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**Real problems. Real solutions: Metro State's innovative management course**

May 2, 2007

"How many students does it take to change a light bulb?" Adjunct Professor Howard Flomberg teases as a group of his Management Decision Analysis students are intent on getting a laptop to work through the overhead projector.

"Are they Metro students?" someone calls back.

This is not an example of the problems Flomberg's class usually solves, but it is representative of the camaraderie the students feel after a semester of intensive problem solving and team building. Flomberg's course is all about innovation through application. "I'm giving them a chance to take all this theory they've had for four years and use it in a real-life situation," Flomberg says. "They are performing at a graduate level. I'm freeing them to think, to go out there and look at how things are done and find better ways to do them."

The projector engages. Students sit down with sighs of relief as the final presentations begin. Paul Cesare, Metro State's assistant director of admissions, is here to learn the students' solutions to help him with the student recruitment process. Also present is Metro State alumna Kathy Ryan-Morgan ('04, business management), director of the Division of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences at National Jewish Hospital and Medical Research Center. She, too, posed a problem for Flomberg's students to solve.

Kevin Cagney narrates a slide show delving into the problem of increasing enrollment by "better understanding why students attend Metro versus other colleges." Armed with statistics gleaned from a survey conducted with palm pilots at the February Open House, Cagney spells out the results: 67 percent of those surveyed choose on the basis of academic offerings with "location, location, location" as their second priority. Value was third, "We are cheap yet we still have the same quality of other colleges," Cagney says.

One recruitment method is proposed: marketing internships that include surveys linked with mini recruitment fairs at local high schools. The internships "give us a good learning experience outside the computer lab," and "students get to see what a Metro student is like."

The room breaks into applause. Cesare speaks up from the middle of the room.

"This is one of the best presentations I've ever seen...The student-to-student relationship is the most effective way to recruit students. If you made this presentation to our board," Cesare smiles, "they would not only applaud you; they'd hire you."

The next group's well-illustrated presentation glides through

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defining then solving a scheduling backlog at National Jewish. Nicole Hosford adds commentary and answers questions.

At the end of the presentation, National Jewish's Ryan-Morgan echoes Cesare's pleased reception of the students' solutions. "You guys did a great job because that's very close to what's actually going to happen," she says.

Flomberg smiles proudly. "This is totally them. I just pointed them at you and let them go."

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