

## **Classroom lessons come in handy at competition**

**by Shane Arman - Friday, February 13, 2009**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/1681/classroom-lessons-come-in-handy-at-competition/>

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students participating in the 2009 National Student Advertising Campaign (NSAC) have high expectations and a unique case study to conquer.

In 2008, UW Oshkosh students placed first out of 10 schools at the NSAC regional competition, qualifying them for nationals, where they finished 11th out of 16 teams.

For the 2008 NSAC case study, students created a local advertising campaign for AOL Instant Messenger. The 2009 competition focuses on the Century Council, a non-profit organization aimed at reducing drunk driving and underage drinking.

“The main difference is we have to promote the Century Council as a national campaign,” said senior journalism major Grace McMurtrie, who helped prepare research in fall 2008.

NSAC team members often take Research in Strategic Communication for the fall semester, where the problem is defined and research is conducted. Then in the spring semester, students in Strategic Campaigns in Advertising 424 develop a strategy for the campaign.

“We’ve compiled about 80 pages of primary and secondary research, but we still need help from individuals on the Century Council,” said McMurtrie, a Wausau native.

Primary research was conducted through online surveys and 90-minute focus groups. The main research question: What are the behaviors, attitudes and beliefs of UW Oshkosh students in regard to the consumption and over consumption of alcohol?

Online surveys asked students how many drinks they considered binge drinking, what family occasions they drink at, how student act when they drink and so forth.

Focus group participants drew pictures of what they thought a non-drinker and a drinker look like, answered specific as well as open-ended questions, and responded to word association.

With most of the research complete, students now are analyzing the research and applying knowledge they’ve learned in previous classes.

“We’re starting to have strategy sessions,” journalism professor and coach Elizabeth Crisp Crawford said. “We’re asking, ‘How are we going to translate this into an advertising campaign?’”

Although the intensive research is complete, the eight-student NSAC team still faces challenges in shaping its strategy.

“We’re so close to the issue, it’s hard to step back at look at it as an outsider,” McMurtrie said of researching her peers.

Journalism professor and other coach of the NSAC team Dana Baumgart points out another hurdle: Culture can be difficult to change.

“It’s hard to convince students to exchange one behavior for another,” Baumgart said. “We need to let students know there are alternative social activities besides drinking.”

The new late-night initiative at UW Oshkosh, Titan Nights, provides students free recreational activities and food 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. the first Friday of every month during the fall and spring semesters. The next Titan Nights will be held March 6 at the Student Recreation and Wellness Center.

Started as a pilot project in Spring 2008, Titan Nights wasn’t specifically created to deter students from consuming alcohol, but its social environment offers safe and entertaining activities.

While the NSAC team hasn’t yet decided how they will raise awareness of alternative activities, Baumgart is sure the experience is worthwhile for students’ professional development.

“Participating in NSAC is as close to real work in marketing, advertising and communications as they can get before graduation,” Baumgart said. “It brings together everything they’ve learned under one umbrella.”

While any students can join the NSAC team, they are encouraged also to join Advertising Club, as both groups work together. For more information about Advertising Club or the NSAC team, contact Dana Baumgart at [baumgard@uwosh.edu](mailto:baumgard@uwosh.edu).