

Lansing State Journal

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By Christopher Behnan
EAST LANSING –

A group of MBA students at Michigan State University found themselves put to the test Monday in what was part marketing, part college exam and part reality TV a la Donald Trump.

Their final exam: make something and sell it using only Jiffy mix, kale, lemon, peppermint candy and their marketing skills.

Sixteen teams of students in the the program's Marketing Management course faced a panel of judges and fellow students in their final exams, described as NBC's "The Apprentice" meets Food Network show "Chopped." The competition unfolded Monday morning at Epley Center.

Teams were given a \$30 budget that could include additional ingredients and promotional items. One team added jalapeños, chocolate and sugar to what could already be considered an odd combination of flavors.

"It kind of exploded in your mouth," said Glenn Omura, course instructor and the MBA program's associate dean.

Students in the MBA program have an October final based on how the program's semester is divided.

A judges panel that included Howdy Holmes, Chelsea-based Jiffy's CEO, local chefs and a food blogger, had final say on the students' concoctions. The students then ventured into the hallways of the Epley Center, which



houses the offices of MSU's MBA program and several other departments in the Broad College of Business to sell their finished products. Each "sale" was based on the exchange of tokens handed out in the hallway.

Omura said he devised the final exam to allow students to demon-

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for the Lansing State Journal



strate their creativity — something he said they'll need in the workforce. The contest resembled the cook-offs in Food Network show "Chopped" and team-marketing component of "The Apprentice," the NBC show that features real estate magnate Donald Trump.

The cookoff marks the latest at-

tempt to shift students from the textbook to the business world, Omura said. Later this week, MBA students will flex their creative muscle through improvisational theater, for example.

"Our new kind of face that we're presenting through our MBA program is creativity and innovation.

We have a lot of new things going on with respect to developing creative talents," Omura said. "The whole notion is to think creatively on your feet, solve problems right away and do it on a continues basis."

