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Seniors Take Sweet Last Step Towards Graduation After Finishing Halo Top Campaign

By: Ambar Mercedes

Sweaty palmed Quinnipiac University advertising seniors handed over their last undergraduate assignment right before their senior capstone presentations; the final step before graduation.

The April 30 event, held in the Communications and Engineering Building on the Mount Carmel Campus in Hamden, Connecticut, featured five groups presenting advertising campaign projects for their client, Halo Top, an ice cream company.

The event started with remarks from Professor Scott DeFrancesco introducing the project scope as well as the panel of judges. The panel judges included: Scott DeFrancesco and Mary Dunn, advertising professors; Peggy Bloomer, interactive digital design professor; Victoria Reed, recent advertising professor hire; and a representative from the Quinnipiac Integrated Marketing Communications Department.

Before the event started, student murmured rehearsed lines or reminded other students to breathe. The room filled with sweaty palms and recently ironed oxfords added to the palpably anxious room.

“It’s hard to believe that my education comes down to this final project,” said Caitlin Cryan, 22-year old advertising major from Millbury, Massachusetts. “We’ve got some really great ideas. I hope it comes across how much my group has been working to pull this off. I’m praying it does.”

The goal of the project was to organize, plan and design a 6-month media campaign for Halo Top within a 45-page book. Each project had to include detailed research including audience research, market analysis and creative implementation.

“Each year the client changes,” said DeFrancesco. “This year’s client Halo Top came from a job posting I saw on their website. They wanted recent student work submitted along with a traditional resume. The point of the final campaign book is for students to have something to show off in their job search.”

Five printed campaign books spread out on the judge’s table at the back of the room. Although they had the same client, each brightly colored book differed from the next in size, shape and style. The differences in every projects reflected the differences in every group dynamic.

“Officially, we’ve been working on the project all semester,” said Stella Vlastakis, 20-year-old senior advertising student from Staten Island, New York. “However, it’s really been within the last month that we actually did a majority of the work. So yeah, it’s accurate to say it’s been a semester worth of work. We’ve pulled a lot of all nighters to be ready today.”

Victoria Amendolara, Abigail Guglietta, Emily Wong and Caitlyn Cryan were the first to present their project. Their main theme: What can you do in 10 minutes while your Halo Top ice cream thaws? It included ideas for television ad spots, a full social media campaign and advertising events.

“Group projects can be really hot or cold, said Emily Wong, 22-year-old advertising major from Ridge, New Jersey. “At this point, we have been all in each other’s classes so we know how the other one works. I got in with an amazing group. We’ve been steadily working on the project throughout the semester. I wasn’t in one of the groups that had to finish the whole project in less than a month.”

After every idea, the judges feverously wrote down notes chronicling what they thought about it. Between every jotted down thought, the judges looked up sometimes giving reassuring faces while at other times giving blank stares to the presenting group.

“[The judges] were definitely honest. They had both praise and criticism for each group,” said Abbie Guglietta, 20-year-old advertising major from Billerica, Massachusetts. “They made us stop and think about some of our tactical decisions for the project. They suggested we should have included an older target since Halo Top is moving in that direction with their current campaign.”

Students frequently shifted in their chairs during the two-and-one-half-hour-long presentation period as they waited for their group to present. Midway through the session there was a viable difference between those who have presented and those who had not. The anticipation and anxiety showed on their faces. Many thought the project was worth all the effort.

“I think it was pretty accurate to what an agency would be doing,” said Ryan Muscato, 22-year-old advertising major from Fairfield, Connecticut. “I think there’s only so much the school can do to make it realistic, but we had a ton of freedom with the project and class as a whole so that

made it feel pretty realistic. I think in the real world we would have less time though.”