

# NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier  
University



## **BBA students to develop marketing plan for Stratford Festival** *Festival executives to choose best proposal from 36 created over week-long marathon*

**For Immediate Release**

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WATERLOO – More than 200 business students from Wilfrid Laurier University will dedicate every waking hour over the next week to solving a marketing challenge for the Stratford Festival of Canada. The Festival is asking the third-year bachelor of business administration (BBA) students to devise a marketing strategy as part of the integrated case exercise (ICE) required by the Laurier School of Business and Economics.

All classes are cancelled during the one-week marathon competition that challenges students to solve a real-world business issue. The students must assess the strengths and weaknesses of an organization, and recommend a strategy for addressing a particular challenge. The current competition asks them to recommend ways to improve customer service and increase ticket sales for the theatre, located in Stratford, Ontario.

“The Stratford Festival offers students an example of a success story – not only through its premier productions but also through the professional way it markets the world-class organization,” says Gordon McDougall, the SBE professor who authored the case. “The challenge for students will be to continue the current success of the Festival and find innovative ways to make it better.”

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Stratford Festival marketing director Anita Gaffney is currently focusing on these issues. The 204 students, working in 36 teams of five to six members, will provide fresh perspectives by recommending strategies to:

- Maintain and grow the number of high-value patrons
- Develop a customer appreciation plan for the Festival's loyal patrons
- Move other customer segments up the value chain to increase sales
- Improve customer service with front-of-house staff and enhance the Stratford experience for patrons
- Create a more dynamic, user-friendly Web site to generate \$5 million in ticket sales within the next three years

Without classes to contend with, the ICE teams will devote the week to researching the case and preparing their responses. To ensure that no one group has any advantage over the others, all information for the challenge has been withheld until the case was made available at noon today.

On Monday, two members of each group attend a question-and-answer session with representatives from the Festival. The groups have until noon on Wednesday to submit a written report. The marks awarded the reports and associated presentations account for 10 per cent of the final mark in each of the students' four core courses.

On Thursday morning, each group presents its analysis and recommendations to one of six internal boards, which then selects the six groups who qualify for the final round. The written reports submitted by the six finalists are couriered to members of an external board while the groups prepare for final presentations.

On the morning of Friday, July 20, the six finalists present their analyses to the external board. The panel includes Gaffney as well as the Festival's director of finance and facilities, Darryl Huras, and its associate director of marketing, Rachel Hilton. The award for the best ICE response is presented on Friday afternoon.