



Greetings!

The team at Walmart is very excited to sponsor the Collegiate Challenge, co-sponsored by the **Council for Retail and Sales, located at DeSales University College of Business**. This team-based competition is tasked to solve a real business opportunity for our company.

The top team will be awarded \$1,200 to be divided by team members, a trophy and their names on the CRS Big Trophy which will be housed at DeSales University. The second-place team will be awarded \$400 to be divided by the team.

The competition culminates in a regional competition to be held on October 30, 2025, at the DeSales University campus. Each school or branch may submit up to 2 teams. **Last year some of the colleges ran a local competition and then sent their top team(s) to the final competition. This is a great class or club (e.g., Enactus, Business Clubs, LaunchBox) project!** The competition will be judged on the written executive summary and the presentation.

Details of the Challenge are in the following pages. We believe presenting students with real business problems and having them develop solutions to those problems will help them bridge the gap between academics and the business world. Thanks for participating!

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2025 Collegiate Challenge

Powered By



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Important Dates

Case Information Released	By the end of August 2025
Friday Sep 12, 2025	Intent to Participate Form is Due Online . 10 teams maximum; First 10 to register will be accepted.
Wednesday Sept 17, 2025 7 – 8 p.m.	Online Information/Q&A session with Walmart personnel and students. Advisors welcome. Link to join .
Saturday Oct 18, 2025	Executive Summary due by 5:00 pm. Send to Elaine Thode, CRS Program Director, elaine.thode@desales.edu . No late entries will be accepted.
Wednesday Oct 29	Pitch presentation due by 5 p.m. Send to Elaine Thode, CRS Program Director, elaine.thode@desales.edu – no changes after this deadline.
Thursday Oct 30	Presentations by Teams to Judges at DeSales University. Bring presentation on thumb drive as backup.

Direct questions about the competition to: Elaine Thode, CRS Program Director, elaine.thode@desales.edu

Introduction

You've heard of the Shark Tank television show. We're taking that concept and applying it to a collegiate competition in retailing and sales! When you enter the **CRS Collegiate Challenge, Powered by Walmart**, you gain both practical and theoretical experience in the development of recommendations for a major corporate client. This challenge allows you the ability to bring your lifelong learning skills to a competition that will help to build a great base for your personal career in business. The focus of the competition will be on helping Walmart develop ideas on how to manage customer expectations and build brand loyalty. The competition will be held Oct 30, 2025, at DeSales University, Center Valley, PA. The Collegiate Challenge will surface ideas and creative solutions that will directly impact the company.



Case Information

Walmart Background / Overview

Walmart is one of the biggest retailers in the world, with the company and its subsidiaries employing approximately 2.3 million associates worldwide.

Walmart is a people-led, tech-powered omnichannel retailer dedicated to helping people save money and live better. According to Doug McMillon, President and CEO of Walmart Inc, “The journey we’ve been on to improve how we serve our customers and members while changing the shape of our business continues. The success we’re seeing is made possible by the hard work and dedication of our associates from around the world. Walmart is an and company. We’re people and technology. We’re stores and eCommerce. We’re innovation and execution. We believe the combination of a purpose-driven, people-centric culture and world-class technology is the winning formula” ([2025 annual report](#), p. 1).

Shown below is a summary of their growth from 2024 to 2025:



¹Our global advertising business is recorded in either net sales or as a reduction to cost of sales, depending on the nature of the advertising arrangement.
²Total global giving includes cash donations made by Walmart Inc. & subsidiaries and related charitable entities, and estimated value of in-kind donations.

Their mission statement is simple: We save people money so they can live better.

This case focuses on how to manage customer expectations and build brand loyalty in a challenging retail environment.

Case Focus and Opportunity

Consumer expectations for convenience and immediacy are reshaping the retail landscape, challenging traditional profitability models. At the same time, deep discounting, rising customer acquisition costs, and logistical expenses strain margins and business sustainability. Walmart, as



a category-defining retail giant, faces mounting pressure to balance operational efficiency with brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction.

