IN OCTOBER 2012, Michael Blumreich, president of the Office for Financial Success and Personal Financial Planning senior, entered the State Farm National Sales Competition. The event encourages students to embrace parts of the financial planning and insurance industries, such as how to market products, how to present oneself to a client and how to create a positive sales environment. “All of these tools ultimately help you as a financial planner or agent to be able to identify the clients’ needs so you can truly help them,” Blumreich explains.

The competition was open to college students from around the nation and judged by top executives at State Farm. Blumreich participated in a sales role-play competition, which was designed to simulate a client-agent interaction – first in a coffee shop and then in the agent’s office. The top four competitors advanced to the final round, which consisted of a more in depth one agent, two client scenario. “The clients came in upset, due to a raise in their premiums, due to a claims audit in their area,” Blumreich remembers. “To be successful in this scenario you had to do damage control, and assess their current wants and needs to ultimately win the client over.”

To prepare for the event, Blumreich relied on previous internship experience and also advice from business school professor and coach of the MU team, Wayne Keene. “The competition was tough,” Blumreich says. “The students all came very well prepared, well trained and from reputable programs. It was an incredible feeling when they called my name as the first place winner of the State Farm Sales Role Play Competition.”

Blumreich received $4,500 in prize money, a plaque, a trophy and a giant foam check, which he’s since displayed on his bedroom wall. He’s also stayed in touch with his competitors via Facebook and LinkedIn. “The memories from this competition are ones I will not soon forget,” he says.