



## Greetings!

The team at Alzheimer's Association 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 March 30, 2026, 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, Lunchbox) 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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# Spring 2026 Collegiate Challenge

Powered By



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## Important Dates

Case Information Released	By the end of December 2025
Friday Jan 30, 2026	Intent to Participate Form is Due <a href="#">Online</a> 10 teams max accepted in order of registration
Wednesday Feb 4, 2026 7 – 8 p.m.	Information/Q&A session – Online Teams meeting with Alzheimer’s Association personnel and case competition students. Advisors are welcome to attend. Come prepared with questions. Link to join: <a href="#">CRS: Alzheimer's/Student Info Call   Meeting-Join   Microsoft Teams</a>
Friday, March 20	Executive Summary is due by 5:00 pm. Send to Elaine Thode, CRS Program Director, <a href="mailto:elaine.thode@desales.edu">elaine.thode@desales.edu</a> . No late entries will be accepted.
Sunday March 29	Pitch presentation due by 5 p.m. Send to Elaine Thode, CRS Program Director, <a href="mailto:elaine.thode@desales.edu">elaine.thode@desales.edu</a> – no changes after this deadline.
Monday March 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](mailto: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 Alzheimer’s Association**, 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 Alzheimer’s Association develop ideas to raise awareness about the organization, with a particular focus on brain health and risk reduction, and to get more people to volunteer with the local Chapter(s). The Collegiate Challenge will surface ideas and creative solutions that will directly impact the company.

## Case Information

### *Alzheimer's Association Background / Overview*

#### **What is Alzheimer's Disease (Alzheimer's Association, 2025)?**

Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia that affects memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms eventually grow severe enough to interfere with daily tasks. Alzheimer's is the leading cause of dementia, accounting for 60–80% of cases. Dementia describes a decline in memory and cognitive abilities severe enough to affect daily life. Although aging increases risk, Alzheimer's is not a normal part of aging. When it develops in people under 65, it's called younger-onset or early-onset Alzheimer's.

The disease is progressive, worsening over time. Early stages involve mild memory loss, while late stages cause loss of communication and response abilities. Most people live 4–8 years after diagnosis, though some may live up to 20 years. Alzheimer's typically progresses through stages: asymptomatic, mild cognitive impairment, mild dementia, moderate dementia, and severe dementia.

There is no cure, but new treatments such as donanemab (Kisunla™) and lecanemab (Leqembi®) can slow cognitive decline by removing beta-amyloid from the brain. Other therapies help manage symptoms and improve quality of life. Research continues globally to develop better treatments and preventive methods.

Symptoms usually begin with difficulty remembering new information and progress to confusion, mood changes, disorientation, suspicion, communication problems, and difficulty walking or swallowing. Because people may not recognize their symptoms, family and friends often notice changes first. [The Alzheimer's Association has a list of the ten warning signs.](#)

The need for effective dementia risk reduction strategies that help all communities increases by the day. Two-thirds of Americans have at least one major potential risk factor for dementia. Just as public health works to keep people physically healthy across the lifespan, public health must help people stay cognitively healthy. A growing body of evidence shows that addressing certain modifiable risk factors and promoting healthy behaviors can reduce the risk of cognitive decline, possibly reduce the risk of dementia, and protect cognitive health. Protecting your brain health — how well you think, learn and remember — is important at every age. Building

brain-healthy habits can help you live better now and protect your memory and thinking for the future. Brain health is important for everyone, including people with a family history of dementia. It is never too early or too late to take action for your brain health.

Early diagnosis is important for effective treatment and support. Resources like the Alzheimer's Association, ALZConnected, and ALZNavigator™ provide guidance, community connections, and personalized action plans for those affected.

### **From their Website:**

The Alzheimer's Association is a worldwide voluntary health organization dedicated to Alzheimer's care, support and research. Its mission is to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia—by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.

We help all those impacted by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias by providing support groups and educational resources, while advancing crucial research and public policy initiatives.

### ***Case Focus and Opportunity***

The Alzheimer's Association [Delaware Valley and Greater Pennsylvania Chapter(s)] seeks innovative strategies to increase awareness of the Association and its resources, brain health and risk reduction. And to boost volunteer engagement across new audiences.

Your challenge is to develop a comprehensive marketing and community engagement plan that:

- Increases visibility of the Alzheimer's Association and Volunteerism across Pennsylvania
- Strengthens the public's understanding of Alzheimer's and dementia, and the need for prevention and risk reduction strategies (focused on Brain Health).
- Enhances public understanding of Alzheimer's and the mission of the Alzheimer's Association.

