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ECON 3492: A Class To Remember!

It all started in Dr. Smirnova's ECON 1201 class. I was an eager freshman at UConn looking to get involved. Dr. Smirnova mentioned the Fed Reserve Challenge and it instantly ignited a spark in my mind. It seemed like a great opportunity. Why? It meets at the intersection of team-building skills and Economics!

Soon after, I was sitting in her ECON 3492 class simply as an observer. Admittedly, at the time I was quite unfamiliar with the world of Economics and how this "class" works. The first day, I was confused, because Dr. Smirnova was seated in her chair for the majority of the class (not in front of the class sharing a lecture). The second day, I noticed the students were critiquing other students. The third day, I realized that the students were able to choose topics that interested them. The fourth day, I saw a mesmerizing presentation (which looked quite complicated to me) that the students had all put together. After attending and observing the Practicum class several times, it struck me that this class was like no other. I had to enroll in it.

This is simply because of the underlying foundation of this class. It structured completely different than a regular class. Instead, it provides a unique aspect to learning. Rather than listen to a professor teach for the entirety of the class, each student becomes a mini professor in their selected topic. Each student gets to choose a topic of their liking and teach the class. Each student will receive constructive criticism from their peers and Dr. Smirnova. Each student learns to work in a team environment and collaborate on a project. Each student gets to present as part of one team to the Federal Reserve. What other class is like this?

Let's dive into the nitty-gritty of what we really did during this class. Each student chose a different topic to become a mini expert in. Mine was manufacturing. Initially, there was so much to learn. I had to unpack the manufacturing industry and the implications the Covid crisis has on this sector. This consisted of a plethora of research. Later, I transferred the research to a PowerPoint and would present it each time we met during class and received feedback. All of which led up to the students creating a single presentation that compiled each of our own topics. After MULTIPLE technical difficulties, we created a video with our presentation and voices embedded. I was quite proud. More specifically, I was a proud team member. This class taught me unity and collaboration in so many ways. We had to learn the importance of showing up and showing out. Completing your individual tasks for the benefit of the group. Understanding how your slight mistake can cost the whole group. Understanding that you have other team members to fall back on. Understanding that this class is not about you, it is about you as a team member.

We worked hard, meeting on weekends, finding extra time during the week to work on the project, to create a polished final product. In the end, it was rewarding to see the single final product of all our combined efforts. I am proud to be a part of a class that is structured like a team. A class that promotes collaboration, forward thinking and innovation. A class that encourages learning through discussion. While we may not have placed in the challenge, being a part of this class was an award-winning experience.