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# MC Students Travel to Philadelphia to Compete in "Free Enterprise" Competition

Macklin Business Institute (MBI) scholars, teaming with fellow Montgomery College students, traveled to Philadelphia this week to compete in the annual Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) business competition. The SIFE competition offers college students an opportunity to develop leadership, teamwork, and communication skills through learning, practicing and teaching the principles of free enterprise.

This is the first year the SIFE team includes freshmen students and non-MBI students. And the changes don't stop there. The competition has added environmental sustainability making it a total of seven different criteria the students will cover in their presentation. The team is made up of six presenters who, along with environmental stability, will be judged on market economics, success skills, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, business ethics and program sustainability.

"The SIFE competition is a compilation of the things [the students] have been involved in all year, making up the seven criteria," said Stephen Lang, director of the Macklin Business Institute. "They held a global trade workshop, the MBI Café, financial literacy workshop for high school students [and more] ... these are all part of the final 24-minute presentation that fit into the judging criterion."

Following the presentation, the judges, often

some of the most successful civic and business leaders in the country, get five minutes

## SIFE Team History at MC

Montgomery College first entered SIFE in 2001. Historically, all SIFE team members were part of the Macklin Business Institute (MBI) program. This year, for the first time ever, the College's SIFE team includes freshmen students and non-MBI students.

**Awards:**

- Rookie of the Year: 2001
- Regional Champs: 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008
- National Semi-Finalist: 2003
- National Finalist: 2008

to question each team. Lang stresses to the presenters that being conversational when presenting not only exhibits an aura of comfort, but it shows the judges that the presenters know their material.

"I know I will be pretty calm, and that's the most important thing," said presenter Sylwia Szczepanek, co-president of the 2008-2009 SIFE Leadership Committee. "When there are hundreds of people in the audience including judges, the worst thing is to start

thinking we're not prepared."

Shahin Shahrivar, co-president of the Leadership Committee, is confident in his team's preparation and overall knowledge of their presentation.

"I think we have a really good team and I think we'll do very well," said Shahrivar, also a presenter. "We have a lot of great projects and I think that we have a genuine interest in what we are presenting. And that's such an important part to looking natural while delivering your presentation."

Shahrivar adds that while the 2008-09 SIFE team feels a small amount of pressure to live up to the past success of Montgomery College SIFE teams, including national finalist honors a year ago, this team can use the MBI program's experience to its advantage.

"[The MBI program] has definitely represented Montgomery College well in the last couple of years," said presenter Josh Carroll. "So we'd like to bring home another regional championship."

Crystal Quinones feels the opportunity to be one of the first freshmen to present in a SIFE



**Students from the Macklin Business Institute boarded a bus bound for the SIFE competition in Philadelphia.**

competition will only help her in the future.

"I'm looking forward to seeing how the competition works, especially being a freshman," she said. "We'll be able to see what it's like and have a better understanding of what to expect next year."

"We all just support each other," presenter Ksenia Prokunina said of the overall team-building that develops while preparing. "If anybody needs help, we band together and help each other out."

The Philadelphia trip will include more than just the SIFE competition as the students will have the opportunity to take in some of the city's rich history.

"I'm excited about the competition and this will be my first time to Philadelphia," said Walter Pineda, one of the six presenters. "To be able to experience this with my fellow MBI students, nothing can be better."