

# WCPE Briefing

SPRING 2024



## Sharing Knowledge

Staff and faculty showcased their research insights at professional conferences across the region.

In November, several Elmhurst faculty and staff members traveled to Milwaukee to give presentations at the annual conference of the Midwest Association of Colleges and Employers (Midwest ACE).

The conference, which brings together college career professionals with employers to share best practices in career services and professional recruiting, featured Elmhurst expertise in two presentations: one on ChatGPT and the other on career competencies in the curriculum.



### The Impact of ChatGPT on Hiring and Career Services

ChatGPT and other generative AI tools have taken the world by storm, upending the way entire industries operate. What impact will those tools have on career services and recruiting?

That was the topic of a panel discussion at Midwest ACE hosted by [Martin Gahbauer](#), executive director of the WCPE, in collaboration with Jerry Donahue from the College of Lake County. [Jim Kulich](#), director of the Master's in Data Science Program, served as a panelist.



"Generative AI is going to have a massive impact," Gahbauer says. "Our presentation focused on how employers are using ChatGPT in the recruiting process and how students, career counselors and employers can use it effectively."

Gahbauer and Donahue, who went on to give the same presentation at UIC and Lewis University, have been discussing AI since 2019, when they gave a talk about whether AI would eliminate jobs. "The first few years we presented, no one else at

these conferences was focused on AI," Gahbauer recalls. "Now everyone's talking about it."

### Closing the Competency Gap

Do today's college graduates feel ready to enter the workplace? For their part, do employers think new hires are sufficiently prepared?

To answer these questions, [Julie Nosal](#), director of career education at the WCPE, surveyed Elmhurst students and local employers about graduating students' level of readiness for work. Where did each group see areas in need of improvement, and did students and employers agree?



"We found that employer and student perspectives did not always align," Nosal says. Areas with the greatest disconnect between students and employers included oral and written communication, critical thinking and problem solving.

Meanwhile, [Soni Simpson](#), associate professor of marketing at Elmhurst, was tackling similar questions through her own research. Taking a more quantitative approach, Simpson uncovered results that were similar to Nosal's.



Both projects prompted changes in the University's approach to career education. For example, the WCPE streamlined its career development course and revised workshop offerings to emphasize the competencies expected by employers. At the same time, the School of Business created new courses to infuse the competencies throughout the curriculum.

### 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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At Midwest ACE, Nosal and Simpson joined forces to present their findings and discuss the outcomes in an interactive, well-attended session.

“It was great to be able to report on our progress to other career services professionals,” Nosal says. “We want our students to be as well prepared as possible, and making sure they have the competencies they need is an important way to do that.”

## A Resume for Success

As a undergraduate marketing major at Elmhurst, **Emilio Suarez '23**, MBA '24, never leveraged the resources of the WCPE. But when he started the University's MBA program last fall, he knew it was time to get serious about preparing for his career.



So he made an appointment at the WCPE, where executive director Marty Gahbauer took a look at his resume.

“My resume listed all my jobs, but it didn't really say anything about what I did,” Suarez recalls. “Marty said my resume was probably why I wasn't getting past the first round of job applications.”

Gahbauer advised Suarez to start by listing his responsibilities for each job on his resume. And that's where ChatGPT came in.

“When you're not in a role anymore, it can be hard to remember exactly what you did,” Suarez says. “I plugged each of my roles into ChatGPT and got back 20 different options. It was a big help in getting through my writer's block.”

The AI-generated responses also sparked other ideas, enabling him to add the kind of specific details that catch a prospective employer's eye. At the same time, he continued meeting with Gahbauer and career education advisor Laina Krisik in the WCPE. “Every time he came back to see us, his resume was measurably better,” Gahbauer says. “Now he's got a very strong resume—something that he can feel proud of and makes him competitive in the marketplace.”

The improvement of Suarez's resume was so remarkable that Gahbauer invited the MBA student to share his story at the conference of the College Career Consortium of Illinois in November.

Since then, Suarez has returned to the WCPE for additional guidance on everything from cover letters to kick-starting the job application process. “The WCPE has been really helpful,” he says. “Everyone there just wants to help you succeed.”

## Starting Strong

**Olamiposi Ogunbiyi '26** knew from an early age that he wanted to pursue a career as a cybersecurity analyst. What he didn't know was how to reach that goal.

So when Ogunbiyi, an international student from Nigeria, heard about the WCPE's First Leap program, he knew it was for him. A four-day course focused on career exploration, First Leap helps first-year students clarify their goals and connects them with professionals in their field of interest.

