



The Bishop's NIBS team (from left to right): Cameron Albert, Maria Paula Gonzalez, Coach Bill Robson, Natasha Paikin, Alexander Lambert.

BISHOP'S MEANS BUSINESS

BY PHIL RICH '17

An annual competition that brings together the best and brightest undergraduate business students, the NIBS (Network of International Business Schools) Worldwide Case Competition is an event that is attended by students, faculty and staff from all corners of the world.

In its 22nd year, the NIBS competition continues to thrive, with 16 teams competing in the 2017 event. Bishop's was one of five Canadian teams participating in this year's competition, which was held from February 26th to March 3rd at the Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in Rauma, Finland.

This year's BU team – Alex Lambert (Saco, ME), Natasha Paikin (Burlington, ON), Cameron Albert (Aurora, ON), and

Maria Paula Gonzalez (Montreal, QC) – was joined by Laurentian, Memorial, Carleton, and Concordia – the school Bishop's would ultimately lose to in the semi-final round of the competition. Led by longtime coach and retired professor Bill Robson, as well as professor Robert Palmer, the Bishop's team qualified in first place for the tournament, but couldn't make it to the finals in the championship round.

Robson, his wife Lissa McRae, and Palmer, the current Williams' School of Business Chair, have been the driving forces behind BU's involvement in the competition. Robson is considered a legend of the competition, a veteran voice whom even the other schools' coaches seek out for advice.

Bishop's celebrated its initial first place finish in 1999 at home in Lennoxville, and has since won NIBS competitions in New Zealand, Norway, and Denmark. The school's most recent victory occurred in Leuven, Belgium, in 2013 when it defeated Memorial University in the final round. The business department hopes to return to the finals in the 2018 edition of the competition, which will be

held in Guatemala City.

For McRae, the New Zealand victory was the most memorable win. "I would say that the win at [Auckland University of Technology] was the most satisfying," she wrote in an e-mail exchange. "Following the final presentation, the judges, several of whom were top level managers with the company on which the case was written, congratulated our team and every student on our team was offered a job!"

Canadian universities have in fact dominated the championship rounds, ultimately bringing home many accolades and awards since the event's inception in 1996. Memorial and Bishop's share the record for having won the championship six times, while Carleton University has emerged as the winner for the past two years.

Robson attributes this to the Canadian approach to teaching business. "We're big on presentations," he told me on a sunny morning in his Bishop's office. "We place a big emphasis on case studies, and the European schools don't teach as much case in their undergraduate classes. They tend to focus on presentations at the graduate level."

The BU team's participation in this prestigious event was funded this year by donations from Bombardier Recreational Products (BRP) and alumni, a personal contribution by Bill Robson and the Williams School of Business. Donations such as these are crucial to the proper development of the NIBS program at Bishop's.

Preparing to take on the best business students from around the globe takes time, dedication, and money, and the organizers hope to be able to count on more and more of these for future competitions.

Interestingly, the NIBS competition has taken on a new light within the last year. With populism increasingly gaining traction in Europe and North America, and the concept of globalization under threat, international competitions such as these assume a new role in the international business community.

The competition is an exercise in competitive camaraderie; a chance for aspiring entrepreneurs, accountants, and investors to present new ideas in a competitive environment and form new relationships in the process. It inspires cooperation, ultimately promoting a collaborative and practical approach to solving the problems of the business world in an approachable setting.

It is also a chance for participants to form valuable connections with fellow business students, and create relationships with other schools from around the world.

"We pick kids who you know can compete at this level, and work as a team," explains Robson. "The competition allows us to maintain connections with other universities. This way we have easier access to exchanges for students and faculty [at the other participating universities]."

In the end, presenting in front of a panel of established professionals from all facets of the business world can be challenging. But the NIBS competition is a unique and rewarding experience, and is an opportunity that both Bishop's students and professors alike can take pride in.