

WCPE Briefing

WINTER 2021-2022



Meet the Teams

More than 50 Elmhurst students joined the WCPE on September 27 to learn about the sports industry and meet professionals in the field.



Meet the Teams featured five professionals who work in marketing, recruiting and other management roles for teams including the Milwaukee Bucks, Chicago Fire, and Boston Red Sox. In a panel discussion, the pros talked about how they got into the field and offered tips on breaking into the industry.

Following the panel, the team representatives made themselves available to speak with students. There was so much demand that the scheduled 45-minute networking session stretched past the 90-minute mark.

“One of the things that I enjoyed about the event was the stories the professionals shared on how they started their career and the steps they took to get to where they are today,” said **Colton Kraus '23**, a double major in business administration and sport management. “Also, being able to network with each of the panelists was a big plus.”

For their part, the participating professionals spoke highly of the students who attended the event.

“This was a very impressive group of students who showed up at this event,” said **Terry Sullivan '67**, a talent scout for the Boston Red Sox. “I must have spent an hour and a half getting through the line of kids who were waiting to talk about what the possibilities were, and every one of them asked pertinent questions and had realistic ambitions.”

The event was modeled on the WCPE’s Meet the Firms night, an annual event that brings students together with business professionals in fields such as accounting and finance.

“We created this event because we realized that sport management majors don’t have as many professional opportunities as some of our other students,” said **Christina Danno**, assistant director of internships and communications. “We were hearing a lot of students say they weren’t sure how to get started in the sports industry after graduation. This event gave them the chance to learn about the options and make connections.”

For one student, the event led directly to an internship. Many others made connections that could lead to opportunities down the road.

“Some of the students gave me their resumes, and I passed them along to the people in charge of hiring at the Red Sox,” said Sullivan. “Through events like this, the WCPE is really going above and beyond to provide students with opportunities to make the right career choice.”

ABOUT THE WCPE

The mission of the Russell G. Weigand Center for Professional Excellence is to prepare Elmhurst University students and alumni for a rapidly evolving 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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Where Dream Jobs Get Their Start

Tiana Palumbo '19 wasn't sure what to expect from the WCPE's Professional Career Preparation (CPP 399) course during January Term of her senior year. But she knew it was time to start thinking about her career, so she signed up.



Three years later, Palumbo has landed her dream job—and she says she owes it all to CPP 399.

“My mentor gave me advice on how to negotiate, he also gave me the confidence that I could do it.”

For her first job out of college, Palumbo served as the assistant events coordinator at Butterfield Country Club in Oak Brook. She spent nearly two years there, building her skills and learning about the operations side of event planning, before accepting an offer from another country club. Today, she is the event sales manager at Hyatt Lodge Oak Brook, and she couldn't be happier.

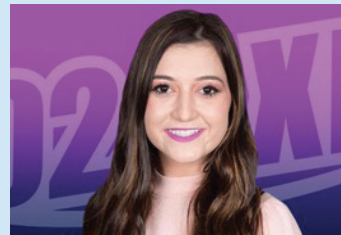
“That class gave me the motivation and the drive to work on my resume and get my references lined up,” recalled Palumbo, who majored in business management and operations at Elmhurst. “I started applying for jobs in the middle of January, and I had offers by the beginning of February. During the last few months of senior year, my friends were all stressed out about having to find a job, but I felt very much at ease, because I already had a job lined up.”

“I sell the space, I plan the events and get everything organized for the banquet captain to execute it,” she said. “It's everything I wanted in an events position. I'm very thankful for the CPP 399 class, because it definitely helped pave the way for my future.”

Taught by **Julie Nosal '03**, director of career education, CPP 399 is a half-credit course designed to prepare juniors and seniors for a successful job search. Students practice career skills and learn strategies for expanding their networks, improving their resumes, preparing for job interviews and more.

As part of the class, Palumbo connected with a mentor who gave her tips on negotiating salaries.

“That advice was really helpful. When I got a job offer, I ended up negotiating a slightly higher salary,” she said. “Not only



“The CPP 399 course encouraged me to find something that I'm passionate about. So I took the time to listen to my heart, and I found a career that I genuinely love. Now I'm an afternoon host at 102.3 XLC, and I can't picture myself doing anything else.”

HANNAH BRUMMER '20
On-Air Personality, 102.3 XLC

Exploring Career Pathways

College students who plan to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) face a variety of obstacles along the way. Among them, says **Dr. Merrilee Guenther**, professor of biology, is a tendency to focus narrowly on one career path.



That's why Guenther and her colleagues teach a career-focused seminar for incoming transfer students in STEM majors. The course, which Guenther co-teaches with **Dr. Liz Majka** (assistant professor of psychology) and **Dr. Stacey Raimondi** (chair and professor of biology), is part of a \$1 million National Science Foundation grant (DUE-1929882) designed to support transfer students pursuing degrees in STEM fields.

