

# Cytiva OpEx Case Competition Delivers High-Impact Experiential Learning at the Huntsman School of Business

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Doug Berry, Caleb Jones, Sterling Sutton, Kyle Turner, Brandon Zook, and Brad Bingham

The Jon M. Huntsman School of Business' Shingo Student Center recently hosted the Cytiva Operational Excellence (OpEx) Case Competition, bringing together 82 students from five universities for an intense, real-world simulation of operations and supply chain decision-making with the goal of preparing students for success after graduation.

Student teams from Utah State University, Boise State University, Bowling Green State University, Brigham Young University, and Weber State University tackled this year's case provided by Cytiva, the competition's sponsor. Centered on a critical supplier contamination crisis, the challenge pushed teams to weigh risk, product quality, supplier strategy, and business tradeoffs under significant time pressure. Sixteen Cytiva professionals served as judges, evaluating not only the teams' recommendations, but also their analytical rigor, creativity, and executive-level communication.

Associate Professor Mike Dixon, Shingo Student Center Director calls the Cytiva OpEx Case Competition a powerful bridge between academic concepts and the ambiguity students will face in industry. Born out of a recognition that students need transformative co-curricular experiences, this is the Huntsman School's third year in organizing an OpEx Supply Chain Case competition.

"Students needed more opportunities to apply classroom concepts to real, messy business problems—the kind that don't have neat textbook solutions," Dr. Dixon said. "These competitions don't just enhance education – they fundamentally change how students see themselves as future business leaders."

Dixon is grateful for valuable partnerships with companies like Cytiva who bring actual challenges they've faced with a wealth of experience to the table with students. He calls the competition a win-win, giving students authentic problem-solving experiences while helping industry partners gain fresh perspectives.

A highlight of the event was a site tour of Cytiva's plant in Logan the evening before the competition and the event's keynote address by Brad Bingham, Cytiva Vice President and General Manager. Bingham offered candid career guidance

and practical tips to help students translate classroom learning into professional momentum. His message reinforced a theme central to the competition: strong careers are built through curiosity, preparation, relationships, and the ability to perform when stakes are real. He encouraged students to look for challenges – especially the hard ones – just as they did in tackling a demanding case competition.

“I think often in life, we don't understand the gift that a good challenge is,” Bingham said. “It is such a privilege to make an impact after you do hard things.”

An invaluable component to the competition's success was the time and support Cytiva leaders invested in the event and students. Caleb Jones, Cytiva Senior Director and Plant Manager, said the experience was especially rewarding because of engagement with students. “I love their perspective, confidence in solutions, and the energy they bring,” he said, calling it a meaningful opportunity, underscoring the value of real-world experience students gained.

From the 25 teams that participated, first place honors were awarded to Brandon Zook, Kyle Turner, and Sterling Sutton from Utah State University. Through its partnership with Cytiva and The Shingo Student Center, the OpEx Case Competition reinforced the Huntsman School's commitment to hands-on, industry-connected learning that prepares students to succeed in the workplace.