

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Laurier students finish in top third of international case challenge *Winners of 1998 EDS Case Challenge defeat Laurier in semi-final round*

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Contact: Kenneth Harling
Professor, Laurier School of Business and Economics
(519) 884-0710 ext. 2531

or Michael Strickland
Media Relations Officer
(519) 884-0710 ext. 3070

WATERLOO – Four business students from Wilfrid Laurier University formed the only Canadian team to make it into the semi-finals of an international intercollegiate business case competition. The team from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, which won this year's EDS Case Challenge, knocked Laurier out of contention.

The 1998 case challenge organized by Electronic Data Systems drew 48 teams to Texas from as far away as Japan and New Zealand. During the competition, which ran from November 4 to 7, the teams were asked to solve an information technology challenge for a fictional international airline. Though this was Laurier's first experience with the competition, the team made it into the top third.

"I am very pleased with how the team did," said team coach Kenneth Harling. "We knew we would do well, but we also recognized that the competitors were impressive. Some universities have been competing in the challenge for years and have very finely tuned skills."

Four students in Honours Business Administration represented Laurier in the competition. The team was comprised of Leslie Berger, who's originally from Sarnia, Nancy Heffernan of Mount Forest, Reagan Ruslim of Toronto and Joe Thompson of Breslau.

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The team was asked to help an airline – which operated in 90 countries, was among the top 25 in the world and was the largest passenger airline in the Southern Hemisphere – develop a cost-effective way of improving information management. A year after a merger the company was less profitable than projected. One key problem involved the consolidation of data from a large number of administrative systems in areas such as finance, human resources and scheduling. With disparate systems in place, management lacked an overall understanding of the company with which to make strategic decisions.

The students were given 24-hours to review the case, interview 'airline officials' and examine the relevant documents they received after asking the 'right' questions. One day after receiving the case, the student presented their recommendations to EDS senior executives during the first round of the competition.

The Laurier team members enjoyed the challenge. "Training for, and then competing in, the case challenge was an invaluable experience," said Thompson. "It made me realize just how good an education I have received at Laurier."

Officials at the Laurier School of Business and Economics plan to enter another team next year.