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STUDENTS FROM GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY TAKE TOP PRIZE IN WEST MICHIGAN'S ACG CUP COMPETITION; STUDENTS FROM WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY CLINCH RUNNER-UP POSITION

25 teams, 102 students, and 42 judges take part in multi-round, hybrid business case competition event.

Grand Rapids, MI March 6, 2023 – After two rounds of a day-long competition, Team Penny Wise from the Seidman College of Business at Grand Valley State University took the top prize of \$8,000, and Team Equity Expand from the Haworth College of Business at Western Michigan University earned the runner-up spot. Each team will have the chance to enjoy a dinner with business professionals from the region.

Partnering with ACG Minnesota and ACG Detroit and offering a remote competition option not only drew in the usual Michigan-based business, finance, and accounting students, but this year also saw competitors from Fordham University in New York and the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.

Teams used high-level financial and valuation analyses to arrive at their conclusions and deliver professional presentations by stepping into the role as consultants and presenting recommendations in a way that would impress a board of directors.

Volunteer judges from Detroit, Minneapolis, and West Michigan come from commercial and investment banking, corporate law, private equity, accounting, and valuation firms. All agree that the competition is more than just a finance competition – it's a step toward a career. ACG Cup competitors often graduate with more job options than their peers, thanks to the collaborative nature of the competition's structure and positive connections developed with area professionals.

Judge Mike Malaga of Comerica stated the event showcases student talent, saying "the future is bright for the deal-making industry." Judge Kelly Plawinski of Adamy Valuation offered "ACG Cup is phenomenal for students . . . a distinct opportunity to level up their skills and provide them with a concrete experience they can pull from as they start their careers."

Additionally, Judges Scott Harris of Huntington Bank and Alison Mast of Northern Trust stated "there is no better place in Grand Rapids to reconnect and meet with current professionals while also connecting with future professionals," and "ACG Cup is a perfect reflection of what makes host West Michigan so special – the commitment of its community members to not only strengthen bonds with one another, but to help develop the next generation of leaders."

The ACG Cup affords student competitors with real-world mergers and acquisitions (M&A) experience and allows them to build a skillset outside of the classroom. This year’s competition also offered in-person competitors a chance to meet business representatives from across Michigan at a Career Conversation networking event held the night before the competition. Tim Iaquina from Cascade Partners attended the networking event to meet prospective hires. He said that “ACG Cup provided a great opportunity to interact with future leaders within the financial services industry. It was motivating to see students challenge themselves outside of the classroom.”

Hope College competitor Jake Vander Ploeg said ACG Cup was an “introduction into a field that I would not otherwise have discovered and I am extremely grateful for it. The attention to detail, teamwork, and presentation skills required can be applied to any career path.” Ferris State University competitor Jake McGaha said that the ACG Cup was a “wonderful experience that not only taught me more about finance, but how to handle myself in a professional environment.” Michigan State University competitor Aditya Bapat stated the “ACG Cup helped me develop a sound understanding of how M&A works . . . aiding in building a holistic perspective through quantitative and qualitative factors. I also had the opportunity to network with other professionals, making this an enriching experience.”

Molly Ostrander of the runner-up team from Western Michigan University added “ACG Cup is an amazing opportunity to not only advance your hard skills, but also your soft skills. Learning how to work and lead a team is a crucial lesson for everyone’s future.” Ryan Gilmore of Grand Valley State University’s winning team added, “ACG Cup gave me the confidence and skills to become a better professional and student.”

Professors from around the region welcome the chance to bring teams to the competition. Aquinas College’s Tom Olive says “The ACG Cup is a premiere learning event for students to be introduced to the world of business valuations, simulate the stresses of presenting one’s analyses to a Board, and to network with supportive professionals.” Central Michigan University Professor Brad Taylor adds, “The ACG Cup is a very well-run competition. Students will benefit from direct interaction with industry leaders.”

Members of Team Penny Wise and Team Equity Expand, along with Final Round Judges:

Justin Farrish, Penny Wise	Grand Valley State University
Ryan Gilmore, Penny Wise	Grand Valley State University
Griffin Jacques, Penny Wise	Grand Valley State University
Justin Quinn, Penny Wise	Grand Valley State University
Teddy Rounds, Penny Wise	Grand Valley State University
Kamola Makhmudova	Western Michigan University
Molly Ostrander	Western Michigan University
Nicholas Scherer	Western Michigan University
Chelsea Austin – judge	Miller Johnson
Jason Brinks – judge	Oxford Financial Group, Ltd.
Brian Hamilton – judge	Allied OMS
Rabih Jamal – judge	Waséyabek Development Company
Matt Miller – judge	BlueWater Partners
Kelly Plawinski – judge	Adamy Valuation



Team Penny Wise, L – R: Justin Farrish, Ryan Gilmore, Teddy Rounds, Griffin Jacques, Justin Quinn



Team Equity Expand, L – R: Molly Ostrander, Nicholas Scherer, Kamola Makhmudova

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ACG Western Michigan's ACG Cup competition has long been hailed as the premier ACG Cup competition across ACG North America's 54 chapters. ACG Western Michigan is a chapter of the global Association for Corporate Growth and was founded in 1999 by West Michigan business leaders who recognized the need for a local organization to serve as a resource to executives actively involved in deal making and internal and external growth of their companies.

If you would like more information about ACG Cup or ACG Western Michigan, please contact Heather Edwards at (616) 732-7149 or via email at acgcup@acgwmich.org.