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Graduate Scholar: Mastering her opportunities

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Jessica Davis is an award-winning student in the Master of Business Administration program.

Mastering her opportunities

Business student's projects help restaurants, military

By Beth Bohn

It hasn't taken Master of Business Administration student Jessica Davis long to earn accolades for her research, classroom work and teamwork.

Since starting the Kansas State University MBA program in spring 2018, Davis has helped develop a sales forecasting model that a national restaurant chain is using, presented her research at a national conference, and was on a top-placing team at the 2019 Big 12 MBA Case Competition.

Davis came to K-State after earning a bachelor's degree in economics from Fordham University, serving in the U.S. Army as a military intelligence officer and then working in sales.

"I decided to go back to school to get an

MBA because I wanted to have a broader knowledge of basic business concepts," Davis said. "I also wanted to learn and develop skills in data analytics and marketing, which are both passions of mine."

She chose K-State's College of Business Administration, she said, because she wanted a program where she could have one-on-one relationships with her classmates and professors.

Those relationships are paying off. In her MBA capstone course this past spring, Davis worked on a team project for client Centralized Supply Chain Services LLC, a company that provides operations management and procurement for national restaurant chains Applebee's and IHOP. The team analyzed Applebee's

social media data to create a predictive sales forecasting model to improve company operations planning.

"Our model proved significantly more accurate than Applebee's current forecast model," Davis said. "The company is now using the model to improve its sales forecasts and is integrating it into a dashboard they provide to Applebee's franchises across the country."

Davis and Jaebeom Suh, associate professor of marketing, worked on another project last year to reduce waste in military field rations, or MREs.

"Our goal was to find the most attractive combination of menu components," Davis said. "Soldiers often pick apart the MRE bundles and throw out items they do not

like. This wastes food and money, and means soldiers do not always get optimal nutrition."

They surveyed current and former military members to determine their MRE preferences, then used conjoint analysis to determine the most attractive MRE bundle. Davis' paper was selected for presentation at the fall 2018 Society of Marketing Advances conference.

To top off her year, Davis and three other K-State MBA students placed third and won \$1,000 at the 2019 Big 12 MBA Case Competition.

Davis is ready for her next opportunity: narrowing down her career interests. She graduates in December and would like a job combining her sales and analytics background. 