



INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR LEE Geunhee

A Case Competition at APU through a Mentor's Perspective: How to guide your students to success



Interview date: January 2023

Introduction

The year 2022 ended in celebration for all APU students as APU's talented B Team won the CFA Institute Research Challenge Japan 2022-2023 held in Tokyo. The CFA Institute Research Challenge is an annual global case competition focusing on financial analysis and professional ethics, well-regarded for its refined standards and competitive environment. This achievement has inspired the students of APU's B Team to start their journeys toward their future ambitions. Along such quests, the guidance and support of mentors are of the utmost importance. This semester, ALRCS's Project Q Team is aiming to provide insight into the role of mentors

during case competitions by presenting the perspective of two experienced mentors and two successful students. We hope that our articles help other professors see the importance of case competitions at APU, learn about what they can earn as mentors, and discover how to guide their students to success.



CFA Research Challenge Trophy

Q1. Please introduce yourself.

My name is Lee Geunhee, and I am from Korea. I have been a professor at APU for 11 years, since 2012. I teach marketing-related classes with an emphasis on consumer behavior. My current research focuses on viral marketing using SNS and co-creation between companies and consumers to bring out unique customer experiences. Before becoming an APU professor I was a businessman and even now I still own some Airbnb apartments. My passion is teaching and motivating others, and I also immensely cherish the community of APU.

Q2. We see that you have participated in many extracurricular activities outside of teaching and researching, such as joining RCAP seminars, advising at circles and case competitions, and of

course, managing your own YouTube channel, APU glee. What motivates you to be so active, and do you recommend that other faculty members do the same?

Being a professor involves little pressure and professors can work at their own pace. However, I believe that a professor should love their job and contribute to the university and its students, not only in class but through other activities as well. From a management perspective, APU is a company and its students are our consumers. As I love this company, I wish to devote everything to giving its customers the best experience. I hope my fellow professors will understand and empathize with my perspective so that we can do our best for our students.

Q3. This interview will focus on the

extracurricular activity of case competitions. May you briefly tell us about case competitions?

The purpose of extracurriculars is for students to broaden their perspectives and hone their efforts towards a goal. Case competitions, while different from regular circle activities, are nevertheless fascinating and essential tools for students, especially APM students, to review and practice what they have learned in class. Basically, companies come to these competitions and offer one of their problems as a case for our students to solve. After attempting to find solutions, the students can receive feedback while the companies can receive some possible ideas, so these competitions are fantastic opportunities for both sides.

Q4. Can you elaborate on the purpose and responsibilities of an advisor during these competitions? How did you manage your time teaching, advising, and doing other activities?

The responsibility of a mentor is not to teach students by telling them what they should or shouldn't do. Instead, we must offer students professional, unbiased opinions on the methods and process of achieving their goals. Critiquing slides or checking scripts, for example, are some of my duties during case competitions. Furthermore, the journey to success in any case competition is challenging, and many students may feel demotivated along the way. Thus, advisors must morally support their students, keep them together, and assure them of the viability of their goals. Finally, I also take care of logistical tasks such as

paperwork, traveling, or accommodation.

To help my students, I obviously had to reduce the amount of time for myself. However, there is a theory I teach in my own class that can help create balance in a schedule. There are four aspects in life: work, family, community, and oneself. Sometimes there is an overlap between these four domains, but most of the time, they splinter away from each other. Therefore, it is necessary to create and expand overlaps to benefit both work and personal life. My secret to developing this crossover is to like what I do and find fulfillment in my work, which is not difficult thanks to my love for APU and its students.

Q5. Recently, a team under your guidance won the CFA challenge. From your perspective, how did they succeed?

CFA is a competition based explicitly on finance, and it is among the top 10 case competitions in the world. The elimination process begins from regional, then national. We had three teams from APU, but we needed more professors because many of the finance experts were busy. Although my expertise is not in finance, I can be a good motivator, and my team won and moved on to the finals.

I was lucky as the students on my team were exceptionally brilliant and motivated. We communicated through a Facebook group where the students kept me updated on their PowerPoint and documents. Despite not being a finance expert, as a practitioner I could still give them feedback on designing their presentation logically. The students provided their solution independently, but I was there whenever they needed help arranging trips to



Tokyo or preparing documents. On the final day, I flew to Tokyo for the sole purpose of cheering them on and taking pictures to encourage their confidence in front of the audience. Although I am a marketing professor and I have advised marketing teams in the past, interestingly the only trophy I won turned out to be finance.

Q6. Currently, there are many case competitions held at APU. How do you feel about the differences between national competitions and APU competitions?

I think that we should not make comparisons between national and internal competitions. At APU, we have an organization called ORCA, which is a circle that holds internal case competitions to train students and prepare them for international

case competitions. The topics at APU are not as complex, but these competitions provide good training. The timeframe we provide for participants is also exactly the same as national or international competitions. For example, we provide a topic, put students in a room without internet, and give them 24 hours to develop their idea. The procedure and emphases are the same. The difference is that internal competitions do not have an advisor for each team.

Q7. Do you think APU's diverse environment becomes an advantage during national case competitions? In return, can these competitions be a tool to promote diversity and cooperation among APU students?

