

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



Contact: Julia Ann Easley
WLU Information Officer
(519) 884-1970 ext. 2070

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Franklin Ramsoomair
Third- and Fourth-Year Co-ordinator
(519) 884-1970 ext. 2673

Laurier's third-year business students to face stressful week

Waterloo, Ont. (March 5) — Industrial espionage is not taught or encouraged at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. But some business students may be wishing they could use it to their advantage right now.

Third-year honors business students are trying almost any means to discover the subject of a closely guarded case that will totally absorb their efforts for five days and count for 10 per cent of their final mark in each of four core courses.

The exercise is called Integrated Case Week. "The competition compels the students to integrate and apply all that they've learned in marketing, organizational behavior, operations decision-making, and finance courses," says Franklin Ramsoomair, third- and fourth-year business co-ordinator.

At 8:30 a.m. on Monday, March 23, when the case is released, the 186 students will begin what is probably the most stressful week in their university career. Grouped in teams of five or six, the students will work day and night to prepare, by 2 p.m. on the Thursday, their written recommendations concerning an actual problem faced by an existing business and, later, a 30-minute presentation.

Huddled over the case in the privacy of locked meeting rooms, students will struggle with group dynamics, time management, and stress. Many will live on pizza that week. Some will sleep; others won't. A few will consider quitting. And some will turn for help to the specially created team of 11 counsellors available throughout the week.

By 7 a.m. on the Friday, they and their recommendations must demonstrate spit and polish in a 30-minute presentation before a panel of judges, including a representative of the particular industry, faculty members, and selected fourth-year students who are veterans of the exercise. And at 1:15 p.m., the top five teams will make their presentation before a representative of the company that is the subject of the case, and two other industry executives.

"We've simulated the real pressures of the business world," says Ramsoomair. "They're faced with a real problem and must work together under realistic time constraints to come up with innovative but workable solutions. Then they have to sell others on their ideas.

"When it's over, the students breathe a sigh of relief, wipe their brow, and know they've achieved a real milestone in their business education," he adds.

Established about 14 years ago, Integrated Case Week is one of the ways Laurier bridges academe and the business world. Students have tackled cases involving companies such as General Motors of Canada Ltd., NCR Canada Ltd., ATS Inc. of Kitchener, and Hervé Pomerleau Inc. of Montreal.