

# NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release / Jan. 28, 2016

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## **Xavier Student Wins International Investing Competition**

### *Williams College of Business Places More Students Among The Top 20 Finishers Than Any Other Business School*

One of Matthew Tarka's earliest memories is sitting on his father's lap in front of a computer and learning about the stock market.

At the time, he was about five years old. Now, he's a freshman at Xavier University and his knowledge of investing has grown dramatically. It also has paid off.

Tarka, a finance major from Edgewood, Kentucky, has won an international competition to determine which college student could get the greatest return on their investment from a simulated \$100,000 stock portfolio.

While other teens might follow sports or pop culture, Tarka tracks the financial markets. "I'd rather read about that than whatever else kids read about nowadays," he said.

"I may not be an athlete," he added, "but I still want to win and be the best."

With an investment return of 15.52 percent, Tarka's portfolio significantly outperformed the second-place finisher, Wyatt Smith of the University of Central Florida, whose portfolio had a return of 11.27 percent.

Tarka wasn't the only Xavier business student to excel in the inaugural ETF Global Portfolio Challenge, held during the fall semester. Six placed in the top 20 out of nearly 1,000 students who entered. No other university had as many students who placed in the top 20.

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“Our students showed that they not only have outstanding investing skills and knowledge but also a strong interest and enthusiasm for finance,” said Kimberly Renners, the finance department faculty member who encouraged students to enter.

The Challenge is a web-based competition to help familiarize college students with exchange-traded funds and instill in them investment and portfolio management skills. ETFs are securities that trade like common stock on a stock exchange. They cover a broad spectrum of assets, including stocks, bonds, real estate and commodities.

The students built a “fantasy” portfolio by selecting four to ten funds out of about 1,700 available on U.S. stock exchanges. They needed to determine the percentage each fund would represent in their portfolio and could rebalance their portfolios four times during the competition. For research into the funds, competitors were given free access to the website of the presenter of the competition, ETG Global, an independent provider of data, risk analytics and other services for exchange-trade products.

Xavier’s Financial Management Association, a student organization, had been talking about holding a stock competition when Renners, the Association’s advisor, learned about the ETF Global Challenge. The Association decided to encourage members to enter, and about 30 students did so. As an incentive, the Association offered a gift card to the Xavier student who would get the best investment return.

Renners and the Association got a nice surprise when they learned that the gift card would be just a small part of their top finisher’s prize.

Tarka and a Xavier representative have been invited to an April 7 luncheon of about 500 finance professionals in New York City, where Tarka and others will be honored. Their expenses will be paid. Tarka will have networking opportunities and other exposure that could lead to internships, jobs and other benefits that would give him a jumpstart in his career.

Tarka is a 2015 graduate of Dixie Heights High School, and had a 3.95 GPA there. His parents are Stan and Deb Tarka.

Growing up, he and his father weren’t the type to play basketball in their driveway. In fact, after developing asthma, Tarka didn’t play sports much at all after third grade. Instead, he and his father, an automation engineer, paid attention to the business world, especially investing.

He likes to read about mergers and acquisitions and other business topics. “Which two companies are merging -- that’s more interesting to me than following sports teams or paying attention to who’s releasing their latest album.”

When he told college friends that he won, some replied: “Oh, that’s cool. But what’s an ETF?”

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He is just as lost when friends talk to him about chemistry and biology. “You put me into stocks and bonds and finance, it clicks for me.”

Tarka attributes his first-place finish to his research and analysis – and some luck.

Every night after he finished his homework, he went to the Fifth Third Trading Center in Smith Hall, the home of the Williams College of Business, to do research. The Trading Center has Bloomberg computer terminals, which provide real-time financial information.

Before the contest started, he set up model portfolios and tested them. Then, he scrapped them after reading predictions that the price of crude oil would continue to decrease. He bought four inverse commodity ETFs, which means he bet on the price of crude oil to drop. Inverse funds can be used to profit from declines in the commodity futures markets because they are designed to rise in value when the price of certain raw materials decreases.

Had it been real money, Tarka’s portfolio would have grown by about \$15,000 in just 10 weeks.

Tarka choose to attend Xavier because of its strong finance department, its connections to the business world and its Bloomberg terminals. With 31 terminals, Xavier has among the most of any business school in North America. The terminals have access to an “insane” amount of business data, he said. “It seems like a never-ending amount of information on companies.”

He’s so studious that he read the manual about how to use the terminals over the summer before he even set foot on campus as a student.

Despite his success in the contest, Tarka is not sure about his future career. He has broad interests, including nonprofits. He’s grateful that winning the competition will open him up to opportunities to explore careers with possible internships and shadowing opportunities.

The other Xavier students who finished in the top 20 were: senior Andrew Klashick, 9<sup>th</sup> place; junior Caitlin Krabach, 11<sup>th</sup> place; senior Paul Zickes, 12<sup>th</sup> place; junior Brandon Bischof, 17<sup>th</sup> place, and senior Michael Harrington, 18<sup>th</sup> place.

More information about the Williams College of Business is available at:  
[www.xavier.edu/williams](http://www.xavier.edu/williams)