“Research suggests that if STEM majors fall out of love with the specific career they had their hearts set on, they sometimes leave STEM altogether because they're not aware of the other options,” Guenther said.

“The course is designed to help students think about careers and broaden their horizons,” Guenther said. “For example, we bring in professionals from places like Fermilab, Argonne and pharmaceutical companies to talk about careers that students might not have been exposed to.”



Last year, Guenther and her colleagues began incorporating the WCPE’s PathwayU career tool in their seminar. An award-winning online platform, PathwayU uses predictive analytics to help students identify their interests and explore careers.

“We’ve dedicated class time to using PathwayU because we wanted to introduce students to the tools that are available through Elmhurst and through the WCPE,” Guenther said. “We also wanted to get them thinking outside the box.”

Before engaging with PathwayU, STEMinar students write a reflective paragraph about the career they plan to pursue and why. Then they take a series of PathwayU assessments that help them explore their interests, goals and potential career paths. After that, they reflect on what they’ve learned.

For some students, the assessment results align closely with their expectations. For others, the results are surprising and point to options they hadn’t anticipated.

“It’s valuable because it gets students thinking more deeply about their choices and their motivations,” Guenther said. “And it helps them realize that they can apply their passions in diverse ways.”

Larry Carroll, professor of business administration, began integrating PathwayU into his First-Year Seminar last fall.



“The students who completed PathwayU found that it really helped them to explore their interests and think about their skills,” he said. “It’s a useful guide for helping students get a sense of direction on their goals.”

Career Team

For student-athletes, the WCPE’s career-prep services have always been an important factor in their decision to attend Elmhurst. Now, the WCPE and the athletics department are teaming up on initiatives to recruit students to Elmhurst and support their professional development once they’re here.

“A big draw for our recruits is the opportunity to participate in internships, mentoring experiences and all the other activities the WCPE offers,” said John Baines, head men’s basketball coach at Elmhurst. “We have a lot of business majors, and the career element is huge for them.”

Once they join the University, student-athletes find a wealth of opportunities to engage in career development through the WCPE. In addition to the programs that are available to all students—internships, workshops, career-focused coursework and more—the WCPE has begun offering more athletics-specific services, and team coaches are actively encouraging their players to participate.

The WCPE’s recent Meet the Teams event, for instance, gave students the opportunity to hear from professionals in the sports world (see story, page 1). And several teams have engaged in specific opportunities.

The men’s soccer team has gotten involved in entrepreneurial activities, for example, and the women’s basketball team attended a recent lecture presented by *Shark Tank*’s Daymond John.



Members of the football team have regular meetings with WCPE staff members. And the departments are currently planning a spring Bluejay Networking Night to connect student-athletes with sports professionals.

“We believe in collaborating with campus,” says **Glen Brittrich**, interim director of athletics. “And we believe in the power of the WCPE, because that’s where our students make connections and prepare to graduate with jobs.”



The partnership is in early stages, but Brittrich sees a promising future.

“The WCPE is a crown jewel of Elmhurst University—and the athletics department has the power to bring student-athletes together to take advantage of their services,” he said. “We are looking forward to bolstering this relationship and creating new partnerships and programming.”



All-Star Mentor

For **Natalie Madigan '22**, baseball has been a lifelong passion. A diehard Chicago Cubs fan, she grew up playing softball and still plays to this day. So when she took a sport management class in high school and had the opportunity to build a fantasy team from the ground up, she knew she'd found her career.



As a first-year student at Elmhurst, she shadowed a marketing professional with the Chicago Fire, a professional soccer club that plays at Soldier Field. From there, she started looking for additional opportunities to make connections and learn about the industry.

That's when **Julie Nosal '03**, the WCPE's director of career education, connected Madigan with **Terry Sullivan '67**. A talent scout for the Boston Red Sox, Sullivan has mentored Elmhurst students for years, and he was happy to take on Madigan as a protégé.

That was two years ago. Since then, the two have met countless times to talk about career options, internships, courses and much more.

"It's truly like a friendship now, not just a professional relationship," Madigan said. "Hearing his stories about working for the Red Sox and seeing how much fun he's had motivates me to work even harder to get to the majors."

At Sullivan's suggestion, Madigan spent two summers working as a marketing intern for the Rockford Rivets, a team in the Northwoods League. Then he connected her with the CEO of Prep Baseball Report, a scouting and multimedia company that promotes high school baseball players.

"Terry got me an interview for an internship, and I took it from there," she said. "I got the internship, and now I'm supporting the company through email marketing, making graphics, tweeting and other marketing activities. And I'm really enjoying it."

For Madigan, Sullivan's mentorship has been a game changer. For Sullivan, the mentoring program provides an important opportunity to give back to an institution that welcomed him with open arms.

"I came to Elmhurst as a transfer student, and everyone took me in and made me feel at home," he said. "I grew so much while I was there, and now I'm paying back the debt that I owe."

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