



A Perfect Match

A good mentoring relationship has benefits for mentors as well as protégés.

The WCPE's mentoring program was designed to help students navigate in a complicated marketplace. Each year, the program connects some 150 students with professionals who guide and support them as they explore careers. Each mentor/protégé pairing has its own unique focus and approach, but they all share the same goals. Here are a few of their stories.



STRONG FOUNDATIONS

LOUIS HANDKE-ROTH '22, an information systems major from Schaumburg, signed up for the WCPE's mentoring program because he didn't know much about careers in his major.

"Information systems is such a broad area," he said. "I haven't had the opportunity to talk to a lot of professionals in my field, so I didn't really know what career options are available."

Handke-Roth was matched with **STEVE JENNRICH '85**, vice president for information systems at West Suburban Bank in Lombard. With nearly 34 years of experience under his belt, Jennrich brings a broad perspective to meetings with his protégé.

"Even though technology has changed a lot over the years, the basic foundational principles remain the same," Jennrich said. "You need to understand those principles in order to be successful today. It's rewarding to be able to share that perspective with Louis."

For his part, Handke-Roth says he's learned a lot from his mentor.

"He's given me a clearer picture of the field and where I can go with it," he said. "Some things you can only understand when a professional tells you what they do."



NETWORKING 101

As a first-year student at Elmhurst, **ASHLEY O'DONNELL '21** had a part-time job in the WCPE, giving her an inside look at the mentoring program. She signed up to participate as soon as she could.

"I could see that the program was a great way to learn more about different fields and make connections," she said. "No matter what degree you're seeking, there's always a professional to talk to."

A business administration and math major, O'Donnell was connected with **BILL SHANKLIN**, president of Champion Container Corporation.

In regular one-on-one meetings, Shanklin coached O'Donnell on everything from interviewing skills to the importance of having business cards. But for O'Donnell, the highlight of the experience was when Shanklin invited her to a meeting of the Elmhurst Economic Development Commission, which he chairs.

"Going to that meeting gave me the chance to meet a whole lot of people and give them my business cards," she said. "Later, I connected with those professionals on LinkedIn and through email. It was a great way to grow my network."

Shanklin said he gets as much out of mentoring students as his protégés do.

"Getting to know these students provides insights into the needs of the young people that we hire," he said. "It also keeps you young."

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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CROSS-COUNTRY CONNECTIONS

Most Elmhurst mentors live in the Chicago area and meet with their protégés face to face. But thanks to technology, today’s mentors can make an impact even if they live thousands of miles from campus.

KATIE KAILUS '09, a writing major at Elmhurst who now runs her own marketing and public relations company in California, is a case in point. Through weekly Skype meetings, Kailus offers guidance and support to **JENNA PEDERSON '20**, an English major whose primary goal for the mentoring program was to learn more about career options in writing.

“I want to be a copywriter and write novels on the side, but my family has some concerns about whether there are jobs in writing,” Pederson said. “Getting to know someone who’s working in the field has been super helpful in making my parents feel more comfortable.”

Kailus says the opportunity to provide that type of guidance is exactly why she wanted to be a mentor.

“When you get out of school with a writing degree, it isn’t always clear what the next steps are,” she said. “I got involved because I wanted to be able to provide insights for students who are in the position I was in.”

Hitting Gold

The mentoring program recently won Gold Accreditation status again from the International Mentoring Association (IMA), a nonprofit organization that promotes mentoring best practices worldwide.



To achieve IMA accreditation, mentoring programs must meet rigorous standards based on years of research and practice in the field of mentoring. Gold, the highest level a program can achieve, indicates that a program can serve as a model for other programs.

“The Gold Accreditation renewal is an acknowledgment that we are looking at new and innovative ways to incorporate mentoring in student development, and that we are following best practices,” said **JULIE NOSAL '03**, director of career education. “It gives our program additional credibility, and we’re excited to keep moving forward to meet the evolving needs of our students and professional partners.”



Dressed to Impress

A new resource helps students dress for success.

You’ve polished your resume, practiced your interviewing techniques and applied for dozens of jobs. Now you’ve landed your first job interview. But what will you wear?

For a lot of college students, there’s no good answer to that question. With wardrobes tending more toward hoodies and sneakers than suits and pumps, students often lack the business attire they need for interviews, career fairs and other professional settings.

A new resource at the WCPE aims to change all that. The Career Closet provides free business-appropriate clothing to help students navigate the sartorial challenges of starting a career.

“We knew that our students faced challenges in finding appropriate attire for career fairs and interviews,” said **HOLLY COFFIN**, director of employer relations and internships. “I’ve been to conferences where people shared what they were doing, and that lit a fire under me to bring the concept to Elmhurst.”

Located in the back of the WCPE’s space in A.C. Buehler Library, the Career Closet is stocked with suits, dresses, shirts, slacks, shoes and more. A dressing room and full-length mirror allow students to try on the clothes.

To stock the new resource, Coffin reached out to the campus community, business partners and organizations in Elmhurst.

“There’s been an outpouring of support,” Coffin said.



A First Leap Toward Success

Some students come in to college with specific career goals and a clearly defined path to meet them. For the rest, there's First Leap.

A four-day program designed to help first-year students explore careers, First Leap combines classroom learning with one-on-one advising and job shadowing experiences to provide insights into the day-to-day reality of a given career.

For **STEPHANIE QUAIVER '22**, the experience was eye opening. "I thought I was interested in law, so I shadowed one attorney who works in health care and another in business and real estate," she said. "But seeing what attorneys actually do all day made me realize that a career in law is not for me."

