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MARKETING TEAM BRINGS HOME THE BACON (OR SAUSAGE)

COMPETITION FOCUSES ON HELPING JOHNSONVILLE REACH CUSTOMERS.

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | May 16, 2024

Read time: about 3 min

A team of marketing students from the [Luter School of Business](#) finished in the top three of a national competition that included more than 50 college teams from across the country.

The competition was focused on creating a plan to effectively market and increase sales for Johnsonville, a sausage company that sells products in grocery stores nationwide. The CNU team finished in the No. 3 spot.

The team was composed of seniors Bennett Cooper, Jayne Pilch and Sarah Lima, and was advised by Dr. Shinhye Kim, Assistant Professor of [Marketing](#).

“Placing in the Top Three of a nationwide competition is a significant accomplishment. The competition drew participants from schools across the country, from the East Coast to the West Coast,” Kim said. “Achieving a top-three finish amidst such widespread and diverse competition is indeed a testament to the hard work and skills of the team.”

The students on the team volunteered after hearing about the opportunity at the beginning of the semester. The premise of the competition was to find creative ways for Johnsonville to expand its reach and increase sales.

“Our group prepared for this competition by conducting a detailed analysis of Johnsonville’s fresh breakfast link product line. We then used this information to create a new demographic that Johnsonville should aspire to reach

with its fresh breakfast link products: Southern Millennials,” said Pilch, ‘24 Marketing.

The team created a survey that drew responses from 200 people.

“After we collected all of the data from our survey, we conducted several statistical tests such as chi-square analysis and attribution modeling,” Pilch said. “We then came up with data-driven recommendations for Johnsonville regarding how they can better communicate with their target audience, new product ideas, and renovations to their existing product line.”

The team suggested ideas such as updated packaging and using Johnsonville’s exclusive flavors to capture the Southern Millennial demographic, said Cooper, ‘24 Marketing.

“I was super into demographics and did a cool analysis, understanding what geographic regions were underperforming for the company in the target demographic. They really liked that,” he said.

After presenting its findings, the team then fielded questions from Johnsonville representatives.

The feedback from the judges was overwhelmingly positive.

“Exceptional methodology, sample frame, data collection, analysis and recommendations that stem from the study. You answered the key business problem and actually expanded it to include the underperforming Midwest as well. Your presentation was crisp, visual, and easy to understand,” one judge said.

Dr. Brooke Reavey, president of the competition, was also very complimentary of the team’s performance.

“Congrats again on a fantastic marketing research report and presentation! As the organizer of the competition, I was very impressed with your level of professionalism and your creativity with the project,” she said.

To prepare, the team met every week.

“There was a wide range of skills, and the most satisfying academic group setting I’ve ever been in,” Cooper said. “The other two team members are so cool.”

The team was first named as a finalist, and then went on to capture the No. 3 spot. The trio was thrilled to have finished so strongly.

“Originally, I was shocked. I had no idea how our skill sets compared to other students at other schools and to be voted as unanimous finalists was crazy. I’m still so proud of this team,” Cooper said.

Kim agreed, saying “I was thrilled with their achievement of winning third place. In my eyes, they were the top performers. Their dedication and quality of their work truly stood out, and I believe they delivered a first-place performance.”

The competition was an excellent way to exercise what they have learned at Luter, and will hopefully assist them as they transition into the workforce, Kim said.

“For the students, participating and winning a nationwide competition is an exceptional achievement that significantly boosts their resumes and job prospects. It provides real-world experience and recognition in their field of study, which can be pivotal during job interviews,” she said.

Pilch said the experience was invaluable, and is thankful to have had the opportunity while at Christopher Newport.

“As a marketing student, it is important to gain hands-on experience in the field. Surprisingly, it is rather uncommon for undergraduate students to have the opportunity to be involved in a project like this,” she said.

Team members said the competition taught them a lot about themselves, and the field of marketing.

“I learned a lot about the importance of teamwork and communication throughout the course of this project. I am so lucky to have worked with Bennett and Sarah — we make a great team!” Pilch said. “We all have different strengths, and we were able to come together to make something we are all very proud of. This competition taught me the importance of thorough data analysis to ensure that all of the client’s needs are being met through data-driven insights.”

