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MBI Scholars Cap 2007-2008 with SIFE National Finalist Honors

Macklin Business Institute (MBI) Scholar Stefanie Siegmund is originally from Germany. And although it is difficult to detect, English is the Montgomery College sophomore's second language, so delivering a presentation at the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) national competition, in front of hundreds of peers and almost 60 judges, caused her to be slightly intimidated.

"And they put microphones on us!" she said.

Despite the technical "surprises", Siegmund and her five MBI SIFE teammates, Ayesha Quadeer, Joyce Krintz, Kumbirai Muhari, Tabby Enam and Arjun Achreja excelled in their presentations, becoming the most successful MBI team ever. The group made it to the final round of the recent SIFE USA National Exposition in Chicago, after earning the right to compete by being named a regional champion in Philadelphia earlier this year.

The SIFE competitions involve teams of students producing a written annual report and delivering live audio-visual presentations that showcase their community outreach projects. Teams report the results of their projects to panels of business leaders and are evaluated on how successful they were at creating economic opportunity for others. The MBI team's projects included a Hispanic Entrepreneur Workshop, World Bank seminar and an anti-piracy video public service announcement.

The competition is organized around separate two and four-year divisions, with teams in each division divided among a series of individual opening round leagues. From the opening round, eight two-year division teams advanced to a final round and 20 four-year division teams moved forward to the semifinal round, with four of them winning a spot in the final round of competition.

According to MBI director Stephen Lang, the method of naming winners was wrought with drama



Congratulations to the 2007-2008 Macklin Business Institute Graduates

Photo of the MBI students and faculty L-R: Dmitriy Gulik, Lina Guerrero, Ayesha Quadeer, Steffi Siegmund, Tabby Enam, Kumbi Mahari, Mariya Zamaray, Joyce Krintz, Steven Church, Nick Sergon, Jeremy Ben-Zev, Ivan Salas-Orono, Brian Cook, Arjun Achreja, Faculty Advisor Prof. Brian Baick, MBI Director Steve Lang.

after the opening round of presentations. In front of thousands of their peers at the McCormack Place Convention Center in downtown Chicago, the MBI team was called to the stage with three other teams. The announcements were made in reverse order and two schools were called as runners-up, which meant that the MBI team was a finalist in the next day's competition.

"As they started to announce the teams, our students – and I – were nervous," Lang said. "And when the students found out [they were finalists], they were a bit in shock."

A spot in the finals meant even more preparation and a second presentation. The team got to work early the next morning, making minor changes to their presentations and honing their overall presentation skills.

"Honestly, I couldn't wait to present once we got to the finals," SIFE team member Tabby Enam said. "With the constant support of [Steve Lang] and the Scholars, I conquered my fear of public speaking and had a lot of fun presenting."

The national exposition turned out to be bittersweet for the MBI contingent. Although the goal of winning nationals was not fulfilled, being named a finalist in the two-year Division Final League is the furthest that a MBI team has ever gone in a SIFE competition. Blue Ridge Community college, the defending national champion and seeded in the same division as the MBI team, won for the second consecutive year.

"In Chicago, we presented twice, and the second time was so intimidating," said Siegmund, who graduated from Montgomery College on May 16 and is looking forward to attending the University of Maryland. "We didn't do as well as the [previous presentations] so that was a bit of a downer. But to think about it now, I am proud to be among the best eight, two-year colleges in the country for SIFE."

In addition to the SIFE honors, another team of MBI Scholars became the first ever two-year college to advance to the finals of the Loyola Marymount National Intercollegiate Business Ethics Competition, held this past April in Los Angeles.

Aside from the honors and awards the 2007-2008 MBI class has achieved, Lang is above-all proud of all the vast diversity the group represents. The SIFE presenters, included students from Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Germany.

"The MBI team was very international and I expect to work with people from many different nations in the future," Siegmund said. "It helped me to understand different religions as well as cultures. I am very glad to have met all these wonderful people."