



Student Case Study Competition

OVERVIEW AND RULE HANDBOOK

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ABOUT NGA AND NGAF

Over the course of four decades, the National Grocers Association (NGA) has represented independent community grocers located in every congressional district across the country and the wholesalers that service them. Also represented are affiliated associations, manufacturers and service suppliers as well as other entrepreneurial companies that support NGA's mission and philosophy. NGA works to ensure ongoing economic advancement and prosperity for America's independent community and remains the only trade association exclusively focused on representing the independent sector of the food industry.

The NGA Foundation (NGAF) is the 501(c)(3) non-profit arm of the National Grocers Association, which aims to support the future of the independent grocer through initiatives to develop more effective recruiting programs, enhance retention efforts and bolster professional and leadership development opportunities for employees. Additionally, NGAF offers technical assistance to retailers on government programs.

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

Since it began in 2004, the NGAF Student Case Study Competition has strived to further the professional development of collegiate students pursuing degrees in food and retail programs, expose students to the independent grocery industry, and provide student teams the opportunity to creatively address real-world issues impacting the industry.

The competition occurs every year at the NGA Show. The program allows students to interact with independent grocers and augment their education with real-life experience. Participants advance through multiple rounds based on scores awarded by a judging panel of food industry professionals. The winning team receives a cash prize for both the team and their school.

Each year's topic features an NGA retail member company that offers real-world contextual data to be applied to the case study. This retailer volunteers time to gather relevant information to frame the topic for all student teams. The retailer also participates in the judging of the competition as they are able.

The NGA Foundation works in conjunction with the Food Industry University Coalition to connect with enrolled students, choose the topic, distribute the topic material and coordinate travel logistics to the NGA Show. This activity, and many other experiences available at the NGA Show, provide students time, space and context to connect with retailers, wholesalers and industry suppliers regarding career path opportunities.

STUDENT CASE STUDY COMPETITION HALL OF FAME

Year	Topic	Featured Retailer	Winning School
2013	Growing Market Share in a Mature Industry and Increasingly Competitive Environment	Chief Supermarkets	Saint Joseph's University
2014	Address the Challenges and Opportunities "Local" offers Independent Grocers	Community Markets	Arizona State University
2015	What will be the next generation of retail circulars?	Wakefern	Western Michigan University
2016	What is a successful e-commerce model of a 4-store independent?	Davis Food & Drug	Saint Joseph's University
2017	How to attract millennial consumers	Harps Food Stores (David Ganoug & Frank Ray)	Saint Joseph's University & Western Michigan University
2018	Inspiring healthy living among employees and shoppers	Coborn's (Emily Coborn and Dennis Host)	Saint Joseph's University
2019	Hiring and Retaining Millennials or Multicultural Associates	Stepherson's SuperLo (Ashley Harris)	Saint Joseph's University
2020	Communicating SNAP POS Incentives	Buehler's	Western Michigan University
2021	COVID-19 and how independents can use local to compete	Karns Foods (Andrea Karns)	Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
2022	Omnichannel Solutions	Woodman's Food Markets	Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
2023	Recruitment & Retention	Dierbergs	Auburn
2024	Maintaining Competitive Edge	Niemanns	Cornell

OBJECTIVE



Program Benefits

ELIGIBILITY

Any four-year institution, university, academic institution or affiliate organization that currently provides teaching or research focused on the food industry may assemble a team for competition. School teams may have no more than four undergraduate students present the solution at the competition. Other students may assist with the research or development phases.

Schools will submit their intent to compete in January prior to the competition. Along with the Intent to Compete form (Section 6), schools must also submit a current list of program faculty and board members. This will be used to determine potential conflict of interest when filling the judge rosters.

NGAF considers funding, room availability and staff capacity when admitting school teams into the competition schedule.

School teams and faculty advisors will be required to communicate with NGAF staff leading up to the show to confirm student team registration information. School teams must submit their final presentation slide deck in a PDF format to NGAF staff approximately two weeks before the show date. From this point on, no changes may be made to the final presentation slide decks. Exceptions will include changes in team member names due to illness, travel complications, etc.

Section 2: The Competition

BEFORE THE ONSITE COMPETITION

Each year, the case study topic is designed with the input of NGA members, NGA staff and FIUC faculty members. To ground the case in real-life context, a retail member partner is selected. Each year, the topic and retail background information are released during a webinar in late fall, providing an opportunity for students and faculty advisors to gather additional information.

