

ARTS & VARIETY

CSP Marketing Program Takes On The West Coast

BY VICTORIA TURCIOS

I REMEMBER WALKING INTO Dr. Nancy Harrower's marketing research class last fall, without knowing anyone or what to expect. Saying I felt intimidated would be an understatement. To my surprise, I was the only graphic design major in the course, and the only junior. Little did I know that I'd end up being a part of the team that would travel to San Diego for a national competition.

The National Grocers Association puts together case studies for schools to apply to, compete, and experience marketing on a whole different level. This was the competition I was assigned for Dr. Harrower's class; we were split into teams and while mine worked on the NGA, the rest of the class took on a different case study. The approach to the class was different than any I had ever experienced. Nancy was not only our professor for this; one could have called her a boss or a mentor. In reality, she became our creative director as she helped us figure out the best approach to the problem we were given. The cool thing was that it made what we were doing feel real like this would most likely be the environment I'd work in if I decided to pursue a job at a marketing agency once I graduate. Soon our classes turned into meetings, research turned into real-life interviews, and revision rounds into presentations.

When I interviewed Nancy Harrower for this article, she explained how these competitions best prepare students for their industry, "In the real world, business people have to research and understand the environments and customer needs. The same is true for these competitions. Students research using both secondary and primary research methods, analyze findings, and prepare a full marketing/business solution to solve a problem." Ask me anything about millennials in the workforce, diversity executive positions, or about the grocery industry, and I may know the answer because of this competition. Thus, truly showing the benefits of why more professors and programs should have the chance to do the same at a collegiate level. Even Nancy agreed, "It is such an important environment for growth and learning that I wish more students could have that chance. Whenever a professor can show the real-world example of a course teaching, it adds knowledge and excitement for the students (and professors)!"

My teammates; Spencer Bergen, Caleb Troe, Hope Schiller, Jake Steckler, and myself didn't know what to expect when we arrived in California, but we knew we had put the work in for our case study. We were to help a Memphis based grocer find better ways to approach a diverse population of millennials to work for them. CSP was the only school that attended the competition that didn't have the resource of a food marketing program, yet we approached the case study with very similar strategies as the other 12 schools that attended thanks to all of our research. We got the chance to network with professionals in the industry, be a part of a mentorship program throughout the time spent at the NGA conference, and experience the West Coast in a different way.

Our team may not have won the competition but we walked away closer as a team, confident in the work we had done, and with Spencer Bergen and Caleb Troe tying for first place at the NGA's charity 5K. With this being Dr. Nancy Harrower's second year having a team for this specific competition I wanted to know what it's like for her having students that she teaches have these experiences. The professor said, "I have to say it feels great! I have the opportunity to guide and teach, and then see how students take those principles and make them their own. I work with students over a period of months, travel with them, and get to see them in action. I am so proud! You are the next generation of leaders. The world is in good hands." †