“First Leap helps you figure out your values,” Ogunbiyi says. “And it provides you with a mentor who can help you navigate.”

Held each May at the end of the academic year, First Leap combines interactive classroom activities with opportunities to visit workplaces and network with industry professionals. In the classroom, participants learn about workplace etiquette, get tips on how to market themselves, and hear from guest speakers.

It's the first of a two-part series designed to engage students in career preparation early in their college careers. The second part, Sophomore Success, helps second-year students articulate their strengths and values, explore majors and reflect on where they're going. Students who complete both parts of the series can earn a .25 academic credit.



“The program helps students set their college journey, from exploring career options to making sure that their career choices align with their values,” says career advisor Laina Krisik, who co-facilitated this year's Sophomore Success in partnership with **Julie Nosal '03**, director of career education. “It also helps them discover who they are as people and what values are important to them.”

This year, all First Leap and Sophomore Success participants were first-generation college students—a demographic that leaders say is particularly likely to benefit from the program. “Students build confidence through the program,” Nosal says. “If you're confident—and if you have goals and plans and a vision—you'll be more invested in your future. You'll do better in school, and you're going to want to stay enrolled.”

**“I know I want to work in the gaming industry, but I didn't know anybody in that field. First Leap connected me with a senior software developer at Microsoft and a program manager at Amazon Games. They gave me an inside look at the industry and helped me decide which aspect I want to pursue.”**

**—Treasure Keys '26**



## Bluejay Tank: Opening Doors

Jessica Pavliukovecas '24 has always had an interest in cars. But when she started shopping for a new vehicle last year with her dad, she realized she didn't know much about basic auto maintenance.

So when she heard about the E-celerator's Bluejay Tank pitch competition in fall 2022, she knew exactly what she wanted to pitch: a user-friendly car repair app that would help people, especially women, keep their vehicles in peak condition. She quickly put together specs for the app, which she later named TuneUp, and prepared to make her case.

Much to her surprise, Pavliukovecas won second place. "I was as nervous as I could be before the presentation," she recalls. "But winning second place was an amazing moment. I felt very proud of myself for trying out a new opportunity."

The experience also led to additional opportunities. She got to know Patrick Yanahan, Elmhurst's Executive in Residence and the host of the competition, and got involved in the school's E-celerator program. Soon, she was working part time for the program as a marketing coordinator.

"Working for the entrepreneurship program opened my eyes to how big the campus is and how many connections you can make," she says. "I got to meet a lot of people, including some of Patrick's colleagues and connections."



One of those connections was Laura DeRousse, founder and president of a firm that builds community for commercial office tenants. A few months later, she got a call from DeRousse inviting her to apply for a part-time role. Now she's a junior experience specialist with the firm.

"Jessica really leveraged her time with the entrepreneurship program. She expressed interest in networking, and she showed up to a lot of events," Yanahan says. "Jessica's story is proof that if you put the time into something, you'll reap the benefits."

## A New Way to Solve Problems

Tyler Posch '25 never dreamed he'd have the opportunity to work on an energy-efficiency tool. But that's exactly what he did last summer as a programming intern at Argonne National Laboratory.

An information systems major, Posch worked on a web app that enables companies to compare the greenhouse-gas emissions of different types of vehicles within a given state. The tool is designed to help firms reduce the energy consumption of their vehicle fleets.

Posch worked on several aspects of the app, including supplying a backend database for exports and fixing long-standing display issues and front-end bugs.

"One of the things I worked on was probably the most complicated issue I've ever debugged," he says. "But it was a transformative experience, because I fixed the problem."

Posch learned about the paid internship opportunity through the Jans Family Endowed Internship Fund, which supports students pursuing internships in science, technology, engineering and/or mathematics at a military or U.S. Department of Defense-oriented institution.

Posch, who plans to pursue a career in software engineering, says the internship helped him take his skills to the next level. "This experience helped me pay a lot more attention to detail," he says. "And it's helped me get a leg up in my career, because it forced me to change the way I think about problem solving."

## An Executive in Residence for the E-celerator

In 2020, Elmhurst introduced the E-celerator, a resource for students interested in startups and other innovative ventures. Housed in the A.C. Buehler Library, the E-celerator provides students with the resources and connections they need to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.



