

COB students gain experience with Mercury Marine

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/10730/students-get-real-world-experience-with-mercury-marine/>

Students in Professor Steve Dunn's Business 450 Environmental Management class received more than a syllabus on the first day of class this spring. They were greeted by five managers from Mercury Marine and were given a real-world challenge: complete a sustainability audit on several of Mercury Marine's suppliers in just five weeks.

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students were divided into 13 teams of three and matched up with UWO College of Business alumni currently working at Mercury Marine. Each team was responsible for beta testing a sustainability audit that Mercury Marine created on one of 13 suppliers.

Students took a field trip to the Mercury Marine facilities in Fond Du Lac, Wis., in early February and created a timeline with the alumni for the project. Project mentor John Cavey '09, currently a global supply chain analyst at Mercury Marine, said his favorite part was "giving a tour of the Mercury Marine facility to a group of 10 students and answering questions on an individual basis. Their work was very professional, and they met deadlines as asked." Nickie Nae '07, Brian Quella '08, and Ryan Hoppe also were mentors for the project.

At the end of the five-week project, students traveled to Mercury Marine and presented their findings to several executives. They also supplied recommendations about the current sustainability auditing process.

"The presentations were well done and demonstrated the depth of involvement of the students," said Stephan Cloutier, vice president of Purchasing at Mercury Marine.

Quella, currently a buyer and planner at Mercury Marine, said he enjoyed working with the students.

"We learned as much, if not more, from the work of the students than we expected," Quella said. "The students were able to adapt to our changing schedule to get the end product."

Senior Ross Kroll enjoyed the hands-on experience.

"Getting to work with several of our recent alumni was very nice because it gave me and the rest of the class the chance to learn and work with people who have been where we are very recently," said Kroll.

In addition to serving as mentors for the project, the alumni also provided insight on school and their experiences post graduation.

The idea for this hands-on project came from Mercury Marine's supplier conference held last summer. Professor Dunn assisted the Mercury Marine sustainability team with development and facilitated breakout sessions with the suppliers at the conference.

“A number of our alumni are in the purchasing area at Mercury Marine and joined the sustainability team. They were instrumental in helping scope the project, having been students within the past five years.

“Mercury Marine is a longtime partner with UW Oshkosh, and we intend to grow our partnership over time,” Cloutier said. “This has been a mutually beneficial relationship for both organizations, and my group will continue to explore new possibilities to benefit from the talent pool at UW Oshkosh.”

The company will use the information collected to tweak its current sustainability audit system so it can roll it out to several hundred suppliers.

“These are exactly the types of partnerships that give our students a strong competitive edge,” said Bill Tallon, dean of UWO’s College of Business. “Our students are establishing themselves professionally with not just the academic theory they are learning in the classroom but also with the applied learning they are receiving by doing projects for our corporate partners. This not only solidifies what they learn in the classroom but also provides real experience for students to use when interviewing for jobs, and we hope to continue to grow our current partnerships and create new opportunities for our students and the community.”

[Katelyn Zima](#), *College of Business*, submitted this article. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to contribute calendar items, campus announcements and other good news to *UW Oshkosh Today*.

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