

2025-2026 PRIME CENTER BUSINESS ETHICS AND SUSTAINABILITY CASE CHALLENGE

The **2025-2026 PRIME Center Business Ethics and Sustainability Case Challenge (Case Challenge)** provides Detroit Mercy students an opportunity to explore the moral imperatives of sustainable development. Student teams will put themselves in the role of a fictional outside consulting group hired by the senior leadership of a real-life organization to help it address a problem it faces related to one of the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. Teams will prepare a written report intended for the organization's senior leadership that analyzes the problem and proposes a viable solution.

Topic

Teams may select any problem, company, and SDG of their choice. The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future." Teams are encouraged to review their chosen SDG, its targets, and indicators carefully when planning their written reports. More information on the UN SDGs is available here: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

The problem must relate to the team's chosen SDG in some way. The problem must connect to the real-life organization in some way. The "audience" for the written report is the chosen organization's senior leadership, such as the CEO, board of directors, etc. (teams are free to select the senior leadership audience they wish to target).

Remember, teams are acting in the role of fictional outside consulting groups hired by the company to address the chosen problem. The tone of written reports should reflect this perspective.

Team Selection and Registration

The Case Challenge is open to all Detroit Mercy students in good standing. *Every team must have at least one undergraduate business administration or accounting major.* All team members must be enrolled at Detroit Mercy during the Fall 2025 semester. **Teams of 3 – 5 students are permitted.** It is not necessary for team members to be enrolled in the same course(s) or have the same class standing (freshman, sophomore, etc.).

Awards and Prizes

Three finalist teams will be selected by a review panel to give short, 10-minute presentations based on their written reports. These presentations will determine the 1st place, 2nd place, and 3rd place teams respectively. Members of each winning team will receive an award certificate and have their names

inscribed on an awards plaque to be on permanent display in CBA. In addition, each winning team will receive the following:

- 1st place – \$400 per team member
- 2nd place – \$300 per team member
- 3rd place – \$200 per team member

The PRIME Center will sponsor the 1st place to participate in the *2026 International Business Ethics and Sustainability Case Competition (IBESCC)* hosted by Loyola Marymount University. The IBESCC is held in early April. **The 1st place team is not required to participate in the IBESCC.**

CBA faculty members may, for undergraduate courses only, at their discretion offer extra credit points to students who participate in the Case Challenge. Please speak with the faculty member directly.

Evaluation Criteria

Written reports will be evaluated, using a blind review process, according to the following dimensions: (1) ethical issues; (2) business/financial issues; (3) legal issues; and (4) persuasiveness. Please see *Appendix I* for more detailed information on each of the evaluation criteria.

Submission Guidelines

Written reports must not exceed 6 double-spaced pages (including executive summary as noted below) and must cite all sources using APA format (APA format required for citations and references only). An abstract is not required.

All written reports must include a detachable cover page with the names of all team members. **Do not include student names, or any other information that may identify team members, anywhere else in your submission.** All metadata identifying the author(s) of the document must also be removed.

All submissions must include an executive summary. The executive summary must include the following:

- Topic title (12 words or less)
- Intended audience (i.e., senior leadership of chosen company)
 - Example: CEO of Apple Inc., Board of Directors for Ford Motor Company, etc.
- The number and complete title of the SDG at issue
- The name of your fictional consulting group
- A 1-2 paragraph summary of your argument that includes your recommendation
- Executive summary must not exceed 1 page

Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Case Challenge

To ensure fairness and academic integrity in the Case Challenge, all participating teams must abide by the following policy regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI):

1. Permissible Uses of AI

- AI tools may be used for supportive purposes only, such as:
 - Brainstorming ideas or approaches.
 - Refining language or grammar in text that you have already drafted.
 - Checking formatting of citations (e.g., APA).
 - Identifying possible counterarguments to stress-test your team's reasoning.
- These uses are allowed only if the final written report and recommendations remain the team's own original work.

2. Prohibited Uses of AI

- Teams may not submit text or analysis generated entirely or primarily by AI.
- Copying/pasting AI output into your written report with little or no modification is prohibited.
- AI may not be used to generate citations or sources that do not exist.

3. Disclosure Requirement

- If your team uses AI in any way, you must include a short AI Use Statement at the end of your written report (before the reference list) describing how AI was used.
- Example: *"Our team used ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) to refine the grammar of our executive summary and to identify potential weaknesses in our ethical analysis. All final ideas, arguments, and writing are our own."*

*Failure to follow this policy will result in disqualification from the competition.

Dates and Deadlines

December 1, 2025: Final written reports submitted to Dr. Evan Peterson at petersea@udmercy.edu by 11:59 p.m.

Finalist teams will be notified via email no later than December 15, 2025.

January 23, 2026 (tentative): Finalist team presentations held in PRIME Center Studio, CF 238. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place teams will be announced at this event.

IBESCC Participation (not necessary for participation in the Case Challenge at Detroit Mercy)

For the PRIME Center to sponsor the 1st place team to participate in the IBESCC at Loyola Marymount, the following are needed:

(1) Team must have 3 – 5 students. A majority of the 1st place team members must agree to participate in IBESCC. If a member of the 1st place team is unable to participate in IBESCC, the 1st place team may substitute a new team member at their discretion in consultation with Dr. Peterson.

(2) All team members participating in IBESCC must be enrolled at Detroit Mercy during the Winter 2026 semester (team members who graduate in December 2025 can still participate in IBESCC).

(3) Written notice (via email) of desire to participate must be given to Dr. Peterson by January 30, 2026.

Teams that agree to participate in the IBESCC are committed to doing so.

More information on the IBESCC is available via the following link:

<https://cba.lmu.edu/centers/ibes/eventsprograms/ibesccl/>

Appendix I – Evaluation Criteria

Ethical Dimension

- From a social justice perspective, precisely why is the problem an ethical issue? **Please refrain from citing philosophers and from using technical, philosophical terminology. Instead, you may refer to your chosen organization's mission statement, code of values/conduct, etc.**
- What is the amount and type of tangible good and harm involved in the problem and in the solution?
- Are the actions themselves in this case (in the problem and solution) ethically defensible?
- Is there a conflict of rights? Does the solution resolve this?
- Is the solution ethically acceptable?
- What goals does the solution ultimately advance?
- How well does the team present the ethical issues in a straightforward way, relating them directly to central issues associated with running the organization? The discussion of the ethical issues should help the team “sell” the team’s solution.

Business/Financial Dimension

- Are the costs to society of the underlying problem pointed out?
- Are the benefits to society of the proposed solution to the problem pointed out?
- Does the solution make sense from a business/financial perspective?
- Is the company in a position to afford the solution? Answers to this question should include: (1) the costs of the proposed solution and; (2) how (and to what extent) the problem raises or lowers the company's costs or profits.

Legal Dimension

- Is the problem brought about by any laws or regulations having been broken? **Keep in mind that local, regional, national, and/or international laws, regulations, and court cases may be relevant to your chosen topic.**
- Do any laws or regulations determine or limit what the organization/industry may or may not do to resolve the problem?
- Do any major court cases determine or limit what the organization may do to resolve the problem?
- Is there any likelihood of lawsuits?
- Is the solution legal?
- If no laws or cases apply, did the team make this clear?

Persuasiveness Dimension

- Were the problem and the solution clearly explained?
- Were the analyses thorough and well-informed?
- Is the solution realistic and practical?
- Is the solution legal, financially responsible and ethical?
- Was the team’s analysis of the problem and suggested solution convincing?