



Meet our 2023 Community Bank Case Study Competition Winners

Sep 28

Congratulations to the team of students from the University of Tennessee at Martin that edged out 34 other teams to win this year's CSBS Community Bank Case Study Competition. Their case study examined how a local community bank, Commercial Bank & Trust Company in Paris, Tennessee, recruits and retains talent, approaches succession planning and uses technology to advance operations.

CSBS holds the competition each year to encourage undergraduate students to gain valuable first-hand knowledge of the banking industry.

The University of Tennessee Martin students, joined by their faculty advisors, will present their findings at the [2023 Community Bank Research Conference](#), co-sponsored by CSBS, the Federal Reserve Board System and the FDIC.

Meet the 2023 Case Study Competition Winners

2023 CSBS Community Bank Case Study Student Team Winner



Ben Arnold

University of Tennessee at Martin
Major: Accounting & Finance

"I saw this as the perfect opportunity to get to know the world of banking better than I could in any classroom."

Why were you interested in participating in the CSBS Community Bank Case Study Competition?

I found it to be a true way to apply what I have learned throughout my college career. It was interesting digging into real finances and being able to use the concepts and techniques I used in class to measure financial performance. I also have never learned much about banking. I saw this as the perfect opportunity to get to know the world of banking better than I could in any classroom..

What did you hope to learn from the competition?

I hoped to learn about the world of banking. I wanted to see how real-world events affected the financial industry. I also wanted the opportunity to learn from real banking executives and see the world of banking from an upper management perspective.

What career do you wish to pursue? Has your participation in the Case Study Competition impacted your future career goals?

I would love to pursue governmental or non-profit accounting. I wish to use my talents and education to better my community.

The competition has opened my eyes to the world of banking. I never thought of a career in banking before the competition but hearing the executives talk about their passion for making their community better and ensuring their account holders feel that their hard-earned money is safe and secure has made me consider a banking job.

What was the most interesting finding for you from the case study?

The most interesting find while researching the case study was learning about the massive investment the bank put into fostering talent. The amount of time, energy and money spent during the succession planning of the bank's top executives fascinated me and the rest of the team. It truly showed that it was more than a career for the bankers, but a service to their community.

2023 CSBS Community Bank Case
Study Student Team Winner



Dan Hoffman

University of Tennessee at Martin
Major: Accounting & Finance

"The most interesting find for me was seeing just how large a part the Trust Department for our partner bank played in the overall success of the bank."

Why were you interested in participating in the CSBS Community Bank Case Study Competition?

I was interested in the Case Study Competition because I had little experience with community banking and saw the case study as an excellent opportunity to learn more about community banking.

What did you hope to learn from the competition?

I wanted to see how community banks differed from larger regional banks and how community banks focused on relationships and reputation within the banks' communities.

What career do you wish to pursue? Has your participation in the Case Study Competition impacted your future career goals?

I am currently working as an accountant with the Tennessee Treasury Department. The case study opened my eyes to a few other potential careers that I had not considered before. I looked into a few examiner positions with the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank as well as some openings at local community banks that I had not thought to look into before the case study.

What was the most interesting finding for you from the case study?

The most interesting finding for me was seeing just how big of a part the Trust Department of our partner bank played in the overall success of the bank.

2023 CSBS Community Bank Case
Study Student Team Winner



Cole Hollis

University of Tennessee at Martin

Major: Business Management
& Marketing

"My favorite finding from the case study is how selfless our bank was in how they serve their clients ... I enjoyed the executive team's passion for helping others"

Why were you interested in participating in the CSBS Community Bank Case Study Competition?

I was interested in participating in the CSBS Case Study Competition because I wanted to learn more about banking and experience a group research project/case study. I performed banking-related research before participating in the case study competition and wanted to do more banking research while working with a bank's executive team.

What did you hope to learn from the competition?

During this case study, I learned more about how banks operate on a managerial level. I worked closely with the information technology officer for our bank, and I learned a significant amount about how security works at a bank and how that affects clients. I also had the pleasure of learning what the financial analysis of a bank looks like. Additionally, I experienced the process of operating a team research project and that knowledge was also very valuable.

What career do you wish to pursue? Has your participation in the Case Study Competition impacted your future career goals?

In the future, I want to pursue a career in management and marketing consulting on a corporate level.

Participating in the case study competition undoubtedly showed me that I want to pursue a consulting career. I enjoyed working alongside a bank/company, learning more about the company, forming a relationship with the executive team and creating an analysis of the company. That is exactly what I want to do as a career.

What was the most interesting finding for you from the case study?

My favorite finding from the case study is how selfless our bank, Commercial Bank & Trust Company (CBTC), was in how they serve their clients. CBTC made every decision to serve its clients, employees and community. I enjoyed the executive team's passion for helping others, and I was happy to learn that banks like CBTC care for their clients, employees and community.

