

Olympic College business students among first from community colleges to participate in prestigious competition

Students from Olympic College's Business program recently participated in the KPMG Financial Accounting Case Competition. The regional competition, held at Seattle University the first weekend in April, is historically open to university students pursuing their bachelor's or master's in accounting. OC was among the first community colleges in the state to receive an invitation to participate in the competition this year.

KPMG is an Amsterdam based financial advisory company that employs more than 207,000 workers in locations around the world. This year, marked the 11th anniversary of the event partnership between KPMG and Seattle U, with nearly 20 schools participating over the last decade from Alaska, California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

OC received an invitation in part due to connections established between Seattle U and OC Accounting Faculty, Kim McNamara. They also reached out to OC because there is a steady pipeline of students who transfer to Seattle U to continue their educations each year.

According to Dr. Gabriel Saucedo, Assistant Professor of Accounting at Seattle U's Albers School of Business and Economics, the annual case competition is great exposure to Seattle U and KPMG, which is considered one of the "Big 4" global professional services companies.

"We believe this is an excellent opportunity for local students at caliber two-year institutions to visit our campus and see what an experience at Seattle U would be like," he said. "This competition benefits students by giving them an exciting opportunity to "lean in" and push themselves as they apply their studies in an interactive format."

"For most, this is their first time talking with members from a "Big 4" firm, and KPMG is very excited to share their firm's values with the young professionals."

OC's team consisted of four sophomores who are all completing their Associate in Business degrees this spring: Max Feldhacker, a former Running Start student and current OC Student Government Vice President of Finance was accepted to the University of Washington Tacoma Milgard School of Business; Sarah Hinson is transferring to Central Washington University's satellite campus in Des Moines, WA; Chris Neeper, a military veteran, is transferring to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte next year; and Jeff Timm, also a military veteran is planning to transfer to the University of Washington Tacoma Milgard School of Business in the fall.

These students come from diverse backgrounds, but share a common goal of completing a program that will one day lead to a good job.

"For me, the competition felt like the culmination of my business education here at OC," says Chris. "I was able to put everything I learned in the program together to come up with a solution to the case study."

The two-day competition challenges teams of four to innovatively solve real-life financial accounting scenarios often encountered by KPMG employees. Students traditionally play

the part of KPMG advisors, presenting to clients played by a panel of KPMG professionals representing audit, tax, and advisory practices. Following first-round presentations, a KPMG judging panel selects the two top teams to represent their pitches in front of the entire competition delegation. During the competition, students network with industry professionals, as well as Seattle U faculty and staff, while strengthening bonds with their fellow teammates and competitors.

The competition serves as a recruitment opportunity for KPMG, which provides participants with extensive information about their internship programs, which can lead to full-time employment.

Although OC's team did not win the competition, community colleges fared well with Cascadia College of Bothell taking home the top prize.

Professor McNamara oversaw the team and traveled with them to Seattle for the competition.

"The fact that we caught the attention of Seattle U really says a lot about the caliber of our students," she said. "And I am proud of our past students who paved the way for OC to participate in this competition."

The competition was a learning opportunity for her as well.

"KPMG went through their entire recruitment process sharing extensive information about internship and job opportunities. They offered insight into academic programs and areas of discipline students should focus on, which was invaluable to our team, but also to me because I can share this information with future students as well."

For Professor McNamara, it is rewarding to see growth and development in her students, and the students greatly appreciate the education they are receiving at OC.

"Professor McNamara is a huge inspiration and help to me personally," Sarah said. "She helped guide me towards accounting and the Business Associate degree with an eye towards transferring."

His time at OC was truly transformational for Max. After struggles in upper-division math postponed his transfer plans, he redoubled his efforts, focusing on business management and accounting.

"This year didn't go according to plan, but it turned out to be a blessing," he said. "I refocused my efforts on the business program which is how I met Professor McNamara, which led to my job with student government and eventually being on this team."

Although these students are all graduating and moving on to the next steps in their educations, they've had an impact that will benefit the next generation of students including establishing a Business & Accounting Club, which was instrumental in their preparation for the competition. The club is currently recruiting members for next year.

To find out more about clubs, including the Business & Accounting Club, contact Student Government of Olympic College at 360-475-7290, sgoc@olympic.edu.

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— Chris Neeper

11th Annual KPMG-Seattle U Financial Accounting Competition At A Glance

Competition Dates

April 5-6, 2019

Competition Format

After receiving the competition prompt from KPMG at 8 a.m., each team had approximately four hours to brainstorm ideas, work directly with KPMG professionals, and then generate their presentation pitches in response to the following question, "What innovations would help empower people to use financial statements in a more meaningful way?"

Participating Colleges

- Boise State
- Cascadia College
- Central Washington University
- Edmonds Community College
- Olympic College
- Seattle University
- University of Alaska Fairbanks
- University of Portland

Competition Results

1st Place – Cascadia College

2nd Place – University of Portland

Honorable Mention – Boise State and Edmonds CC

Most Valuable Presenters – Boise State, University of Portland

The Big 4 Accounting Firms

KPMG is one of the four largest accounting firms in the world, often referred to as "The Big 4." The other firms are Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Ernst & Young.

Olympic College Team



Max Feldhacker



Sarah Hinson



Chris Neeper



Jeff Timm

OC Music

JUNE 1-2 WEEKEND

Solo Recital & Piano Masterclass

"I Was a Stranger"

THE GREAT BEND CHORALE & YOUTH CHORALE CONCERT

JUN 1, 7PM
JUN 2, 10-3PM
OC BREMERTON
BLDG 7 HARVEY
THEATRE

CONDUCTED &
PRESENTED BY
Kevin Ahfat

MORE INFO @
OLYMPIC.EDU/MUSIC

JUN 2, 4PM
OC BREMERTON
BLDG 7 HARVEY
THEATRE

DIRECTED BY
Matthew Melendez
FEATURING SOPRANO
Jess Altiveros

ON THE COVER