

# Competition challenges future sales force

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The room was filled with business suits and polished sales pitches, not a typical Saturday scene on a college campus. But these weren't typical students at the fourth annual National Sales Challenge at the Russ Berrie Institute for Professional Sales at William Paterson University.

Forty-nine students representing 25 colleges and universities from 18 states and Scotland competed in the three-day event.

David Goodmark of Oakland, a senior representing The College of New Jersey, was there with a focused eye on the future.

## Fast facts

*The Russ Berrie Institute for Professional Sales:*

\* Established at William Paterson University by a \$6.2 million endowment in 2002 from late Englewood resident and toy magnate Russell Berrie

\* Opened in 2003

\* The only school in the country with a bachelor of science in professional sales

\* 60 students at WPU have a major in professional sales

\* About 150 students in various majors take courses at RBI each semester

\* Job placement rate of 80 percent for graduating seniors in the major

*Source: WPU*

"The opportunity this opens with the companies that are here, it's definitely an advantage [over other graduating seniors] to be here," said Goodmark. "You definitely want to get the word around to the companies that 'I'm really interested.' "

The aspiring salespeople were judged on a 15-minute role-playing sales call and a speed-selling competition, which gave students two minutes to sell themselves to a string of corporate executives and recruiters. The judges were from the 11 companies that sponsor the Wayne event.

William Paterson senior Alice Heinrich from Vernon was one of four role-playing finalists. But Megan Anderson of North Carolina's Elon University was the overall champion, winning both the role-play and speed-sell competitions. She and Charles Costa won the team competition for Elon.

Costa, from Hammonton, N.J., only learned about the sales challenge in September. "Then," he said, "it became a goal to win."

But the competition was only part of the weekend. Students also interviewed with sponsor companies.

"All of the kids will walk out of here with job offers," said Tim Werkley, director of the National Sales Challenge and a visiting professor at the Russ Berrie Institute.

While the competitors acted more like professionals than students, the idealistic collegiate attitude still surfaced.

"I just want to be able to believe in what I'm selling," Goodmark said. "And I want to feel like I can offer a benefit to the business."

Norm Levinsohn, lead recruiter for Roseland-based ADP, was a judge, but he also worked the room for his company's future sales force. For him, interviewing students at this event is different than talking to the average college seniors.

"It's night and day," said Levinsohn, whose human resource and payroll firm has an office in Clifton. "You really see the difference in the preparation. It's about focus. They really understand what they want to do."

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