In response to growing demand for the E-celerator's offerings, the University recently appointed Patrick Yanahan '94, MBA '10, to a new position as Executive in Residence. In his new role, Yanahan, who was instrumental in launching the E-celerator, is responsible for all events and programming, including an annual speaker series and the popular Bluejay Tank pitch competition. He also works one on one with students at each stage of the entrepreneurial process.

"I'm like a mini air-traffic controller when it comes to supporting students," says Yanahan, who is also the president of USA Strategies, a marketing firm serving the technology and packaging industries. "If a student wants to go to an innovation networking event, it's my job to pull in school resources to make sure that that student is adequately prepared to self-promote and work a room."

Yanahan also maintains the E-celerator's partnership with Innovation DuPage, a nearby business incubator that provides resources and programs for startup founders and small- to midsize-business owners. Through the partnership, Elmhurst students have access to Innovation DuPage's facilities as well as its services and mentors.

Looking ahead, Yanahan and the department plan to finalize some major strategic innovation relationships with two large private entities in the cybersecurity and robotics markets. These entities will partner with the University's School of Science, Technology and Mathematics to bring wide-ranging academic and internship benefits to Elmhurst students. "Part of my job is to be on the lookout for new ideas and new platforms," Yanahan says. "And the school has given me the flexibility to do that."

## Meet Our New Staff

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to the newest members of the WCPE family!



**Adekemi "Kemi" Dosunmu, J.D.**, joined our team in September. As pre-law advisor and department liaison, she supports Elmhurst students at each step of the journey to law school. In addition to coordinating events such as LSAT strategy sessions and meetings with law school representatives, she works one on one with students on topics such as academic planning, researching law schools, and putting together a strong

application. She also advises the University's Pre-Law Club and connects students with internships and other professional opportunities. Before coming to Elmhurst, she developed and ran a pre-law program at UIC.



**Emily Korkowski** came to Elmhurst in the fall of 2022 from a data analyst position at a not-for-profit organization. In her role as senior coordinator of career experiences at the WCPE, she oversees networking events such as the Career Fair and the Meet the Professionals series, which brings employers to campus to engage with students interested in their industry. She also runs the WCPE's Career Closet, which provides

students with free business attire donated by community members and manages the WCPE's Instagram, TikTok, and other social media pages.



**Laina Krisik** joined us in May, bringing extensive experience in career consulting and coaching for C-level executives. A career education advisor at Elmhurst, she guides students and alumni in exploring career paths and building job-search skills such as resume writing and interviewing. In addition, she co-facilitates the WCPE's First Leap and Sophomore Success courses.

### WCPE STAFF

**Martin Gahbauer, M.Ed.**

Executive Director  
(630) 617-3625

[martin.gahbauer@elmhurst.edu](mailto:martin.gahbauer@elmhurst.edu)

**Erica Ashauer, M.A.**

Director, Pre-Professional Advising,  
Health Professions & Pre-Law Advising  
(630) 617-6482

[ashauere@elmhurst.edu](mailto:ashauere@elmhurst.edu)

**Alfie Chelette, MBA '19**

Coordinator, Data Systems and Analysis  
(630) 617-3190

[alfie.chelette@elmhurst.edu](mailto:alfie.chelette@elmhurst.edu)

**Christina Danno, MBA**

Associate Director, Career Experiences  
(630) 617-3188

[christina.danno@elmhurst.edu](mailto:christina.danno@elmhurst.edu)

**Adekemi Dosunmu**

Pre-Law Advisor/Department Liaison  
(630) 617-6466

[adekemi.dosunmu@elmhurst.edu](mailto:adekemi.dosunmu@elmhurst.edu)

**Laina Krisik**

Advisor, Career Education  
(630) 617-3186

[laina.krisik@elmhurst.edu](mailto:laina.krisik@elmhurst.edu)

**Akaash Khushal**

Graduate Assistant  
[wcpe.ga@elmhurst.edu](mailto:wcpe.ga@elmhurst.edu)

**Emily Korkowski**

Senior Coordinator, Career Experiences  
(630) 617-6457

[emily.korkowski@elmhurst.edu](mailto:emily.korkowski@elmhurst.edu)

**Julie Nosal, M.A. '03**

Director, Career Education  
(630) 617-3440

[julien@elmhurst.edu](mailto:julien@elmhurst.edu)

**Patrick Yanahan, M.B.A.**

Executive in Residence  
Director, Jans Internship Program  
(630) 765-5887

[patrick.yanahan@elmhurst.edu](mailto:patrick.yanahan@elmhurst.edu)



RUSSELL G. WEIGAND  
Center for Professional Excellence