

Students Make Finals in NookStudy Contest

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newwave@tulane.edu

When Barnes & Noble opened a nationwide marketing competition focused on NookStudy, its new digital textbook reading software, a team of Tulane marketing students stepped up to the challenge. They developed a set of tactics that earned them one of three prestigious finalist slots and afforded them the chance to present their plan to Barnes & Noble headquarters in New York.



The Tulane Bookstore promotes the new NookStudy digital textbook reader. A team of Tulane business students developed a marketing plan for NookStudy, becoming finalists in a national contest. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The team was among several in a class given at the [A. B. Freeman School of Business](#) in which MBA students are required to act as volunteer marketing consultants for a range of clients, developing targeted marketing plans in the context of a semester-long project.

In cooperation with the clients, the students synthesize market research, field research and a dash of creativity to come up with innovative and customized plans for their clients.

“We started by interviewing professors and students to understand the existing perceptions, needs and wants in the academic community for this software,” explains Tom Connor, a member of the Nook team. Others on the student team that traveled to New York in late April to make its presentation were John Padavan, Will Marshall, Bill Laird and Dare Mangus-Lawson.

“We included around 20 individual recommendations [in our proposal],” says Connor. “The big idea was to change B&N's marketing from a rational base to an emotional one ... using scholarships and giveaways, cause marketing, on-campus events and even the creation of useful mobile apps.”

“Marketing planning begins with gaining a deep understanding of a client's business,” says Kim Davis, the adjunct lecturer who teaches the marketing course. “It's about identifying the different internal and external factors, understanding what's happening with their business and choosing the right goals and strategies.”

For Davis, this mixture of old and new techniques is crucial to modern marketing aimed at today's savvy consumers.

The team from Babson College won the [NookStudy](#) competition, and the other finalist was the University of California's Los Angeles team. NookStudy is a free e-textbook application that can be downloaded for both PCs and Macintosh computers.

Cody Wild is a first-year student studying English and political economy.