



What It Means To Be a Mentor

The WCPE's mentoring program connects students with professionals in their field for career support and advising. Our mentors represent a wide range of professions and career stages, but they all share a passion for making a difference in students' lives. Here are some of their stories.



"In 2010 I launched a protégé program at our company for Elmhurst students who are interested in marketing and business. We help them assess their

strengths and weaknesses, train them on the tools they need and evolve them from a college environment to a real-world situation so they're ready to enter the workforce.

"Over the years we've had close to 40 students go through the program, and most of them have gotten jobs related to our industry. Some have even become our customers.

"As a student at Elmhurst 25 years ago, I was fortunate to have two or three mentors who spent a great deal of time with me and prepared me for my career path. Their support was a blessing, and I wanted to give that blessing back."

PATRICK YANAHAN '94, MBA '10
President
USA Strategies
Technology, Packaging and
Machinery Marketing Firm

"I'm mentoring four nursing students. I meet with them once a month to help them with their classes, their study habits and their career goals. It's all about being there for them and letting them know they have someone on their side. I didn't have a mentor when I was a student, and I wish I had.

"It's cool to give back. And I'm learning a lot from the students, too. Mentoring is a great way to network, communicate and grow as an individual."

AMBER ASBACH '17
Psychiatric Nurse
DuPage Health Department

"I had multiple mentors when I was a student: the advisors at the WCPE, my internship supervisor, even my fraternity brothers. I knew nothing about the professional world, so that advice was important to me.

"Now I'm mentoring two graphic design students, helping one get real-world experience and guiding the other in choosing a medium to pursue. I feel a lot of satisfaction in sharing my experience with the next generation. As my grandmother always said, the best thing you can do in the world is help another person."

QUINCY BANKS '00
President and Owner
Graphix by Dzine



"I didn't attend Elmhurst, but when I saw how much the College invests in its students, I wanted to get involved. I've had mentors in the past, and seeing how much they cared about me really shaped my future. For me, it's very fulfilling to give back.

"With my protégé, I've focused on the importance of networking—putting yourself out there and getting comfortable meeting new people. I've also encouraged her to believe in her dreams. When we first met, she was undecided on whether to pursue a master's degree, but she told me that our relationship helped her decide to go for it."

YLANDUS ROUNDY
Director of Community Relations
Artis Senior Living of Elmhurst



"I have a passion for GIS, and I enjoy sharing that passion with students and talking to them about how they can apply their training to a rewarding career.

"You see a lot of growth over the course of a year. At first, the protégés are really just looking for guidance, but by the end they know how they can apply their degree and how to think professionally.

"I've been mentoring students at Elmhurst for 20 years. I keep in touch with some of my former protégés, and it's very rewarding to see them working in the field."

STEVEN G. DAMOLARIS '87
GIS Coordinator
City of Elgin

ABOUT THE WCPE

The mission of the Russell G. Weigand Center for Professional Excellence is to prepare Elmhurst College students and alumni for an ever-changing world by igniting their professional curiosity, competencies and purpose. Through career guidance, mentoring, internships and more, the WCPE readies students for a successful launch into their careers and to become effective contributors to society.

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MARTIN GAHBAUER
Executive Director, Weigand Center for Professional Excellence

Reimagining Our Future

With a new mission and a refined focus, the WCPE has re-envisioned the future of career development at Elmhurst College.

For more than 20 years, the Weigand Center for Professional Excellence took a broad-based approach to professional development. By combining career services with programs like Honors education and service learning, the Center encouraged students to think broadly about their life’s work in the world.

This year, the Center set out to reinvent itself for a new generation of students.

“There is a thrust in the College to make sure that all of our students graduate ready to launch professional careers,” said WCPE executive director Martin Gahbauer. “Accordingly, we reorganized the Center with a singular focus on career education and development.”

As a first step in reimagining career development at the College, WCPE staff held an offsite retreat to develop a new mission statement.

“Retreats like this can be a real bear, but we were able to nail down our mission and values in just a day,” Gahbauer said. “The result was a mission statement that is true to what we do and that fits within the larger framework of the College.”

The WCPE also reworked its organizational structure around three pillars: career education, career experiences and pre-professional advising. This approach emphasizes the Center’s commitment to career education and development and gives students a clear point of contact for all things career related.

“Our new structure underscores the College’s desire that every student will have the opportunity to do an internship and be ready to start their career,” Gahbauer said. “The Center was launched with the idea that an Elmhurst education should be imbued with a sense of professionalism. Our new structure brings that more strongly into focus than ever.”

Making the Most of LinkedIn

On January 17, the WCPE welcomed staff members from the Career Transitions Center of Chicago (CTC) for an in-depth workshop on using LinkedIn.