2023 CSBS Community Bank Case
Study Student Team Winner



Libby Rushton

University of Tennessee at Martin

Major: Agriculture Business

"Throughout the case study and my time spent with Commercial Bank & Trust, I learned so much about community banks and their importance, especially to the communities they serve."

Why were you interested in participating in the CSBS Community Bank Case Study Competition?

I was interested in participating in the case study competition to broaden my knowledge of banking and finances. As an agriculture business student, I had a general knowledge of these topics but knew this opportunity would help me understand this industry on a deeper level.

What did you hope to learn from the competition?

I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the way that community banks operate. Throughout the case study and my time spent with Commercial Bank & Trust, I learned so much about community banks and their importance, especially to the communities they serve.

What career do you wish to pursue? Has your participation in the Case Study Competition impacted your future career goals?

I hope to pursue a career in either public or political relations for an agriculture-based company. The agriculture industry is my passion, and I am excited to hopefully spend my career giving back to the industry that has shaped me into who I am.

Although the case study didn't necessarily change my career plans, I am much more interested in, and knowledgeable of certain aspects of finances. I know the things I have learned through this case study will serve me well in my everyday life and career!

What was the most interesting finding for you from the case study?

The most interesting part of the case study in my opinion was learning about the succession planning and process of the bank. I have always been a firm believer that succession planning is essential in all industries and parts of life, and banking is no different. I think one of the most important aspects of a successful bank is their ability to plan for the future, and that is one of the reasons I believe Commercial Bank & Trust is so successful.



2023 CSBS Community Bank Case
Study Winning Team Faculty Advisor

John Clark

University of Tennessee at Martin
Director, Horace and Sara Dunagan
Chair of Excellence in Banking

"Each year we hope that the students learn more about real world community banking by working with talented community bank management teams."

Why did your department decide to get involved in the CSBS Community Bank Case Study Competition?

I was introduced to the Case Study Competition in the spring of 2017 by the Dean of the College of Business at the University of Tennessee at Martin. This was my first semester at the university in this role after retiring from a career in community banking. I learned more about the competition as a guest of Tennessee Commissioner of Banking Greg Gonzales at the Fall 2017 CSBS Community Bank Research Conference. This seemed to be a great way to connect talented students with real world and current significant issues in community banking. We have fielded teams each year from 2018 through 2023. Every year the process has been successful in achieving this objective.

What do you hope your students took away from the competition?

Each year we hope the students learn more about real world community banking by working with talented community bank management teams. We also hope the students learn how to form and effectively function as a team on a significant research project. Thirdly, we hope the students improve their communication skills through the production of a disciplined research paper and an effective video.

What was the most interesting finding for you from the case study?

The most interesting finding for me from this year's case study was how effectively our partner bank successfully achieved management succession in almost all their executive management group positions over a five-year period.

2023 CSBS Community Bank Case
Study Winning Team Faculty Advisor



Lajuan Davis, Ph.D.

University of Tennessee at Martin

Professor, Department of Management,
Marketing & Information Systems

"My hope always is that these students are exposed to real-world simulations and networking possibilities that cause them to think critically about their future careers."

Why did your department decide to get involved in the CSBS Community Bank Case Study Competition?

The former administrative assistant to the Dunagan Chair of Excellence (the sponsor of the team at UT Martin) asked me to proofread a paper that the students had completed approximately eight years ago. I teach business communication, so I am often asked to work with students in other disciplines on special projects, and when time permits, I try to help. Editing a paper of the volume of the CSBS Case Study Competition is a considerable commitment of time and although I am a professional writer and editor, I am not a content specialist. To get the students to a competitive level, I recruited a finance professor to work with them and me on these case studies. In the College of Business and Global Affairs at UT Martin, the faculty strives to provide students with as many experiential-learning opportunities as possible. I think having students compete in the CSBS Case Study Competition is a worthy and interesting project that pushes the students to work in a cohesive team capacity on a challenging topic and demonstrates our aspirations of excellence in education.

What do you hope your students took away from the competition?

My hope is always that these students are exposed to real-world simulations and networking possibilities that cause them to think critically about their future careers. I also think they learn the power of professional communication in a workplace as well as how efficient and effective a united working team can be.

What was the most interesting finding for you from the case study?

The students will agree that the most interesting finding of the case study was the accomplishments of the bank's technology director and how his work took the bank to another level of productivity and customer service. People who do not work with technology daily sometime underestimate the potential of user-friendly technology for improving an industry. Since part of my Ph.D. is in technology, I was not surprised by this finding but pleased to see the bank embrace the application of technology in achieving their goals.

Team members not listed:

Student Winner, Abbey Strong

Faculty Advisor, Mark Farley, Ph.D.

Learn more about the CSBS Case Study Competition: www.csbs.org/bankcasestudy.

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202.296.2840

newsroom@csbs.org

1129 20th Street, N.W., 9th Floor, Washington, DC 20036