Questions to Consider:

1. Which value drivers (for examples: price, convenience, speed, personalization, and sustainability) do consumers prioritize most in retail today? How do these vary across different demographic or psychographic segments?
2. How do expectations around delivery speed, seamless omnichannel experiences, and pricing flexibility impact consumer retention and loyalty? What impacts these expectations?
3. What strategic moves can Walmart make to reconcile rising operational costs with the need to remain competitive on convenience and pricing?
4. Considering the pressures on profitability, what actions can Walmart take to build deeper brand loyalty beyond price and convenience?
5. What trade-offs could there be between short-term margin protection and long-term customer value creation?
6. What programs or activities can Walmart implement at the store level without significantly impacting sales and profits?

While not required, it is highly recommended that members of the team visit a Walmart store.

Assignment / Deliverables

Assignment: Approach this as if your team is a part of a consulting company.

Develop a strategic business plan in response to the question above, integrating actionable ideas and recommendations.

Teams should explore all relevant aspects, conducting research to determine the necessary budget for their proposed plan. Each team will present their strategy to a panel of judges, outlining their recommendations, implementation steps, projected timeline, and associated financial implications for Walmart. Rationale for each recommendation should be clearly articulated.



Required Deliverables:

1. **Expanded Executive Summary:** 5–8 pages
2. **Final Presentation:** Up to 15 minutes

All proposed ideas should be:

- **Actionable:** Capable of being implemented by the Walmart team within a short timeframe and justified by the investment of time, capital, and resources required for scale.
- **Replicable:** Designed for scalability across multiple Walmart locations to ensure consistency and impact.

On Oct 30, teams will present to judges, followed immediately by a 10-minute question and answer session with the judges. The winners will be announced on that day.

Useful Sites

How to Write a Case Study: <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-write-a-case-study-analysis-466329>

How to Write Executive Summaries:

<https://www.uakron.edu/cba/docs/communications/WritingExecutiveSummaries.pdf>

Rules

Section I: Competition Overview

The challenge may be incorporated into a class project, a club project or, if there is enough interest among students, a group of students may get together and compete.

Event Date & Location October 30, 2025. DeSales University 2755 Station Ave., Center Valley, PA (Additional venue details will be shared as deadlines approach.)

Team Composition

- Each college/university may submit up to *two teams*.
- Multi-campus institutions (e.g., Penn State) may register *two teams per campus*.
- Teams must include *3–4 undergraduate students* graduating in 2025 or later.
- Presentation Requirements (If a team member can't make it to the competition):
 - Teams of 3: *At least 2 presenters must be present*
 - Teams of 4: *At least 3 presenters must be present*



- Each team must have a *faculty advisor*, who must attend the competition in person. Exceptions due to illness or emergency are subject to organizer discretion.

Section II: Registration & Participation

Eligibility Requirements

- Students must be enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year accredited institution.
- All submitted work must be original and created by the student team.
- All participants agree that submitted ideas become the property of Walmart and that *no compensation* will be provided.

Registration Deadline Intent to Participate Form due by *September 12, 2025*

Submit via: [Council for Retail and Sales website](#)

Expenses & Meals

- Teams are responsible for travel, lodging, and materials.
- Light breakfast and lunch will be provided at no charge.

Other Guidelines

- Use of Generative AI

Generative AI may be used for background research, but it is prohibited for idea generation or final deliverables. Disclosure of AI use is required.

Citing Generative AI: [How to Cite AI Generated Content - Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) - Research Guides at Purdue University Libraries](#)

Section III: Written Submission – Expanded Executive Summary

Requirements

- **Length: 5–8 pages, including cover page.** Pages must be numbered.
- Due: *Saturday, October 18, 2025 by 5:00 p.m.*
- Submit via email to: *elaine.thode@desales.edu*
- APA style referencing required

Cover Page Must Include

- Institution name
- Walmart-compliant logo
- Team name and members
- Faculty advisor's name and contact information



Suggested Content Structure

- Introduction
- Situation/SWOT Analysis
- SMART Objectives
- Recommendations and Implementation
- Budget
- Evaluation Plan
- Conclusion
- Works Cited (APA format)
- Each team should generate secondary data to substantiate all material found within their executive summary. APA (American Psychological Association) style should be used for referencing purposes. Primary research is accepted and encouraged.