It depends on the theme during national case

competitions. However, as most recent business cases are based on globalized issues, APU's diversity does give us an advantage. With a multicultural team, we are able to share different perspectives compared to teams with members from the same country. Perhaps that was why the APU team was victorious. We succeeded because we can see the problem from multiple angles and think outside the cultural restrictions of each individual.

Can these competitions be a tool to promote diversity and cooperation among APU students? Yes, of course. I have a mini version of a case competition for the final exam in my class in which groups of students give a presentation on solving a case. Through this exercise, students can learn to respect foreign perspectives by working together to solve problems. Case competitions are also

teams in future competitions? If so, what are your expectations for future competitions or students?

Of course, I will continue to mentor and advise other professors to do the same. I became a professor not only to teach but also to learn from my peers and students. In real life, especially in businesses, there is no ultimate answer. Instead, we can only utilize what we know and hope for the best result. Therefore, the key to success is constantly expanding your knowledge via learning, discussing, and comparing perspectives, whether you are a student or a professor. Case competitions are perfect opportunities for mutual discussion between both sides since students present their ideas to the mentors and receive feedback. This way, everyone can learn something new from each other. In the future, I hope that more and more APU

essential in attracting Japanese high school students to APU as they demonstrate our diverse yet cooperative environment.

Q8. Are you still in contact with the students whom you advised before? Have they shared with you how their lives have changed after the competition? In your opinion, what can students gain from these competitions?

Yes, I am still in contact with them. And I try my best to be a connector between generations of students. At APU, we have solid bonds to help each other to become more successful. The seniors who have already participated in case competitions are eager to share their knowledge with later generations. That is one benefit of joining a young university like APU. Since every generation is still

professors and students participate in these activities so APU can become the perfect community for mutual discussions and learning.

Q11. What is your message for students and faculty members who are interested in joining these competitions?

Case competitions are challenging. Your opponents are competitive, the events are time-consuming, and you may not win anything immediately despite your immense efforts. However, when looking back, you will surely realize that the connections, knowledge, and experiences you earned through these occasions are invaluable. Therefore, my message to all students and faculty members is: "JOIN CASE COMPETITIONS!"

connected, we can easily create a network to share knowledge and support each other.

I think that the biggest reward for students in entering case competitions is the ability to create relationships with friends and mentors who share similar interests. These connections may last for life and help in terms of networking for future careers. Even now, some students still call me to discuss their current careers and ask questions, especially students working in the marketing industry.

Q9. From your experience, what qualities do you think a mentor should have to help students in competitions?

Expertise is critical. I could have been a better advisor in CFA if I knew more about finance.

However, knowledge is not the only qualification. A great mentor should also keep the team intact and motivate the students from the beginning up until the very end. The CFA competition, for example, was challenging as it took six months and will take another six months of hard work and mental demand for the final competition. Due to this competitive nature of high-ranking competitions, the team members often become tired and demotivated along the way, so keeping them motivated to keep up their best performance until the end is really important. Professors should also be enthusiastic and encourage students to ask for help. Students may hesitate to "bother" a professor at first, but a great team, including the mentor, should always be able to rely on and help each other.

Q10. Will you continue to mentor more



The Project Q Team with Professor Lee

Author's Impressions

From our little time together during the interview, I can sense Professor LEE Geunhee's passion for APU and its students. I can see this devotion in his mentoring approach, as Professor LEE Geunhee is always there to offer guidance and support while also encouraging students to come up with solutions on their own. I was incredibly impressed when Professor LEE Geunhee flew to Tokyo and cheered on his students during the CFA Final while also managing an immense workload. The professor's enthusiasm and affection have certainly contributed to the victory of his students. In the future, I wish Professor LEE Geunhee all the best in his endeavors. Moreover, I hope his success can become an example, inspiring other APU faculty members to become mentors and guide their students on the path to success.

Interviewer and Author

Name: PHAM Tran Duc Anh

College : APS (CSM)

Country: Vietnam

Message: Greetings! My name is An, and I am a 3rd-year Culture, Society, and Media major. I enjoy reading and writing, and I hope to become a professional novelist or scriptwriter in the future. Becoming a member of ALRCS's Project Q has been a dream come true for me, as I get to contribute to our beloved APU while also practicing and improving my writing skills. I am sincerely grateful to you, my reader, for studying this article, and I hope you can find something precious from our discussions.



What is [Q]?

At APU there are many professors who put together wonderful classes, and if we could get to know how these classes are planned, it would contribute to the improvement of other professors' classes. For that purpose, we have begun doing interviews in order to learn about class planning. These articles have been entitled [Q], comprising a variety of meanings such as: increasing the [Q]uality of classes, answering [Q]uestions to increase quality, and forming a [Q]ueue, or line, of class improvements. We would be very happy if these articles could contribute to the [Q]uest of APU professors' class quality improvement.



Interviewer

Name: LORENNIJ Kelly

College : APS (ED)

Country: Marshall Islands

Message: lakwe (hello)! I am Kelly, a 3rd year Environment and Development major. I enjoy traveling and taking my ukulele to play wherever I visit. As a member of the Project Q team under the Academic Office's ALCRS, I have been able to get an inside look at the goals and expectations of APU faculty. Through these articles detailing the methods and motivations of each respective professor, I sincerely wish each reader takes away a nugget of wisdom.

