Sophomore Standout
Accepting the Challenge as a Sophomore

What Challenge Is
PwC Challenge is a case competition put on by PricewaterhouseCoopers and the School of Management. This competition is meant to bring students outside of the classroom and to expose them to real world business issues. The competition requires students to work in teams of 4 or 5, over a span of two weeks, in order to create a 12 minute presentation which explains a solution to a business problem. The presentation is given in front of a panel of PwC recruiters and employees. Our case was to come up with a solution to whether the company, West Texas Biodiesel Facility, was a good investment for its parent company. We were to show the social, environmental, and financial implications of starting the company.

Why We Accepted the Challenge
- We thought it was important to find ways to get involved in the School of Management. The School of Management has many opportunities for students and we thought it would be a great idea to start taking advantage of these as early as we could.
- As accounting majors, we wanted to use the competition as a networking opportunity with the PwC recruiters by showing them our skills and abilities.
- As sophomores we don’t necessarily have as many experiences as older students yet, so this would be a great way to boost our resumes and real world experience.
- We have learned how competitive the job market is. Therefore, starting to get familiar with accounting firms while sophomores would give us a bigger advantage over other students our age who wait.
- We realized that participating as sophomores would familiarize us with how the competition worked, so therefore we would be comfortable with it when it comes time to participate again next year.
- We wanted to be SOPHOMORE STANDOUTS!

Why Should PwC Trust Sophomores?
There are many reasons why PwC should have trusted our team that consisted of three sophomores and two seniors. Although we were one of the youngest teams in the competition, we were able to create an effective presentation just as well as any other team. The seniors on our team had more accounting knowledge which naturally led to them researching the financial implications of the project. Therefore, as sophomores, we took on the role of researching the social and environmental aspects of a biodiesel company. Finding a solution to a case does not require a lot of detailed accounting knowledge, since there are many other aspects required when starting a company. This means PwC is able to trust younger teams just as much as older teams because:
- Since we don’t have much advanced accounting knowledge, we were able to think outside of the box when it came to a creative solution. When others may know all of the financial implications, they may revolve their solution around those. However, we revolved our solution around our social and environmental implications and added in the finances later. This way, the world around us is not forgotten when starting the biodiesel company which is just as important these days.
- Since we were motivated to participate in the competition as sophomores competing with juniors, seniors, and graduate students, we were definitely just as motivated to come up with a great solution so that we could live up to all the more experienced teams. Just because we are sophomores doesn’t mean we didn’t try just as hard as others to find important facts and concepts.
- Our confidence in our own presentation and research was projected throughout our presentation. Therefore, the judges should have had no reason to doubt our findings or solution.

Our Team
Our team consisted of three sophomores and two seniors from the School of Management.

Deal Expo Presenters:
Brittany Popovski and Dominic Eusanio

Case Competition Team:
Brittany Popovski, Dominic Eusanio, Austin Reese, Jing Lu, and Yuting Xia

Faculty Advisor:
Professor Kathleen Nesper

Highlights
- Every team in the competition was assigned a faculty advisor. This was not only helpful when putting together our solution and presentation, but we now also have a contact within the School of Management. When in classes, many students never actually talk to their professors, but participating in Challenge allowed us to connect with a professor.
- We realized how well we could manage our time. Classes, studying for exams, working on projects, and preparing for the competition caused the two weeks to be very hectic. However, our team learned how to manage our time very well in order to get everything done successfully and on time.
- Since two seniors were on our team, we were able to learn more about accounting from their experiences that they shared with us. Therefore, we now have more insight into what is to come as an accounting major.
- Having around five days to prepare the actual presentation portion, we had little time to make our presentation perfect. However, after much practice together and getting comfortable as a group, our presentation in front of the judges was better than we could have ever predicted at the beginning of the competition.
- We were given the opportunity to have another professor give us tips on presentation style, which taught us skills that we have never learned in class. These will help us far beyond the reaches of this competition.
- After our presentation, the PwC recruiters and employees gave us valuable feedback on our presentation. This is very beneficial because they may be our future employers one day.
- We were able to find our strengths and weaknesses while working on a team. We were able to sort out tasks based on what we were good at.
- This competition has given us the confidence we needed to do more in order to stand out as sophomores. We are more confident in our public speaking abilities, research skills, and time management. Knowing we created a successful 12 minute presentation in two weeks gives us confidence that we can do it again successfully in our classes and outside the classroom as well.

Thoughts Before
- Why would any team want to have sophomores with limited accounting knowledge?
- I will never be able to remember a 12 minute presentation without flashcards.
- This will be a stressful two weeks but at least we will be ahead of most students our age!

Thoughts After
- You know more than you think when remembering a presentation. It is easier than we thought.
- We were able to use other skills besides accounting knowledge to help our team succeed.
- It was definitely stressful! However, the competition prepared us more than anything else has for the real world!