



News release

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**Gateway instructor provides innovative way
to keep competition alive during COVID-19**

A canceled national student competition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has led a Gateway Technical College instructor to make a little lemonade out of those lemons and give students an opportunity to still compete and showcase their skills.

Along the way, the competition could provide business leaders some ideas for handling the impact the pandemic is having on their industry.

Gateway instructor Ed Grochowski teaches Entrepreneurship and Marketing and serves as a Gateway Technical College Collegiate DECA Chapter adviser as well as state director for Wisconsin Collegiate DECA. At this time, his students should have been preparing themselves for the national DECA competition on April 21 in Atlanta.

Instead, they find themselves staying at home.

"I felt bad that students were losing that ability to compete again this year, but as a small business owner myself, I knew that businesses were going to be struggling," said Grochowski.

DECA students compete against each other in real-world business-related career skills categories – so why not have the nation’s current situation and how it affects business be used as the foundation for a virtual competition, Ed thought. What better way to connect learning and real-world situations?

Grochowski quickly came up with an idea for a virtual challenge: A case study competition solving a COVID-19 related problem in each of the career competition areas. Students will submit their solutions through videos online and face two rounds of competition.

“This will highlight Gateway students’ ability to be problem-solvers and succeed in this new economic environment,” said Grochowski. “They will be able to take what they’ve learned to apply it to a real-life situation.”

Grochowski created case study scenarios for each competition area based on conversations he had with area business leaders.

“I went out to industry to ask them what they face, what are those actual, real-world situations you are handling now?” he said.

Grochowski set up the competition to include the 16 Wisconsin Collegiate DECA chapters and then reached out to administrators from the 12 Minnesota Collegiate DECA chapters and eight from Texas Collegiate DECA. Their groups and students will also be part of this competition.

“After the call, we all had the same opinion – our members have the ability and innovation to create solutions for these businesses,” said Grochowski.

Students will have the opportunity to pick one category to compete in – Marketing, Operations, Hospitality or Finance – and each case study will have a

problem to solve related to COVID-19. Grochowski said cash prizes, provided by the Ward Family Foundation, will be given to the winners in each category: \$1,000 for first place, \$750 for second place and \$500 for third place.

Friday, April 3, is the deadline for students to enter. Gateway has DECA students from Kenosha County, Racine County and Walworth County. Any Gateway DECA student is eligible to enter.

Gateway Technical College's mission is to deliver industry-focused education that is flexible, accessible and affordable for our diverse community. The college collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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