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United Dairy Industry of Michigan

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Hi-res images for download: <https://bit.ly/3YZQCyH>, <https://bit.ly/3SporqD>



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College Students Keep Dairy's Message Fresh

Western Michigan University marketing students developed the winning campaign for United Dairy Industry of Michigan campus marketing competition.

OKEMOS, Mich. [FEB. 23, 2023] – For an entire semester, more than one hundred Generation Z college seniors at three state universities focused on making dairy marketing more impactful with their peers while competing for cash prizes. At the same time, dairy farmers gained invaluable insights into the attitudes and needs of the next generation of milk drinkers.

The innovative project stemmed from a partnership between United Dairy Industry of Michigan and the Campus Commandos firm. The goal was to modernize milk messaging for the next generation of dairy consumers by tapping into student marketers at Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University and Western Michigan University. To help, the UDIM team provided the students with dairy industry insights and background, including virtual farm tours and promotional activity details.

“If dairy farmers want to win the hearts and minds of the Generation Z economic powerhouse, they must go to the source to learn what motivates them and drives their decision-making. The insight from this project is one-of-a-kind because the process allowed us to answer the students’ dairy questions while hearing directly from them and the peers they surveyed about how dairy can be more visible in their lives,” says Dwyer Williams, UDIM CEO.

In their quest to find new ways to build trust in dairy and increase sales of dairy foods, the students conducted audience research, evaluated market competition and delivered a series of fresh ideas to reach Generation Z – those born between 1997-2012 with a collective disposable income of \$360 billion.¹

The winning team from Western Michigan University crafted its message, activities and social media recommendations around the theme that “dairy takes you home” – literally and figuratively. Their findings were based on team market research indicating college students surveyed had a favorable and sentimental response to dairy.

¹ Santora J. 2022. 29 statistics on Gen Z spending habits you should know in 2023. *Influencer Marketing Hub*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/41mdnhK>.

The students suggested creating nostalgic events and activities such as “dairy takes you home” branded gas cards and dairy snacks, dairy-themed parade floats, treats and handouts for community parades, and dairy day carnivals with dairy-themed games, prizes, informational kiosks and interactive activities to reinforce and personalize the importance of dairy in the lives of Generation Z consumers.

Runners-up focused on:

- Creating new, positive memories around dairy with interactive dairy trivia, games, video booths and new dairy mascots
- Reversing negative stigmas associated with dairy while squashing misinformation through positive experiences and capitalizing on milk’s benefits as an exercise recovery drink
- Encouraging Generation Z to take advantage of milk’s natural benefits to help de-stress and improve restful sleep

“From immersing themselves in the dairy industry, conducting research with college-aged consumers, coming up with creative ideas, to finally presenting to the UDIM team, the students gained experience impossible to get from textbook assignments,” says Greg Gerfen, Marketing Professor at Western Michigan University. “Credit for the success of this semester-long project begins with the UDIM team. Their commitment to the project was evident. The UDIM team took the time to meet our students and expressed genuine interest in what they thought, which fueled their desire to do well.”

The winning teams include:

- **First Place:** Western Michigan University, Team Spark
- **Second Place:** Western Michigan, Team Cowgirl Creative
- **Third Place:** Michigan State University, Team The Drawing Board
- **Most Unique Idea:** Grand Valley State University, Team Insights Driven
- **Best Metrics:** Michigan State University, Team The Drawing Board
- **Best Presenters:** Michigan State University, Team Open Door Creative

“The ideas from this competition are incredibly creative and intriguing,” says Williams. “The student insights give us a myriad of points for the UDIM team to incorporate and adapt into experiences we can share with Generation Z – precisely what we hoped to gain from this partnership.”

Additionally, the classroom competition allowed dairy farmers to connect with students who might not otherwise have a touchpoint with the dairy industry.

“Giving seniors a chance to work with a real-world scenario in the classroom gave them a favorable view of dairy, and it gave UDIM insights into the student thought process,” says Adam Grant, Founder and CEO of Campus Commandos. “Oftentimes, they don’t have the established buying habits of mom and dad who have been buying the same cereal and milk for years. The students involved had a positive experience with the category that is staring them in the face in those grocery aisles.”

To learn more about UDIM, visit www.milkmeansmore.com.

About the United Dairy Industry of Michigan

The United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM) is dedicated to serving Michigan’s hard-working dairy farm families and promoting Michigan’s locally produced dairy products. UDIM is the umbrella organization for the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council of Michigan. These non-profit

organizations provide dairy product promotion and nutrition education services on behalf of their funding members.

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Download the release.

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Caption:

UDIM_Campus_Commandos_1: *Winners of the Campus Commandos marketing challenge outlined how their team would modernize dairy messaging to play to dairy's strengths to motivate Generation Z consumers to include more dairy in their diet.*

UDIM_Campus_Commandos_2: *Western Michigan University's Team Spark developed its winning dairy marketing campaign around the concept that "Dairy takes you home, wherever that is."*