More than 20 Elmhurst students, alumni and staff members gathered in the WCPE’s offices for an hour-long session that covered everything from using keywords to the importance of joining LinkedIn groups.

“The workshop taught participants how to go beyond a basic profile and really make the most of LinkedIn,” said Julie Nosal ’03, director of career education. “For instance, some of the students hadn’t thought about Elmhurst’s alumni page on LinkedIn as a means of networking.”

Located in Chicago’s West Loop, CTC offers a variety of career services to professionals in transition. Thanks to a longstanding partnership with the College, CTC offers on-campus workshops to Elmhurst students throughout the academic year as well as discounted career coaching to Elmhurst College alumni. For more information about CTC, visit elmhurst.edu/cpe.



“The Professional Career Preparation class helped me improve my resume and prepare for internships and interviews. It also featured a great panel about HR

recruiting and a meeting on how to develop your LinkedIn account. I definitely recommend this course to juniors and seniors.”

SEAN ROONEY '20

Marketing/Supply Chain Management Major



Preparing to Launch

The WCPE brings career development into the classroom.

Choosing a career and starting a job search can seem overwhelming. Where do you even begin when you aren't sure what you want to do with your life?

For Elmhurst College students, two WCPE courses offer a road map through the entire process. Taught by Julie Nosal '03, director of career education, CPP 299 and CPP 399 provide a structured way for students to learn about careers and start a job search—while earning academic credit.

The first course in the sequence, CPP 299 Professional Foundations of Career Development, is designed to help students clarify their goals, choose a major and begin to explore career options. Topics covered include everything from skills assessments to the art of networking to setting realistic goals.

In the past, CPP 299 was open to all students, from first-years to seniors. This year, recognizing that students entering college have vastly different career needs from those who are about to graduate, the Center revamped the existing course to focus specifically on first- and second-year students and developed a new course for juniors and seniors.

Offered for the first time during January Term 2019, CPP 399 Professional Career Preparation prepares students to conduct a successful job search and enter the world of work. Students practice career skills and learn interviewing strategies, research techniques, negotiating salaries and much more.

“The new structure allows us to focus each course on the topics that are most relevant to the students in the class,” said Nosal. “It makes the courses even more valuable for students at every stage of the career-building process.”

From Intern to Internship Coordinator

Meet India Worthem, the WCPE's new coordinator of career experiences and communications.



India Worthem '12 had a life-changing internship experience as an Elmhurst student. Now, she's back at her alma mater, helping today's students get similar opportunities.

Worthem, a communication studies major at Elmhurst, did an internship in human resources at the urging of a professor. A highlight of the internship was the opportunity to create a training program about diversity and inclusion—and to present it to senior leadership and company employees.

“I was able to see what I learned in the classroom come to life,” Worthem said. “It felt good to have an impact in a real-world situation.”

After graduating from Elmhurst, Worthem earned a master's at Northwestern University and leveraged her internship experience to land a job in HR. But after a few years, she realized something was missing: “My mom reminded me that I'm passionate about helping people and I love education—so why wasn't I doing something with that? It turned out that my skills translated easily to higher education,” she recalled.

Worthem, who joined the WCPE staff in October, advises students at every step of the internship process, from finding an internship to articulating the skills they've gained.

“I love meeting with students and letting them know I was in their shoes once,” she said. “When I can share an experience with them, that gives them a confidence they didn't know they had.”



Pre-Law Advising Comes to the WCPE



This fall, the College centralized pre-law advising in the Weigand Center for Professional Excellence and hired a dedicated pre-law advisor. We recently spoke with the new advisor, Lisa Woods, about how she landed at Elmhurst and her plans for the program.

What's your background?

I started my career as a practicing lawyer, first clerking for the Illinois Appellate Court and then working for the city of Evanston. It was a great experience—I was exposed to many different areas of the law and dealt with everything from drafting contracts, resolutions and ordinances to constitutional

issues. I felt called to the education world, though, so I starting teaching at the School of Law at Loyola University.

What prompted your transition from teaching to advising?

While I was at Loyola, I discovered that I had a passion for mentoring law students and helping them discover their interests within the field. I wanted to focus on advising students, so moving into that role here has been a smooth and rewarding transition.

How would you describe the pre-law advising role?

My role is 100 percent about supporting students who are interested in going into the field of law. I help students choose a major, guide their LSAT preparation, and make sure they learn more about the field of law by connecting them with opportunities for informational interviews, mentoring, shadowing and internships.

What are your plans for the program?

I'm going to help students start a pre-law club to give them an opportunity to develop a community and share the experience of applying to law school. I'm also planning a series of pre-law events this spring, including a workshop on the LSAT and a panel discussion of attorneys talking about what it's like to practice law. And in April, we'll take a field trip to downtown Chicago, where students can meet a judge and watch a real-world trial.

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