Driving Innovation in Telecommunications:

Cisco Guest Lecture – 22 October 2012
By: Mary Rideout

The third lecture in the **Institute for Entrepreneurship Breakfast Series** challenged students in a very different way than the previous sessions. This time Valerio Viscardi, the Business Development Manager EMEA at Cisco, shared with a group of students. The fast talking Viscardi explained the inner workings of optical communications and innovation flow within Cisco. Students learned that Cisco does not enter a market if they do not believe they can capture the majority of the market share. Currently Cisco is the market leader across 9 segments in the telecommunications industry.

Valerio Viscardi

Additionally, those present were exposed to a presentation as it would be given in the business world; acronyms and technical vocabulary were used, as the belief that a basic knowledge, of the products being discussed, was held by all in attendance. Students were challenged to grasp concepts they had never heard of before the lecture, a common occurrence business professionals must face.

Although the content presented was challenging due to students' unfamiliarity with it, the real challenge was in the topic itself. Viscardi's lecture forced students to push their thinking past its normal limits. Instead of thinking about the devices used to access the internet, students were made privy to the way the internet functions, moving their focus from the service to the infrastructure that makes it possible. He explained that Cisco uses two methods when developing a new product a "Top-Down Approach" and a "Bottom-Up Approach;" terms every business and marketing student is familiar with at JCU. Viscardi also spoke about how Cisco introduces new products and phases out the old ones. Before drawing to a close, the lecture touched on the costs incurred by service providers and how these may be reduced. To conclude Viscardi stated, "Innovation is continuous, not just in the planning stage [of new product development]," reminding students of a key factor to be aware of when creating new products and services.