

SWEET CLASS

**MSU
business
students get
real-world
experience
with candy
company**

By Renee Berg
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Jainand Patel never imagined he'd be pouring chocolate as part of his college business class.

But there he was recently, doing just that. Samuel Sleichert took the 300-level class because he needed it to graduate.

Little did he know what he would learn.

"I've endured challenges and come to learn things," Sleichert said. "I feel that's really benefited me. The teamwork skills and communication skills, everything is beneficial."

He added that he'll be a "step ahead" in the real business world when he graduates from Minnesota State University in May, largely because of his experiences outside the classroom.

The two seniors are relishing their Applied Entrepreneurial Practice business class that they take with professor Shane Bowyer. The class is made up of 18 students divided into three groups of six, who are all challenged to devise a new chocolate candy in collaboration with executives at Maud Borup, a business-to-business candy company based in Plymouth.

That's where Patel was pouring chocolate last week. It's all part of a competition among the 18 MSU business students to devise a new product for Maud Borup.

The process began with another Bowyer business class in the fall, whereby students developed candy concepts, choosing flavors and packaging design and assisting in pricing metrics for a brand-new candy creation. Their focus was to develop a Valentine's Day product.

Then this winter, the cohort of 18 took those ideas further and worked with the Maud Borup chef to develop their product concept samples and tasting samples.



Courtesy Gary Lesley

Sam Sleichert, Jenna Mortier and Jainand Patel spread chocolate at Maud Borup's headquarters in Plymouth. The three are among 18 MSU students competing in a new candy product competition as part of their class in collaboration with the \$50 million dollar candy corporation that sells to Target and Whole Foods.



Courtesy Karen Edwards

MSU senior Jainand Patel pours chocolate as part of his business class that involves partnering with a candy company to get real-world experience.

It will all culminate in an exciting product reveal on March 16, during the Richard Schmitz Food Entrepreneurship Series at MSU's Centennial Student Union. Attendees at the series, which features Maud Borup owner

Christine Lantinen, will vote for their favorite of the three products via roundtables and sampling, all facilitated by the MSU students.

At the end of the event, Maud Borup executives will reveal the People's

More Information

For those interested in attending the candy competition on March 16, go to the union's Ostrander Auditorium from 2 to 3:30 p.m. to vote on your favorite of the three developed chocolates.

From 3:30 to 5 p.m. there is a presentation of the student's candy and a fireside chat with Christine and Randy Lantinen, which will be moderated by College of Business Dean Brenda Flannery.

Choice winner. About 300 people are expected to attend the Entrepreneurship Series, and the community is invited.

Karen Edwards, chief communications officer at Maud Borup, has worked in tandem with Lantinen this semester in helping students prepare their candy for the competition.

"Every step of the way was supposed to be real, not a concept out of a book," Edwards said. "But real product development process, real hands' on, real world experience." "We're trying to take them out of the classroom," Bowyer echoed.

Please see CANDY, Page A2

**"We're only eight weeks into our course
and we've already come up with an idea for a product."**

MSU junior Jenna Mortier

GANDY: Students work with Maud Borup, a provider to major retailers

Continued from Page A1

“Karen and Christine have been great, spending time with our students and going through their questions. Karen and Christine are treating them like they would an outside company trying to develop a candy idea for them. They’re being treated not like stu-

dents, but as though they were a client.”

“What I’ve enjoyed,” said MSU junior Jenna Mortier, “is we’re only eight weeks into our course and we’ve already come up with an idea for a product. And now we’ve made the chocolate and put together the molds and put it together with the packaging. We’ve

accomplished a lot.”

Maud Borup sells candy to national retailers such as Target, Whole Foods, Sam’s Club, and specialty retailers such as It’s Sugar. It’s a \$50 million company which is on track to becoming a \$100 million company in the coming three to four years, Edwards said.

“It’s been a fun journey,”

Christine Lantinen said.

“It’s fun to see the students get excited about the products they’re creating. We’ve been there to advise and guide them but they’ve done the footwork of coming up with concepts and deciding who the item will be marketed to.”

“Students are learning this whole process of prod-

uct development, having to take an item to market, pricing strategies, and design on the box,” she said.

The goal of this was to give every student real-world, transferrable skills regardless of where their careers will lead them, Edwards said.