Faculty advisors support their team from case study announcement up until the NGA Show (typically late February each year) with research process, market analysis, solution testing and final presentation compilations. Student teams are not allowed to visit the featured retailer in person to gather information to be used in their solution, nor may they contact the retailer directly. If questions arise, contact NGAF, which will facilitate communication with the retailer. Questions asked of the retailer are only shared with the requesting team. Answers are not provided to all competing schools.

About two weeks prior to the NGA Show, student teams will submit their final presentation slide deck to NGAF staff. Student teams may also prepare an 1-2 page executive summary of their findings if they choose. These are to be submitted along with the slide decks on the deadline shared.

After receipt of final presentation slide decks, NGAF staff will arrange schools into the competition schedule using a random generator. This schedule will be shared with all school teams one week prior to the NGA Show. The following cycle summarizing the timing of each milestone in the cycle. For specific deadlines and dates, visit <https://www.nationalgrocers.org/foundation/student-case-study-competition/>

Annual Competition Cycle

The following cycle summarizing the timing of each milestone in the cycle. For specific deadlines and dates, visit <https://www.nationalgrocers.org/foundation/student-case-study-competition/>

Launch Webinar	November
School Intent to Compete form	January
Final Slide decks and Executive Summary (optional) in PDF format	about 2 weeks prior to NGA Show
Competition schedule shared	About 1 week prior to NGA Show
Competition commences at the NGA Show	NGA Show

COMPETITION FORMAT

The student case study competition will take place onsite at the NGA Show.

Each team will each have 12 minutes for an oral presentation using a slide deck as visual aid. Judges will then have approximately eight minutes to pose clarifying questions to the students. The room monitor is the official timekeeper and will flag a one-minute warning at the end of both the presentation time frame and the judges question segment.

Slide decks will be submitted and presented in a PDF format. Animations, video clips and audio clips are not allowed. This is intended to limit technical difficulties onsite. Any other printed materials may not be given to judges. A laptop, projector and projector screen will all be made available to student teams. The room will be set up auditorium style with a judges' table near the presenting team. Students may have the opportunity to view the room layout at their onsite check-in time. However, a full onsite rehearsal will likely not be possible due to shared room use at the NGA Show.

The final slide deck PDFs will be loaded on the presentation computers in each competition room by NGAF staff. It is advisable for student team members and/or faculty advisors to travel with a backup file saved to a flash drive.

NGA Show attendees are invited and encouraged to listen to the presentations. However, individuals that are affiliated with a competing university team, including faculty, advisors, board members, non-competing students, etc., will not be allowed to listen to presentations in Round 1. Schools that have been eliminated are encouraged to watch consecutive rounds to learn from other teams' approaches and solutions. Schools may record their own presentation if desired. However, no school will be allowed to record another school's presentation. The intent of this is to ensure that information from other presentations is not shared with schools causing changes or additions to prepared presentations.

Faculty, board members or other individuals affiliated with the presenting team are not allowed to coach the presenting student team during the presentation or question time.

Students will be judged by a panel of at least four judges who represent the industry's diverse perspectives. NGAF staff will provide training, orientation and a scoring rubric to all competition judges. An sample scoring rubric is included in Section 5.

SCHEDULE

Once the final PDF slide deck is submitted to NGAF staff (approximately two weeks before the NGA Show), schools will be randomly assigned a room and presentation time. After the all schools have presented in each round of competition, judges will remain for closed door deliberation. Here they will be encouraged to review presentations and scoring rubrics as a panel and build a consensus on scoring and feedback statements.

A sample schedule is included below. Start and end times may shift based on the overall NGA Show schedule, but the basic model will be followed to allow ample time for student preparation, judge orientation, etc.

SCORING AND ROUND ADVANCEMENT

A scoring rubric will be provided to the judges in their training and onsite (see Section 6). Judges are instructed to judge against the rubric, which includes:

CONTENT: How well the teams describe the problem, their strategy and tactics for response, realistic use of budget and resources needed for solution, and overall feasibility of solution.

AGILITY: Professionalism, teamwork and logic used in replying to questions.

PRESENTATION: Professionalism of materials and speech of the team as well as confidence of team in the presentation and solution.

Teams can receive up to 60 points. Scores from each judge will be averaged to reach a final score.

Teams are not judged based on their dress. Students should dress as professionally as they are financially able to; coordination of team attire is not required.