Section IV: Presentation Guidelines

Format & Timing

- 15-minute in-person presentation
 - Two-minute warning given
 - Strict cutoff times enforced
- 10-minute judge Q&A
- Faculty advisors may attend Q&A but may not participate

Technical Details

- Presentation file due: *Wednesday, October 29, 2025 by 5:00 p.m.*
- Email to: *elaine.thode@desales.edu*
- No changes permitted after submission
- Bring a backup on a thumb drive

Onsite Equipment Provided

- Computer with PowerPoint
- Internet access
- Remote control
- Projector and screen
- Teams must operate all electronic equipment themselves

Presentation Standards

- Students may show and/or hand the judges items (such as paper handouts)
- Giveaways (e.g., food, gifts) are not permitted
- No corrections to written submissions may be added during presentation
- Latecomers will not be admitted once a presentation begins



Section V: Communication Protocol

- Advisors may collect and submit student questions throughout the semester
- Weekly submissions may be sent to elaine.thode@desales.edu who will forward to a Walmart representative who will answer as time permits.
- General answers provided to requesting faculty advisor

Awards

Awards are determined by the combined score of the expanded executive summary and presentation.

Award	Description
1st place	The team will receive a trophy, award certificate, plus the following: \$1,200 total to be divided equally among team members The team members' names will also be added to the Big Trophy, housed at DeSales University. This trophy contains team members' names and sponsors from previous competitions.
2nd Place	The team will receive a trophy, award certificate and \$400 total to be divided equally among team members.
3rd Place	Certificate for each team member
Other awards	There may be other awards presented by the judges if outstanding performance is indicated. This will be up to the judges' discretion. For example, awards MAY be given for "Best Presenter," or for other achievements that exceed the minimum expectations.

Scoring

1. Scoring sheets for both the expanded executive summary and presentation will be used to choose winners. These score sheets should help the teams develop their expanded executive summary content and are included below.
2. Judges' decisions are final.
3. The penalty for all violations is disqualification. Whether or not a disqualification is warranted is up to Walmart representatives.



Judges

There will be three to five judges. The judges for the challenge will be individuals who are experts in their areas. There will be judges from the sponsoring company (Walmart) and if needed, faculty and/or practitioners.



Tentative Score Sheets

CRS Collegiate Challenge - Expanded Executive Summary

	Must Improve	Should Improve	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent	Score
Situation/Strategy						
Current Situation	0-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10	
Competitive Analysis	0-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10	
SWOT	0-8	9-10	11	12-13	14-15	
Objectives	0-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10	
Ideas						
Recommendations	0-19	20-23	24-27	28-31	32-35	
Evaluation and Control	0-1	2	3	4	5	
Other						
Introduction	0-1	2	3	4	5	
Conclusion	0-1	2	3	4	5	
Documentation of sources	0-1	2	3	4	5	
	TOTAL					

CRS Collegiate Challenge – Presentation

	Must Improve	Should Improve	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent	SCORE
Opening – Attention getting, led into topic	0-1	2	3	4	5	
Current Situation/Competitive Analysis/SWOT	0-17	18-20	21-23	24-26	27-30	
Recommendations	0-19	20-23	24-27	28-31	32-35	
Conclusion – Effective	0-1	2	3	4	5	
Overall Delivery, gestures, energy level, voice	0-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10	
Visual Aids	0-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10	
Appearance – dressed for a professional presentation	0-1	2	3	4	5	

Contact Information

Questions or concerns should be directed to: Elaine Thode, CRS Program Director,
elaine.thode@desales.edu **Note: Any contact must be initiated by the faculty advisor.**