In addition to two days of shadowing and other workplace visits, First Leap participants spend two days in the classroom, engaging in interactive exercises and hearing about careers from guest speakers. On the final day of the program, students share their experiences.

For students like Quaiver, getting an early look at a career means they have plenty of time to adjust their career plans if their initial goals don't pan out.

"By helping me realize what I don't like, First Leap helped me figure out what I do like," she said. "I learned that I want a job where I can interact with people. Now I'm looking at either school psychology or counseling."

Helping Students Find Their Path

On Oct. 9, 2019, the WCPE brought together a diverse array of faculty and industry representatives to introduce students to the College's new majors in digital media.



Hosted in partnership with the Niebuhr Center, Finding My Path was the WCPE's first-ever interdepartmental event for students. Some 50 students gathered to connect with professionals in the digital media industry and to hear about majors in business, computer science and communication.

"This was a great way to give students a closer look at careers in a particular industry and talk to them about the pathways they can take toward those careers," said **JULIE NOSAL '03**, director of career education. "Employers have told us that they want to connect with students before they get to the internship stage, and this event gave them that opportunity."

The WCPE hopes to make Finding My Career a biannual event, featuring a different industry each term.

Embracing Entrepreneurship

A new initiative supports students in building new ventures.

For college students entering today's volatile job market, entrepreneurship is looking better than ever before. According to *Inc.* magazine, more than 60 percent of college students would rather start their own business than work for someone else.

The College has launched a new initiative to support students with an entrepreneurial mindset. Led by WCPE Executive Director **MARTIN GAHBAUER**, the Entrepreneurship Initiative will provide resources such as a monthly speaker series, an executive-in-residence and a space where budding entrepreneurs can gather to work on their ideas.

"Our vision is to foster an entrepreneurial spirit, both here at Elmhurst College and in the surrounding community," said Gahbauer. "We aim to build an ecosystem that allows students to make real their entrepreneurial dreams by providing knowledge, resources and mentoring."

Funded in part by a \$30,000 grant from The PNC Financial Services Group, the initiative will kick off at the beginning of Spring Term in its new location on the lower level of the A.C. Buehler Library.

The initiative's executive-in-residence, **PATRICK YANAHAN '94, MBA '10**, will help students develop their ideas, write business plans, find capital and more. President and CEO at USA Strategies, a marketing firm that specializes in the tech industry, Yanahan has deep experience in building successful businesses.

"From a curriculum standpoint, the ultimate vision is to establish a Center for Entrepreneurship that serves students in all majors, particularly for first-generation students and students of color who generally haven't had a lot of exposure to entrepreneurship," Gahbauer said.

"We also see this initiative as a great way to help build our community. We've seen a groundswell of interest, both on campus and beyond. People are really getting excited."



Exploring Health Care

The WCPE has formed a partnership with BodyInsight, a local nonprofit focused on medical exploration programs for young adults, to provide opportunities for students who are interested in health care.

As part of the collaboration, BodyInsight will offer a weeklong immersion program on campus this summer. Designed to give students a better understanding of a variety of careers in the field, the program includes hands-on experiences such as dissecting cow organs and watching surgeries as well as shadowing opportunities, mentoring, one-on-one career counseling and insights from medical professionals.

“This program will expose students to multiple health professions and opportunities before they have to commit to a specific field,” said **ERICA ASHAUER**, director of pre-professional advising. “Even students who have had some exposure to these fields will benefit from the hands-on experience and in-depth conversations with professionals and college student mentors.”

The program, which will run from June 15 to 19 on the Elmhurst campus, will be open to high school students and to first-year Elmhurst students. For more information, email info@bodyinsight.us or call (630) 432-9452.

Coming Up: Networking for Career Fairs

Career fairs are a great opportunity for job-seeking students to connect with employers and learn more about openings in their field. But for students who don't know what to expect, they can also be intimidating—and even a waste of time.

On Feb. 11, the WCPE will present Networking for Career Fairs, a workshop designed to help students make the most of career fairs. Led by professionals from Career Transitions of Chicago (CTC), the workshop will cover everything from how to research companies to career fair etiquette and what questions to ask a prospective employer.

“At a career fair, you have 20 seconds to a minute to get a recruiter's attention and keep it,” said former WCPE advisor **INGRID BECTON**. “So at the workshop, students will learn how to create an elevator speech and tailor it to 10 to 12 different companies. They'll also learn how to dress appropriately, how to give a firm handshake and how to follow up with potential employers after the fair.”

Based in Chicago, CTC offers on-campus workshops for Elmhurst students throughout the academic year, as well as discounted career coaching to Elmhurst College alumni. For more information, visit elmhurst.edu/cpe.

WCPE STAFF

Martin Gahbauer, M.Ed.

Executive Director

(630) 617-3625

martin.gahbauer@elmhurst.edu

Erica Ashauer, M.A.

Director, Pre-Professional Advising,

Health Professions Advising

(630) 617-6482

ashauere@elmhurst.edu

Alfie Chelette

Coordinator, Data Systems and Analysis

(630) 617-3190

alfie.chelette@elmhurst.edu

Holly Coffin

Director, Career Experiences,

Internships/Employer Relations

(630) 617-6457

hollyc@elmhurst.edu

Julie Nosal, M.A. '03

Director, Career Education

(630) 617-3440

julien@elmhurst.edu

Amber Skinkys

Coordinator, Office Operations

(630) 617-5295

ambers@elmhurst.edu

Lisa Woods, J.D.

Pre-Law Advising

(630) 617-6466

lisa.woods@elmhurst.edu

India Worthem, M.S. '12

Coordinator, Career Experiences

and Communication

(630) 617-3188

india.worthem@elmhurst.edu