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Welch College of Business Team Finishes 3rd in 198-Mile Relay Race

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On the weekend of May 21st, 12 members of the Sacred Heart University’s Jack Welch College of Business shed their business attire to battle against other teams in the New England-based RAGNAR Relay Race. The race consists of 198 miles and is not only one of 15 being held around the United States, but also a part of the world’s largest relay series. The team, “It’s Business Time”, raced from Yale University in New Haven, CT all the way to Harvard Stadium in Boston.

“We created the team to bring some of the WCOB community together,” said Sean Heffron, director of the Student Experience in the College of Business, as well as member of the team. “We never thought we’d actually win anything. We had no idea what to expect, or what a good finishing time would be.”

Despite the surprising results, the team did not go into the race unprepared. They started training for the event months ago.

“We all ran in small groups or individually, since it was hard to get 12 people together,” said Heffron. “We all trained hard enough, as no one was injured and no one dropped out. Mentally this race is just as tough as it is physically.”

The team consisted of 5 current or former SHU cross country runners; however the other 7 individuals had no professional running experience. The race, which is called a “RAGNAR,” splits team up into 2 vans, each carrying 6 runners. The runners then run a relay-style race from check point to check point from start to finish. Each runner gets 3 turns to run different legs of the race. The team battled against fatigue, hunger, unfamiliar routes, thick fog, steep hills, and much more.

“What started out as an opportunity to just bond and showcase some of the talent the WCOB has turned into something much more,” said Heffron.

To keep the race fair, the teams that need more time start earlier in the day, while the teams that are faster start later. Team “It’s Business Time” started somewhere in the middle around 10am with and estimated time of arrival around 11 a.m. the next day. However, they did not know how quick they would end up running.

“At checkpoints we began talking to other teams, “ said Heffron, “and discovered that we had caught up to teams who had left as early as 6 a.m.”

The team continued their climb to the top as they passed more and more runners until they were in the lead.

“We held the lead for the remainder of the day,” said Heffron, “running without anyone in sight through thick fog, sleeping towns, and the darkness of the quiet countryside.”

The member to finish the race was Interim Dean of the College of Business, Rupendra Paliwal. He was the first
runner to enter Harvard stadium. Heffron explained that his team met him and ran the final quarter-mile around the track to finish the race together. The team not only finished the 195 mile race first, but also placed third overall among 190 teams.

“I am impressed,” said Heffron. “These people had my respect before the race started. Now they have my trust. They are 11 people that I know I can count on, 11 people who have a special character that I haven’t seen before. There won’t just be a smile in the hallway, and a ‘hey, I ran a race with that person.’ The connection goes deeper. When you accomplish something like this, when you witness someone reaching into empty recesses to harness waning strength in the name of the team; you never forget it.”

There were also two other teams that represented SHU in the race. "Hearts & Soles", sponsored by the SHU Employee Wellness Program, placed 20th overall out of 205 teams and 5th in the Mixed Division. The other team, “SHUnanigans”, placed 12 overall.