NIU’s Lorado Taft campus for the experience. Our new LEADers will be ready to take on that challenge so we will be the most prepared we’ve ever been in the fall.

It’s tough to say goodbye to LEAD, but it’s reassuring to know it will be in good hands after I leave in May.

Competition

Continued from front page

began. For three hours, the judges listened to teams present their ideas on how to deal with these ethical dilemmas. At 12:30 p.m., the Top Three College Teams and the Top Two High School finalists were announced and given thirty minutes to revise their presentation before competing for the $1,000 grand prize. During that time the keynote speaker, David McCoy (VP and CFO of National Bank & Trust of Sycamore) spoke to all of the remaining competitors about how they will be faced with ethical dilemmas as soon as they start in an entry level position. He spoke of the importance of always remembering to make conscious decisions to help your company as a whole. It was very informative and everyone responded well to his presentation.

The high school finalists then presented to the judges followed by our top collegiate finalists. The judges were excited to discuss their final decision while Dean Denise Schoenbachler spoke highly of LEAD and NIU’s BELIEF Program. She also showed that she always carried her decision making card and encouraged students to take advantage of this tool. When the judges returned, the winners were announced.

Overall, the Case Competition was a huge success. Wali Rizvi did an excellent job with recruitment and we hope to have his talents help us next year as well. Our goal for next year is to increase high school participation. Our thanks to the many participants that made this year so memorable!

Meggesin

Continued from page 2

Q. How would you like the future of BELIEF program to be like? Becky: More involvement, especially beyond the College of Business is very desirable. BELIEF has an opportunity at this challenging time [NIU’s leadership crisis] where it can take the core of the BELIEF Initiative and integrate it within the University. BELIEF principles can help supplement the decisions that are made regarding challenges currently facing Northern Illinois University. The expansion of LEAD [the student group] throughout all of the College of Business’ disciplines is really great. NICOR’s objectives are linked to its beliefs. NICOR highly values ethical behavior, so NICOR and the BELIEF Program have a goal alignment. This affects NICOR’s hiring because the students here are introduced to ethical dilemmas in business so early on. Our philosophy in relation to the BELIEF Program is a win-win philosophy where we could learn from the BELIEF Program and BELIEF could learn from us.
Lasting Impressions

Thank you to our corporate sponsors

AT&T
KPMG
NICOR Gas/AGL Resources Company

Caterpillar
Microsoft
Northwestern Mutual Financial Network

Experian
The National Bank & Trust Company of Sycamore
Road Ranger USA