At the end of each round, scoring rubrics will be audited to ensure scoring completeness. The judging panel will then be asked to discuss the presentations they observed and provide feedback for each team. Lastly, each judge will assign a final rank to each team that presented in the room. These completed scoring rubrics, feedback statements and room rankings will be submitted to the scoring auditor. NGAF staff will distribute scores and panel feedback comments to each school team within four weeks of the competition completion.

Leading teams from each competition room will advance to the next rounds of competition.

NGAF prioritizes operating a case study that maximizes the student's experience, elevates the program benefits and promotes fairness among all competition teams. The following officials play key roles in achieving this goal.

Section 3: Competition Officials

COORDINATOR

The coordinator – an NGA staff member – serves as the main point of contact for all case study-related matters. They coordinate the drafting and approval process of the case study topic, recruit and manage the relationship with the selected feature retailer, communicate with all student teams and faculty advisors, facilitate the judge training and orientation process, secure sponsorships to support the execution of the case study and student events at the NGA show. The coordinator also manages events onsite at the NGA Show.

ROOM MONITOR

On the day of competition, the room monitor oversees the logistics and flow of the competition within one competition room. There is one for each room used for the competition. They welcome the judges, review expectations and review the schedule. They welcome student teams as they arrive and review the rules for student teams and audience members. They also are the timekeeper, giving a one-minute warning to student teams and judges. They are the intermediary between tech support if any technology issues should arise.

JUDGES

The judges are selected to represent a diverse industry perspective. They are current or retired professionals working in NGA member companies such as retailers, wholesalers, industry suppliers and servicers. Ahead of the competition, judges will be evaluated for conflicts of interest and trained. School teams must submit a complete list of their program's faculty and board members to NGAF staff to assist in this process.

At least four judges will be recruited and assigned to each panel, with alternates available for last minute scheduling conflicts. If fewer than four judges are able to serve on a panel, the scores of the remaining judges will be averaged.

SCORING AUDITOR

The scoring auditor will review all scoring rubrics to check for completeness. They will tally and calculate score averages and determine which teams will advance to consecutive rounds. They will make the scoring rubrics and judge panel feedback available to the coordinator so that they can be shared with school teams four weeks after the close of the competition.

Section 4: Competition Prizes and Stipends

Since 2004, a funding endowment from the Asparagus Club has allowed for cash prize money to be awarded to the winning school and its team members. This prize will continue to be given as funding allows. Currently, cash prizes are \$4,000 to the winning school and \$1,000 to each winning team member.

As funding allows, travel stipends are provided to competing teams to offset the costs of transportation, lodging and incidentals. Currently, this amount is \$2,000 per team. Schools are allowed to bring more students than the four competing but travel costs are calculated only for competing team members. Preference for stipends will be given to active Food Industry University Coalition members. Faculty advisors and school teams will be responsible for all travel arrangements. It is encouraged to leverage the show hotel blocks, paying attention to expiration dates for best rates. Stipends require school W-9s and mailing addresses; stipends will be mailed within four weeks after close of the competition.

NGA Show registration will be compensated for all traveling students and up to two faculty advisors per school team.

Intent to Complete Form



The NGAF Student Case Study Competition strives to further the professional development of collegiate students pursuing degrees in food and retail programs and provides student teams the opportunity to creatively address a real-world issue currently impacting the industry. The competition, hosted by the NGA Foundation and generously funded by the Asparagus Club, awards up to \$4,000 each to the winning team of students and their university.

This opportunity provides students with the experience and resources to help them build a career in the independent grocery industry.

For more information about the NGA Foundation and its resources for students, **visit our website ngafoundation.org**

CASE TOPIC & SCENARIO:

A document outlining the competition topic scenario, and retailer background information will be provided to all interested schools. Additionally, the retail partner will provide additional context via a webinar. This webinar will be recorded, and a summary follow up document will be provided to interested schools.

Students and faculty are not allowed to contact the retail partner, their suppliers, customers, or tour the company's stores as part of the preparation process.

