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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Local Students Compete to Solve Case Study Problem in International Business**

### **Students' Strategic Business Plans are Capstone of W.J. Cowee Program for International Commerce**

BERLIN, New York, June 2, 2009 – Two teams of students from Berlin Central High School will compete for a scholarship prize when they present their solutions to a theoretical international business problem presented in a case study. The focus of this year's challenge is Caterpillar, Inc., one of the leading US companies with a strong global brand. The presentations, which are open to the public, will take place on Monday, June 15 at 12:00 p.m. at Berlin Central High School in Cherry Plain, New York.

The presentations are the culmination of a semester-long program at Berlin High School developed in partnership with W.J. Cowee, the world's largest manufacturer of wooden floral picks and plant stakes, based in Rensselaer County, NY. The Cowee Program for International Commerce, now in its fourth year, invites top students to participate in a rigorous academic program, incorporating guest lecturers from some of the nation's leading colleges and businesses. The course culminates with the presentation of the students' business plans, involving a number of international business issues, including product mix, pricing, distribution platforms, cultural and political considerations, return on investment, transportation issues, raw materials, labor markets, environmental issues, trade organizations, and related subjects.

This year's case study challenges the students to propose a strategic plan comparing an opportunity to develop a joint venture with either China or South Korea to help manufacture and distribute Caterpillar's mining trucks in Asia markets.

"The Cowee program began four years ago in collaboration with Berlin High School as a way to encourage students to employ a variety of skills to address real-world international commerce issues," said Brian E. Suslak, President and CEO of W.J. Cowee, LLC. "This year's program was especially exciting in that Caterpillar, Inc. helped us develop the concept for the case study. Having Caterpillar's participation in the project raised the bar for everyone, and provided the case study with a 'real-world' context that truly resonated with the students."

"We at Caterpillar are excited to support the program and its goal of developing future leaders. Having an understanding of how companies like Caterpillar make global business decisions is a critical skill for business," says Chris Arvin, Dean of Caterpillar University. "It will be exciting to see the final presentations from the students."

The students have been working under the direction of Berlin High School faculty member Robert Gould, with assistance from management consultant Kenneth W. Moore. “The Cowee Program provides our secondary students with an exciting opportunity to transfer and apply knowledge learned in the classroom to an authentic international business situation,” said Charlotte Gregory, Interim Superintendent of the Berlin Central School District. “This unique program allows us to join forces with a well-respected community business to provide a course of study that is rigorous and relevant for our students. The Cowee Program allows us to mobilize resources and combine them in ways that challenge and broaden our students’ learning and strengthen their success.”

The student presentations will take place beginning at noon on Monday, June 15 in the high school library at Berlin High School, which is located at 17400 Rt. 22 in Cherry Plain, New York. The presentations will be evaluated by a panel of judges including David J. Zimmerman, Professor of Economics and Orrin Sage Professor of Political Economy at Williams College; Ralph M. Bradburd, David A. Wells Professor of Political Economy at Williams College; Lester Gerhardt, Professor, Rensselaer School of Engineering; and Brian E. Suslak, President and CEO of W.J. Cowee, LLC.

The students participating in the 2009 Cowee Program are juniors Erin Berschwinger, Kelsey Demick, Samantha Grant, Kayla Hawk, Victoria Muller, Deanna Nash, Shawn Vasilatos and Drew Webster.

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