



### **University of Wyoming MBA's Participate in Strategic Initiative Projects**

University of Wyoming MBA students and faculty recently completed summer projects as part of the Strategic Project Initiative Program. Participating companies included EnCana Corporation, Marathon Oil Corporation, Global Healthcare Exchange (GHX) and RE/MAX Obsidian Real Estate, LLC. Second-year MBA students, along with a faculty advisor, served as industry consultants addressing unique strategic challenges within each organization. Shaun Andrikopoulos, Ultra Petroleum Visiting Professor of Management (EnCana), Dr. Benjamin Cook, Visiting Assistant Professor/Enhanced Oil Recovery Institute (Marathon), Dr. Philip Varca, Professor of Management (GHX), and Dr. Eli Beracha, Assistant Professor of Finance and Real Estate (RE/MAX), served as faculty advisors.

Steve Farkas, MBA Director, notes that "UW MBA's Strategic Project Initiative Program aims to provide MBA students with hands-on, cross-functional experience by addressing real business challenges across diverse industry segments. UW MBA students possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to make relevant contributions that translate to strategic action plans for sponsoring firms."

Allegra Ramey, MBA student, was a member of the team assigned to Rob Cheek, owner of RE/MAX Obsidian Real Estate, LLC, in Jackson, WY. The team conducted a feasibility study for a \$25 million commercial real estate project. Allegra believes her newly acquired financial analysis skills will prove to be "beneficial in determining the probability of return should she start her own business upon graduation."

Strategic initiative projects address business concerns that are timely and relevant. The student team assigned to GHX was responsible for producing a series of reports that allowed the company to understand and better predict future costs of a number of activities including implementation, customer support, and development. They also assessed the company's organizational behavior and identified areas of improvement to prevent employee burnout and increase employee satisfaction in their jobs. MBA team member Sean Valentine commented that "Our project gave us firsthand experience with accessing and prioritizing company data and then utilizing that data to make business decisions. We also were able to take away firsthand experience on conducting employee interviews to assess morale and conducting time studies to create a benchmark for measuring costs." GHX's mission is to reduce costs in the healthcare supply chain.

Energy MBA candidate Gregory Simons, worked with EnCana Corporation. He and his teammates had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. to attend the largest Clean Transportation Expo in North America with over 100 vendors. Gregory commented that "The opportunity to travel and network with individuals and representatives from a variety of industries across the World really helped me become more confident in my communication skills and my ability to network. I also gained a lot of knowledge and insight from people in an industry I hope to enter after graduation, so the trip was extremely rewarding and a great learning experience."

Evidence of the students' success is found in the feedback provided by the UW MBA Strategic Project Initiative corporate sponsors:

*"The material furnished will be used to solicit investors to the project; it provides a neutral, third-party assessment of the project's feasibility and viability. We were impressed by their (the students') enthusiasm and thoroughness. I would absolutely encourage others to take advantage of this wonderful resource; it benefits the client and the students in meaningful ways."* ~Rob Cheek, RE/MAX Obsidian Real Estate, LLC.

*"The UW team exhibited great ability to adapt to our changing business needs, while demonstrating great commitment, and ultimately execution to deliver the desired business results."* ~Ali Larson Executive Director, Corporate Performance, GHX.

*"The UW MBA students provided very good research and analysis on a topic that had data acquisition challenges. Their professionalism and proactive management of the project was impressive. The students' findings will aid in our continued discussions as to utilities' best roles in increasing the natural gas vehicle market."* ~ Sherrie Merrow, EnCana Corporation.

The UW MBA program is currently seeking corporate partners to sponsor projects for Summer 2014. Interested organizations should submit a Project Proposal form found on the Corporate Relationships portion of the MBA website ([www.uwyo.edu/mba](http://www.uwyo.edu/mba)) or contact the MBA Program Office at [mba@uwyo.edu](mailto:mba@uwyo.edu), 307.766.2449.