University of Auckland wins the 10th annual event, which focused on declining revenues at newspapers.

http://www.usc.edu/uscnews/stories/14880.html

USC Marshall team members Matt Gasparich, Justin Saks, Alisha Chona and Dan Greenberg, from left

Photo/Bill Ormerod

A team of four USC Marshall School of Business students captured third place in the 10th annual Marshall International Case Competition on Feb. 16.

The international field included 30 teams from the United States and around the world.

Juniors Dan Greenberg, Justin Saks, Matt Gasparich and Alisha Chona represented USC Marshall. The team was coached by USC Marshall faculty members Michael Coombs, Yolanda Kirk and Donna Miles.

The event is the oldest and largest business case competition in the country, said Guillermina Molina-Sabatini, director of USC Marshall Undergraduate Student Services and co-director of the competition.

"I was pleased with USC Marshall's performance at this year's event," Molina-Sabatini said. "The team worked extremely hard and put together an impressive final product."

Students had 24 hours to research a real business problem and deliver their resolution to a panel of judges.

Associate professor Coombs presented the case, which focused on the Los Angeles Times and the declining revenues of print media. The question at hand: "How can print journalism succeed in the new high technology environment?"

The teams, which arrived in Los Angeles on Feb. 12 for an opening reception and dinner, took
part in various activities leading up to the competition, including a scavenger hunt, a Clippers basketball game and a tour of Paramount Studios.

Six teams were selected to compete in the finals after presenting their solutions in a preliminary round: USC, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Pennsylvania, Concordia University (Canada), the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the University of Auckland (New Zealand).

Each team had 20 minutes to present its case analysis and recommendations, after which the judges addressed them in a 10-minute question and answer session.

Teams were judged by a panel of industry experts, including chief executive officers, management executives, consultants and individuals in the publishing industry.

Judges based their decisions on criteria that included the teams’ analysis, which was weighted most heavily, their presentations and the quality of answers during the Q&A session.

Some of the presentations suggested that in order to balance journalistic integrity while increasing revenue at the Los Angeles Times, publishers should consider an emphasis on new technology such as the Internet and mobile devices.

Other presentations suggested publishing a free supplemental magazine to attract new age demographics and placing greater emphasis on local coverage rather than on national and international events.

The winning team from the University of Auckland suggested that the city’s largest newspaper publish a shorter version called the L.A. Times Express for people who do not have time to read the entire paper.

They also presented the idea of reaching out to untargeted markets, such as Los Angeles’ large Hispanic community, by translating the paper into Spanish.

This is the first time an international school has won the event since 1999, Molina-Sabatini said.

"I enjoyed watching the interaction among students from all over the U.S. and the world," she said. "These future business leaders will be making decisions in board rooms similar to some of what they grappled with in this case study."

Other U.S. schools in the competition were Babson College, Carnegie Mellon University, Indiana University, Ohio State University, University of Arizona, University of Florida, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Minnesota, University of Texas at Austin and University of Wisconsin at Madison.

Other international schools were National University of Singapore and Singapore Management University (Singapore); Copenhagen Business School (Denmark); Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (Mexico); Mahidol University (Thailand); Manchester Business School (England); Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi (Italy); Universiteit of Maastricht (Netherlands); University College Dublin (Ireland) and University of Melbourne (Australia).