The 11th International Conference of the Society for Global Business and Economic Development (SGBED) held from May 27-30, 2009 in Bratislava, Slovak Republic was in many respects a remarkable meeting. It was a great moment for the School of Business, Montclair State University as we have successfully organized and implemented the 11th event in cooperation with Comenius University and a number of partner universities from around the world. The conference had accepted 219 papers and 7 abstracts after submitting them to a double review process. The conference attendees included about 300 academics representing over 200 universities from 45 countries.

The theme of the 11th International Conference was “Striving for Competitive Advantage & Sustainability: New Challenges of Globalization”. With the globalization of the world marketplace, new opportunities and challenges have emerged causing governments, organizations, and businesses to find innovative ways to conserve the environment while developing strategies to foster economic growth and sustainable development. In line with (Langenwalter, 2007), sustainability is a movement that is both global and relatively new, although its roots are decades old in both the environmental and human resources/organizational development fields. While lean and quality are powerful and effective attributes for an organization, so many companies have implemented these processes in the last 20 years that they no longer provide a competitive edge. Instead, they are expected to be the foundation on which any good business operates. The next competitive edge is sustainability, which incorporates environmental and social values in the corporate focus and organizational goals. Also, sustainability extends lean thinking by including opportunities that are outside of the lean model (Chodikoff, 2009).

The competitive landscape is being reshaped by sustainability pressures. What capabilities and characteristics will companies need to cultivate in order to thrive in the future (Hopkins, 2009)? In striving for competitive advantage and sustainability, many new challenges of globalization have blocked the runway (Harris & Twomey, 2008).

To discuss and address these opportunities and challenges, the 11th International SGBED Conference incorporated papers and
presentations on theoretical and empirical research under a range of sub-themes related to competitive advantage and sustainability in a global economy. All sessions of the conference provided numerous opportunities to discuss the state of the art in the field, from challenges of European and transitional economies to challenges of emerging economies, from international finance and accounting issues to pharmaceuticals, bio-technology and healthcare business; from international management and organizational issues to challenges of higher education international dimensions. This Special Issue contains extended versions of selected high-quality papers from this conference. The set includes five articles with both theoretical and empirical content; these articles were chosen because they cover a wide range of issues, promote cross-learning, and contribute to the present understanding and the existing body of knowledge on new challenges of globalization in striving for competitive advantage and sustainability. Also, each paper has been double-blind reviewed again by three regular Editorial Board members of the journal.

The first article focuses on cybercrimes. Cybercrime is a difficult area in which to conduct legal investigations: not only is the crime often not well-defined, but also the evidence is hard to come by and the laws are not clearly stated. In this context it is very helpful to know what evidence can lead to prosecution. The authors, Murthy, Nagadevara, and De, make a strong contribution in this regard. By using data mining techniques on data collected from real cybercrime cases, the authors show what variables in the data will have the strongest impact in assisting charge-sheeting of reported crimes. The results indicate to law enforcement officers what factors to focus on during their investigations, what factors are not really important for the case, and the regions where such factors assume importance. The most valuable aspect of this paper is to demonstrate, conclusively, that data mining techniques can provide useful and concrete answers to difficult questions of cybercrime.

Further, although the data analysis is specific, the results show that the methods can be used anywhere, to good effect.

The improvement of policies of technological innovation management made possible to address adequately the four main features of the healthcare services supplying: personalization, quality, rapidity and costs; nonetheless, the implementation of large ICTs remains a high-risk activity for most healthcare organizations. This situation is about to persist without the development of a comprehensive and validated evaluation model to provide the means of identifying factors which predict the consequences of ICT for organizational processes and outcomes. Identification of these predictive factors will enable organizations to manage more effectively the business risks associated with ICT, and to make informed decisions regarding ICT impact. Tamburis and Bonacci focus on the exploitation of the Social Network Analysis for the designing of the network emerging from the Care Path of Diabetic patients. Their successful experience provides a strong evidence that, when combined with proper organization, leadership and skills, innovative Information and Communication Technologies can help to address some of the societal challenges to healthcare systems, first of all the achievement of the logics of “healthcare network” through which realize a level of technological integration capable of increase synergies between HealthCare Organizations (HCOs), and between them and the patients: a network of interconnected HCOs and healthcare operators (General Practitioners, Specialists, …) can lead to access to, deliver and share new forms and channels of relations, apart from consolidating and revitalizing the already existing ones.

The transformation of the tertiary education environment to a commercially driven sector forms the background of the third article which is written by De Jager and Soontiens. Their paper focuses on identifying those characteristics of a university which drive demand from international students. Although some
drivers are universal or industry wide, others are deemed country specific. Their paper focuses on aspects of reputation and marketing as perceived by students in their decision making process. The paper contextualizes the topic through a literature-based framework describing the increased competitive, international and service driven environment and its impact on product offerings and institutional positioning. The report is a sub-section of a larger study on internationalisation of education. A unique aspect of the paper is the comparison between Singapore and South Africa as education providers. Although the regulatory environments are distinctly different both countries have emerged as regional leaders in education over the past decade or so. The role as regional educators has emerged on the back of economic and political changes in South-east Asia and Southern Africa, respectively. In terms of findings, the paper confirms the absolute importance of family and friends in influencing the decision making process in both countries. A unique finding captured in the paper is the difference in prime institutional drivers for student decisions. While in Singapore students are mostly influenced by the marketing activities of universities, in South Africa student decisions are made based on the academic reputation of the university. Both groups confirm that sport reputation is unimportant. The paper concludes with suggestions for improved communication, focusing on both marketing and reputation.

Data mining involves searching through databases for potentially useful information such as: knowledge rules, patterns, regularities, and other trends hidden in the data. Nowadays, data mining is more widely used than ever before. Data mining is not only used by businesses who seek profits, but also by non-profit organizations, government agencies, private groups and other institutions in the public sector. The authors of the fourth paper, Wang, Yan, Chen, and Xing, summarize and classify the applications of data mining in the public sector into the following possible categories: improving service or performance; helping customer relations management; analysing scientific and research information; managing human resources; improving emergency management; detecting fraud, waste, and abuse; detecting criminal activities; detecting terrorist activities.

Of late, concepts of customer orientation and customer satisfaction are increasingly being adopted to identify and prioritize the areas for improvement in the quality of services provided by government departments to their clients. Parkash and Nagadevara, the authors of the fifth paper, have measured the expectations and perceptions of the clients of an Indian public sector engineering department using a SERVQUAL instrument. The sampling frame involved selection of 31 units of Army and Air Force who are dependent on Military Engineering Services in India. Stratified sampling was adopted to ensure judicious mix of respondents of various ranks from different units. Respondents from these units were randomly selected and data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The study has identified and quantified the gap between service expectations and perceptions on actual experience. This gap is analysed based on 24 scale items describing various service attributes. These attributes are grouped into 5 dimensions as per the SERVQUAL model. The reliability of the data was established through Chronbach’s alpha. The differences on the level of service perceptions are analysed using various demographic characteristics of the respondents such as education, type of organization, gender, age etc.

Their analysis has provided very useful information for the service deliverance. It was found that the three service quality dimensions namely, Tangibles, Responsiveness and Reliability are most prominent. Education level seems to be influencing the satisfaction level with higher satisfaction levels prevailing among clients with higher educational qualifications. The improvement of these factors will contribute significantly towards higher satisfaction levels. Most of the clients