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Two Huntsman Teams Take Top Honors at Walmart IT Summit

News Warehouse

Two Huntsman Teams Take Top Honors at Walmart IT Summit

By Steve Eaton

Two teams from the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business recently placed first and second in an information systems competition in Bentonville, Ark., that pitted 82 teams from top universities around the world against each other, testing their IT skills and their ability to find innovative solutions.

The Utah State University students took the top honors at the 2013 Walmart IT Summit and AIS Student Chapter Leadership Conference. The Association of Information Systems (AIS), the organization that hosted the competition, is a professional group for individuals and organizations that lead the research, teaching, practice and study of information systems worldwide. Teams from 17 universities entered the contest and just six teams in each of four different categories made it to the finals.

A team of three Huntsman MIS students, which included Vishal Patel, Dannaea Ward and Eric Schnell, entered the "IT risk identification category" and took first place. They were asked to do a case study for a fictional health care company that was trying to decide if it should store private patient data in an online secure cloud storage system or on a more traditional protected system. The team took first place on a regional level to qualify for nationals where it was further tested and asked to come up with a more detailed plan to mitigate the risks of its recommendation.

"In the IT risk identification competition we were up against students from Arizona State University, Carnegie Mellon University, University of Alabama, and Temple University, all of which are ranked among the top 20 MIS programs in the United States," Dannaea said. "By placing in both categories we competed in, we were able to gain great recognition for our MIS program. We as Huntsman Students take great pride in the education we are receiving and this was the perfect opportunity to show off the skills we have learned."

The other team of three Huntsman management information systems (MIS) students, which included Gina Baldazzi, Kristen Tenney and Kyle Bell, submitted a training video they created and the team took second place in the "interactive learning module" category. The video, which a former student, Marielle Sanchez, helped them create before she graduated in 2012, is aimed at helping people learn how to create an "entity relationship diagram," which Gina described as "the blue prints for a database." She said they wanted to create something that was not too technical so that even those who are not MIS students could understand it.

David Olsen, who heads the Management Information Systems Department, said it is impressive that the Huntsman students competed so well in this premiere international MIS competition.

"The hallmark of a great MIS student at USU is hard work, productivity and camaraderie," Dr. Olsen said. "Our students were just so determined to bring home awards and I am so proud of them. To see them excel like this when competing against some of the brightest students in the country is gratifying."

One competition broke students up into new teams made up of a mix of students from various schools. The team Gina was on took second place in that competition.