COMPETITION OVERVIEW:

A comprehensive overview and rules for the case study competition are documented in the *NGAF Student Case Study Competition Overview* and Rule Handbook. Some of these are summarized below:

- Three rounds of competition will be scheduled at the NGA Show.
- Each student team will have 12 minutes to make their presentation to the judges. The panel of judges will then have 8 minutes to pose clarifying and contingency questions to the student teams.
- Presentation slide decks are required. These must be finalized and submitted to NGAF staff in PDF format approximately two weeks before the NGA Show.
- Students teams will consist of no more than four (4) undergraduate students.
- NGA Show attendees are invited and encouraged to listen to the presentations.
- Individuals affiliated with a university team (students, faculty, school board members, etc.) will only be allowed to listen to other team's presentations in the second and third rounds of competition.
- Presentations should not rely on internet access as it may not be unavailable in presentation rooms

JUDGING PANELS

- Judges are volunteers and will be recruited from NGA Show attendees. Each panel will include representatives of retailer, wholesaler, supplier and service provider companies to represent diverse perspectives of the industry.
- Training, orientation, case study background information and a scoring rubric will be provided by the NGA Foundation to all judges.
- Conflicts of interest will be evaluated by the NGA Foundation when filling the judge panels. To do this, faculty advisors of competing teams must send a complete list of program faculty and board members to the NGA Foundation.

PRESENTATION SUBMISSION:

Final presentations must be sent to NGA Foundation staff via email (nga-foundation@nationalgrocers.org) by the specified deadline in a PDF format. After this submission, no alterations may be made to the slide deck. Student teams should travel with a back up electronic file of their presentation. A 1-2 written executive summary may also be submitted. This is optional, but allows for greater promotion of the event and student teams.

TRAVEL STIPEND:

Schools may be eligible to receive a stipend to offset travel costs of attending the NGA Show. W9 forms, account information, and mailing addresses must be provided to NGA Foundation staff to process these stipends. These will be sent out after completion of the competition.

TRAVEL INFORMATION:

- University attendees are responsible for making their own travel arrangements and booking hotels to The NGA Show. Hotel information and booking can be found at: <https://www.thengashow.com/event-info/hotel-travel>.
- Student teams and up to two (2) participating faculty will receive complimentary registration to the NGA Show. Registration information will be collected by NGAF staff for each faculty member and student attending the show.

For questions about the Student Case Study Competition or the Food Industry University Coalition, contact: NGA Foundation staff at nga-foundation@nationalgrocers.org.

SCHOOL INTENT TO COMPETE FORM Deadline to return form: January 6, 2025.

Information below should be completed by the faculty member traveling to the NGA Show.

- I have reviewed the competition format, rules and additional information, and attest that my University and student team will follow to the best of our ability.
- I understand that by participating in the student case study competition we are being given access to confidential retailer information. I agree to use this information only in conjunction with preparing for the competition and will not share with outside entities.
- I will include a complete list of current program faculty and board members to NGA Foundation Staff in order to evaluate for conflicts of interest on the judging panels.

First and Last Name _____ Title _____
 University _____ Street Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Mobile phone _____ Email _____
 Signature _____ Date _____



STUDENT CASE STUDY COMPETITION

Presentations are to be developed based on information provided in the case study scenario and retailer background information. Circle the score next to each criteria, scoring the presentation and Q&A response, with a score of 1-5.

PRESENTATION INFORMATION

University Name: _____ Judge Name: _____
 Presentation Date: _____ Presentation Round: _____

SCORING SCALE Circle one score from 1-5

A. CONTENT

Description of Problem: How well did the student team adhere to the Case Study Scenario?	1	2	3	4	5
Strategic Overview: How well did the student team develop a strategic solution?	1	2	3	4	5
Tactical Solutions: How well did the student team develop tactics to support the strategies?	1	2	3	4	5
Return on Investment: Did the students develop a solution that realistically aligns to a ROI?	1	2	3	4	5
Resources Needed: Did the students identify the resources needed to support their tactics?	1	2	3	4	5
Feasibility: Is the solution realistic and achievable?	1	2	3	4	5

B. AGILITY

Quick Thinking: Did the students respond professionally even with unexpected questions?	1	2	3	4	5
Response Probability: Did the students respond to questions in a factual and logical manner?	1	2	3	4	5
Working as a Team: Did the teams support each other during the presentation and Q&A session?	1	2	3	4	5

C. PRESENTATION

Professional Format: Was the slide deck presentation clear, visually interesting and professional?	1	2	3	4	5
Verbal Presentation: Did the verbal presentation align with the slide deck?	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence/Poise: Did the students present themselves with confidence throughout the session?	1	2	3	4	5

TOTAL POINTS BY COLUMN

5 Points deducted for exceeding 12-minute time allocation

GRAND TOTAL



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