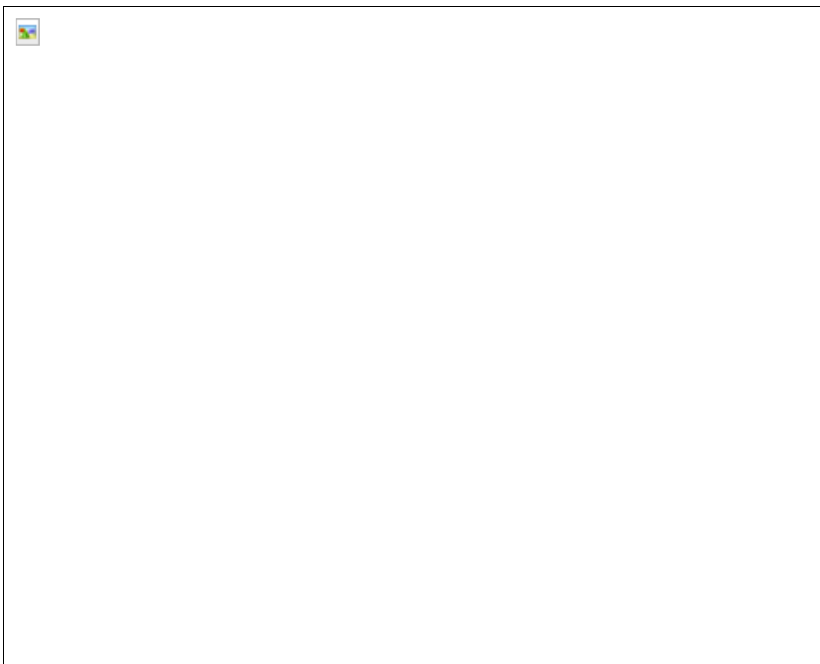


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### MB107 students examine how to increase Papa John's profits



For most of us, Papa John's Pizza is just another pizza place. Not true for the 130 students taking Skidmore's signature introductory business course, MB107, this fall. Not true for the 40 juniors and seniors acting as coaches for the 23 student teams whose assignment was to add \$15 million to Papa John's bottom line in 3-5 years. And not true for the 30 business executives—many of them Skidmore alumni and parents—who came to Saratoga's Holiday Inn Dec. 3 to evaluate the team presentations. For them, Papa John's, the third largest take-out and delivery pizza restaurant chain in the U.S., was at the top of mind, if not on the lunch menu.

And for the students—many of them first-years who had never seen an income statement—Papa John's had been on their minds since September when teams were picked and the case study handed out. Said one happy student from team No. 7, "Digging into a company, and in our case into the Australian market, in such depth, and looking at all the options, was a great learning experience."

The assignment was entirely in keeping with the 29-year tradition of MB107, Skidmore's cornerstone course in business organization and management. The challenge of conducting a comprehensive strategic analysis and developing a strategic action plan for big U.S. firms such as Amazon, American Express, and the Gap is an experience that bonds thousands of Skidmore alumni.

Over the course of 13 weeks, according to MB107 organizer, Professor Caroline D'Abate, business faculty had introduced the students to strategy, marketing, organizational behavior, corporate social responsibility, sustainability, accounting, and finance. They had engaged them in rigorous study of a variety of firms (Apple Inc., KIPP schools, McDonald's in China, Nintendo and the Wii, and LinkedIn, to name a few). And they had invited guest speakers to present and discuss franchising, public

speaking, and the teamwork process. And of course, the student teams had met many times with and without their coaches, especially in the week preceding the main event.

And now, in 25-minute presentations followed by questions from business executives, a semester's worth of work was on the line. Game on, as they say. Typically, presentations are divided into introductory remarks (the big picture), SWOT analyses, strategy, marketing, and financials.

In the end, the response from the executives was enthusiastically positive. A's were hard to come by, but no team dipped into the C's. Said executive Bud Morton to one team, "I thought [adding salad to the Papa John's offerings] was at the very least, a good idea, maybe even a great idea....In fact, you might want to call Papa John's and tell them to think about this."

The strategic plans—the ideas—were diverse and interesting. In addition to the healthy salad option, they ranged from entering the Australian and Brazilian markets, to aggressively moving into the college market (licensing kiosks in college stadiums, a joint venture with the NCAA, and partnering with schools to put Papa John's in dining halls), to acquisitions (Papa George's, Naked Pizza, even a sports bar chain in China).

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