Depending on where your college is located, tailor your recommendations to your local community or region. Your team may focus on one or more of the following areas: marketing

### **Questions to Consider:**

#### **1. Awareness and Communication**

- Which communication channels (e.g., social media, local news, community partnerships, campus engagement) are most effective for reaching different audiences (students, families, businesses, corporate and community leaders, older adults)?
- How can storytelling or personal connections be used to make the cause more relatable?
- What tone and messaging strategies could most effectively motivate people to take action (volunteer, donate)?

## **2. Corporate and Community Partnerships**

- What types of local or regional companies align with the Alzheimer's Association's mission and values?
- What value can the Association offer potential partners (e.g., visibility, employee engagement/education, community goodwill)?
- How might the Association engage businesses and community groups year-round to enhance public awareness and education?

## **3. Local Strategy and Implementation**

- What community groups, schools, or civic organizations could become strategic allies?
- What are some low-cost or high-impact local marketing tactics?
- How will you measure success (KPIs like participation, donations, awareness, engagement metrics)?

## **5. Long-Term Sustainability**

- How can the Alzheimer's Association turn one-time engagements into long-term partnerships?
- How can data, feedback, or participant stories be used to continually improve the Volunteer experience?
- How to deepen or expand a volunteer's portfolio or encourage current volunteers to activate others in their networks.

## ***Assignment / Deliverables***

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

Develop a strategic 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 Alzheimer's Association. Rationale for each recommendation should be clearly articulated.

**Required Deliverables:**

1. **Expanded Executive Summary:** 5–8 pages (including cover page & references)
2. **Final Presentation:** Up to 15 minutes

**All proposed ideas should be:**

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

Teams will present to judges in person, 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:** March 30, 2026. DeSales University 2755 Station Ave., Center Valley, PA in the DeSales University Center (DUC). Venue details will be shared as deadlines approach.

- All submitted work must be original and created by the student team.
- All participants agree that submitted ideas become the property of Alzheimer's Association and that *no compensation* will be provided.

### **Team Limits**

- Each college or university may submit up to **two teams**.
- Multi-campus institutions (e.g., Penn State) may register **two teams per campus**.
- If a team includes students from multiple campuses, at least **two members must come from the same campus**. That campus will be designated as the **host campus** for rules purposes.

### **Student Eligibility**

- Students must be enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year accredited institution
- Teams must consist of **3–4 undergraduate students** who are expected to graduate in **2026 or later**.

### **Presentation Requirements**

- If a team member cannot attend the competition:
  - Teams of 3 must have at least **2 presenters** present.
  - Teams of 4 must have at least **3 presenters** present.

### **Faculty Advisor**

- Each team must have a **faculty advisor** who attends the competition in person.
- Exceptions due to illness or emergency may be granted at the **organizers' discretion**.



## ***Section II: Registration & Expenses***

**Registration Deadline** Intent to Participate Form due by *January 30, 2026*, 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.

## ***Section III: Written Submission – Expanded Executive Summary***

### **Requirements**

- Length: *5–8 pages, including cover page & references*. Pages must be numbered.
- Due: *Friday, March 20, 2026, by 5:00 p.m.*
- Submit via email to: *elaine.thode@desales.edu*
- APA style referencing required

### **Include**

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

### **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](#)

### **Suggested Content Structure**

- Introduction
- Situation/SWOT Analysis
- SMART Objectives
- Recommendations and Implementation
- Budget
- Evaluation
- 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: *Sunday, March 29, 2026, 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 the presentation

## ***Section V: Communication Protocol***

- Advisors may collect and submit student questions throughout the semester
- Weekly submissions may be sent to [elaine.thode@desales.edu](mailto:elaine.thode@desales.edu) who will forward to an Alzheimer's Association 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.

<b>Award</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> place</b>	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 member's names and sponsors from previous competitions.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Place</b>	The team will receive a trophy, award certificate and \$400 total to be divided equally among team members.
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Place</b>	Certificate for each team member
<b>Other awards</b>	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 Alzheimer's Association 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 organization (Alzheimer's Association) 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
<b>Situation/Strategy</b>						
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	
<b>Ideas</b>						
Recommendations	0-19	20-23	24-27	28-31	32-35	
Evaluation and Control	0-1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Other</b>						
Introduction	0-1	2	3	4	5	
Conclusion	0-1	2	3	4	5	
Documentation of sources	0-1	2	3	4	5	
	<b>TOTAL</b>					

### 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](mailto:elaine.thode@desales.edu) **Note: Any contact must be initiated by the faculty advisor.**