The BCLC Case Competition with Target Corporation was a chance to exhibit competency in business. Walking into the School of Business Boardroom, my anxiety level was higher than I expected. Greg Pare, Target Senior Campus Recruiter, and his panel of Store Managers were very serious about this opportunity. The room was filled with excited case competition hopefuls. The main goal of the competition was to help Target keep up with their competitors in the e-commerce industry and to give a specific and creative idea to set their products apart. For the first thirty minutes of the information session, the panel discussed Target as a whole, their experiences working for Target, and the expectations for the competition. I was furiously writing notes while trying to remain poised in front of my group members and the Target employees. When the panel opened up their presentation for questions, there was a flurry, each of us trying to make a memorable first impression. This was the first of the learning experiences. The panel wanted to hear questions that were out of the box and challenging. Here was a chance to ask something that can't be found online or in the case competition packet. The panel moved quickly through the obvious answers and slowly through ones that we were supposed to implement into our presentation. Following the questions, my group was quick to plan outside meetings and set up times. We ran into our first hurdle: not every group member was at the Q&A. We now needed to figure out how to communicate with our group members. The email chain became dangerously long. We arranged to meet later that week with ideas for the competition. On Tuesday night, we crammed nine people into a library group study and began to bounce around some great ideas.
We talked about the Target app, website, message, market, advertisements, products, and every aspect of the business. This holistic view of the company and trying to understand how to make it better was an incredible experience. By having an actual company coming to the BCLC, we could target (no pun intended) exactly what the company needed. Since everyone is familiar with Target, our ideas were specific. After this brainstorming session, we met again with the plan to assign jobs and complete the PowerPoint.

Another Tuesday night and we were smart enough to obtain an entire classroom in the School of Business. We plugged our presentation in and started practicing. The first time was very rough; many of us stumbled over words because we were picturing the panel and Greg Pare sitting there with his arms crossed. We were desperate to prove ourselves and everyone was dedicated to doing a great job. After two hours of practicing, reworking the presentation, arguing about order of presenters, getting worried about the content, and gaining confidence, we decided to call it a night.

On presentation day, nine groups piled into the boardroom to listen to the impressive expanded panel of judges. There were recruiters, store executive interns, executives, and a whole table full of successful employees. Also exciting for me, the panel was overwhelmingly female. This diversity made me even more eager to do a great job.

Our group went first and my left leg decided it was a good time to cramp up. My group members began to seamlessly articulate our presentation. It was nerve wracking and exciting.

My turn came and I became suddenly aware of every little movement by the judges. I did my best to articulate our point of marketing Target’s underutilized in-store pick up option. We found this feature on the app; you can complete your entire shopping trip online and pick up your assembled purchases in store, only two hours later. The panel smiled and we finished our presentation.

When the panel started asking questions, we realized that in our nervousness we hadn’t articulated everything effectively. Another group member and I back-tracked our presentation and tried to deliver a more valuable explanation. The head nods continued and we felt more confident leaving the room.

We returned to a classroom to wait for the rest of the groups to finish. My group and I definitely did not feel confident about our presentation. However, I can’t claim it wasn’t an incredible experience. We got to solve a real problem and we did our absolute best. I worked on a great team with one goal, being creative. I believe as business students we focus on results more than the process. But the process of preparing for the Target Case Competition taught me patience, flexibility, creativity, and professionalism. Even though our group was not happy with our execution, we still felt proud of the final product because we had created it from start to finish.

After all the groups had finished presenting, we went back to the School of Business Boardroom. The third place team was announced; it wasn’t us. The second place was announced; nope. Surprise! Not first place either. We were disappointed, but not particularly surprised. The winning team had incorporated virtual reality
and Spot the Dog. It was an incredible idea that we had never come close to imagining. This taught us that we were too practical with our idea and we should have gone even more outside of the box. It was definitely a learning experience. Winning is not everything. The process of starting from nothing, with a group of people who had never met, to becoming friends and presenting in front of a group of professionals is not something most undergraduate students ever get to experience. It was a lesson in teamwork, creativity and understanding. I have nothing but positive things to say about the BCLC Target Competition. It was an incredible opportunity to expand business skills in a real world setting. It was challenging and intriguing. The Target Case Competition is only one of the many events that the BCLC provides for their students, and it was a great experience.

- Jackie Seras