

Community Outreach Through DeVry's Senior Project

By Elisa Barranco

DeVry University Senior Project 2011: Designing A Practical Business Plan Application for the Ultimate Success of Local Businesses

Recently, I was invited to and had the pleasure of attending a senior project event hosted by DeVry Miramar Campus' Senior Project Team B. The event took place on Saturday April 16th, 2011. The goal for this project was to create and implement a business plan for a small local business to turn it around and make it a profitable organization; in this particular case – AGUACATAL, a Colombian restaurant in Miami Lakes, Florida. I had never tasted Colombian cuisine and this event allowed me the opportunity to do just that. What better way to experience this than while at the same time helping my fellow students, and may I add treating my taste buds.

Many of you might ask-what is a senior project and why is it so important? Why do it? The senior project is a capstone course within DeVry University's bachelor's degree programs for which students must construct a functional project that incorporates the management, technology, and business concepts studied throughout their education. During a 16 week period, groups of students work together with clients from various industries to develop their projects. Applying what they learn is sort of like being book smart versus street smart. You can read about how to do something, but when applied to real life events it is something different altogether. The intent of this course is to actually see, feel, and in this case, taste the flavor of the business world. Opening the eyes and minds of the student, and at time those of the Professors and Deans alike.

The group's enthusiasm was apparent, as was shared by family and friends, who came to show support for their loved ones- even Dean Wilborn made an appearance and had a taste of the food samples offered at the event. I had the pleasure of speaking with Professor Marino and he shared his visions for future senior projects. It is noticeable that Professor Marino loves what he does, believes what he teaches, and would like the students that are part of this course to absorb his knowledge, experience and the vast opportunities available in the stimulating world of entrepreneurship.

One of the many things I have learned while at DeVry is that people do not realize what they are capable of, unless they give themselves a chance. And yes, "a mind is a terrible thing to waste." DeVry provides students the tools necessary to achieve success; the senior project does just that. The way I see it, the event helped to reaffirm my commitment to continuing my education. This of course cannot be taught in books, not learned because your Professor tells you so, but by example.

The camaraderie demonstrated during this event was possible by example of leadership, and the delectable recipe of partnership, team work, knowledge, integrity and respect for the community. I witnessed all these factors at this event- as for the future success of this little Colombian restaurant, I say *adelante*-onward! No doubt in my mind that with the group of individuals involved in this project, and armed with the ingredients mentioned above, this business will be successful.



Photo by: Rolando Valenzuela

Attendees from top left to right: Melissa Dubocq, Ana Delgado, Ivan Montero, Professor Paul Marino, Rafael Velasquez, Sandra (Restaurant Owner), Jonathan Jimenez, Rafael Son's, Abel Cabello. Bottom left to right Gustavo Meza, Elisa Barranco, Andre Pastore, Yanidra Meza and Rolando Valenzuela.

Not in picture: Brad Gleason, Karl Payoute, Carolyn Saa, Rockcine Miller, and Dayanara Diaz