

The case for care

Seniors rank top three in the nation for case study competition with caregiving campaign

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Features Editor

No matter how many long nights they spent hunched over in the Mac lab with cup after cup of Acorn coffee instead of relaxing with friends and "living up" their senior years, it was all worth it.

The national Public Relations Student Society of America named seniors Brigid McCauley, Julia McIlrevey, Kristen Tremoulis and Elizabeth VanDerwerker as one of the top three finalists in the Bateman National Case Study Competition.

Participants were given case studies in which they created and implemented a campaign on behalf of a national client. This year's client was National Family Caregivers Association's Family Caregiving [FC101], but past companies have included Habitat for Humanity and Ford Motor Company.

Among the 200 teams entered in the competition, Elon ranks with the University of

Georgia and California State at Fullerton, who claim the other two top spots.

"They used their own ideas, I did nothing, which is even better," said Dr. John Guiniven, associate professor of communications and the team's faculty adviser. "Their recognition is something that is both a compliment to them and our PRSSA chapter itself."

The client, created by research-based health care company Eisai Inc., aims to support family caregivers by acknowledging their role and providing available assistance.

The team created a Web site that included information on resources, events, Frequently Asked Questions, team members and a 20 minute podcast with testimonials from families who have caregivers and from the caregivers themselves.

"The Circle of Caregiving campaign aims to raise awareness, identify resources and show appreciation for the family caregivers of Alamance County" according to the team's Web site.



Photo submitted

After researching their audience, team members focused on raising awareness of caregivers and their challenges, increasing identification of caregivers in Alamance County and strengthen their support system and encouraging employers to support caregivers. A caregiver is a person who provides assistance to a person with limited mobility.

"The campaign is so effective and meaningful because people like me in the general public were oblivious to the challenges of this very special group of people," Tremoulis said.

Since the team felt their entire audience couldn't be actively reached by electronic means, they engaged the public by hosting a bingo event and support group, providing information tables in Burlington Square Mall, mailing Valentines directly to caregivers, and publishing articles in the "Rock

(Left) Seniors Brigid McCauley, Julia McIlrevey, Kristen Tremoulis and Elizabeth VanDerwerker were selected by Public Relations Student Society of America as the nation's top three for the Bateman National Case Study Competition for their Circle of Caregiving campaign

Creek Record."

The team worked from the end of October to March on the Bateman Competition, but they were only allowed to release the campaign to the public in February.

"We spent so many months planning our campaign without knowing what the end result would be," McCauley said. "Honorable mention was our goal, but we were blown away when we made top three."

The team was thrilled to hear the news of their recognition, but was worried they would have to choose between it and graduation. The team will pitch their campaign to FC101 on May 18 in New Jersey, the day before graduation.

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