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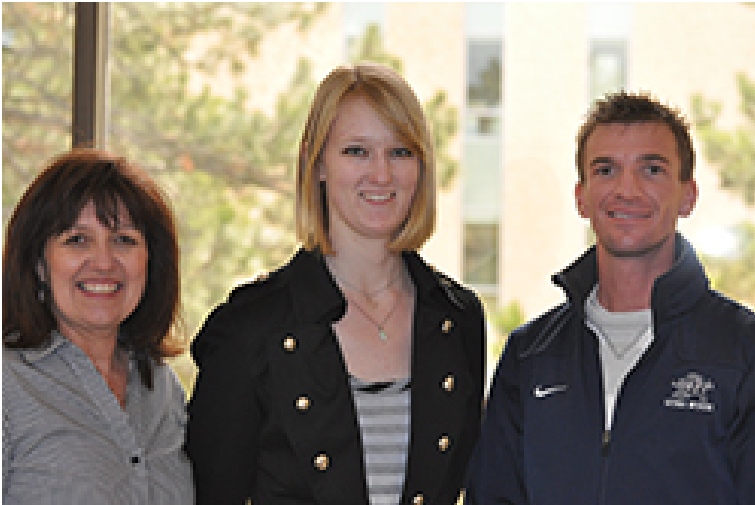
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Huntsman Club, Beta Alpha Psi, Wins Two First-Prize Awards at Deloitte Best Practices Competition - May 2013

By Allie Jeppson



Huntsman students and officers of the accounting club Beta Alpha Psi recently traveled to Denver, Colo., to attend a Deloitte Best Practices competition and took first place in two out of three categories. They competed against teams from Brigham Young University, the University of Utah, the University of Denver, and other schools from six states in the Rocky Mountain Region.

The organization is an international honors society that seeks to bridge the gap between students and accounting professionals. Each year, Beta Alpha Psi (BAP) chapters located at universities nationwide have the opportunity to showcase projects they have completed during the year that help accounting students develop professional skills and serve the community.

This year each club was expected to develop a project or practice in one or more of three areas or categories called "innovation," "imagination," and "inspiration." Each club presented to judges and other chapters at BAP regional meetings across the nation.

USU competed in two of the categories, imagination and innovation, and won first place in both areas which will allow the Huntsman club to compete nationally in Anaheim, Calif., in summer 2013.

"We went out there with good ideas that really were innovative and imaginative, and we were recognized for that," said Bonnie Villarreal, BAP advisor and director of the Master's of Accounting program.

In the category of imagination, chapters were required to help students improve written communication skills in an imaginative way. To meet this challenge, chapter members at USU surveyed students within their chapter to see what written skills they needed the most help with and found that many students struggled with writing cover letters. The club held a workshop that helped students not only to write better cover letters, but also to adapt their cover letters to different companies and job opportunities. Afterward, a competition was held among the participating students to see who could produce the most well-written and adaptive cover letters.

"In accounting, a resume is a filter," Ms. Villarreal said. "Accounting companies don't want resumes to be unique, so we really wanted a way to help our students develop their own personal brand through their cover letter."

The innovation project involved developing soft skills that were not recruitment related. To help students learn to present technical knowledge to a non-technical audience, members of BAP held a workshop over two evenings to help local Boy Scouts earn a personal management merit badge. More than 90 Boy Scouts attended.

USU's chapter was successful, in part, because the students found creative ways to present their material, said Ms. Villarreal. For example, one presenter removed his suit jacket to reveal a Boy Scout uniform, and two of the presenters gave parts of their presentations in Romanian and Chinese to demonstrate how difficult it can be to understand a presentation that is not in your native language. Accounting is commonly referred to as the language of business. The terminology can make it feel like a foreign language to non-accountants. Explaining money management at the Boy Scout level helped accounting students practice overcoming the language barrier while introducing the scouts to possible careers in the financial profession.

"It wowed the judges because it wasn't the same boring thing that they usually see," she said.