

WCCPE Briefing

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Law School: A Sure Thing



Chiara O'Leary '25 has been interested in law since high school, but she wasn't sure it was the right path for her until she enrolled at Elmhurst. Recruited to play softball for the University, she soon connected with people who helped her cultivate her curiosity and define her goals.

"The professors at Elmhurst got me on the right path and helped me decide that law is what I want to do," she says. "I was never 100 percent sure until I got here."

Now, O'Leary is looking forward to starting classes at DePaul University College of Law in the fall after becoming the first Elmhurst student accepted to the law school through a new and highly selective Guaranteed Admission Program.

Launched in 2024, the program offers guaranteed admission to DePaul's law school to Elmhurst students who take specific classes, earn a qualifying GPA and meet a benchmark for LSAT scores. Successful applicants also receive a scholarship to cover at least 25 percent of law school tuition.

"It made me feel a lot more relaxed and confident that I was going to find a place to go after graduation," O'Leary says, adding that the Guaranteed Admission Program helped reduce her stress about law school.

O'Leary notes that she got valuable support and guidance throughout her Elmhurst experience from Adekemi (Kemi) Dosunmu, pre-law advisor and department liaison. For example, Dosunmu helped her choose the right classes, develop a study plan and prepare for the LSAT. "Kemi was so helpful and supportive. I wouldn't have been able to do it without her," O'Leary says.

At Elmhurst, O'Leary found a variety of opportunities to explore law and position herself as a strong candidate for the Guaranteed Admission Program. A civil law class and a two-week summer boot camp, both led by Professor Ed Momkus, provided an in-depth preview of the legal profession. Participating in the Mock Trial program enabled her to compete in a regional tournament and give opening statements in a real courtroom. Through the Pre-Law Club, she met peers with similar professional goals and learned from guest speakers, including law school admissions directors and former Elmhurst students.

O'Leary says she's excited to start classes in the fall. Looking ahead, she's considering a specialization in healthcare law after seeing family members struggle to find affordable legal representation to address a healthcare failure. "I want to help people who have similar journeys and issues," says the future lawyer.

ABOUT THE WCCPE

The mission of the Russell G. Weigand Career 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 WCCPE readies students for a successful launch into their careers and to become effective contributors to society.

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Partners in Healthcare

In-demand healthcare careers such as nuclear medicine, radiation therapy and sonography offer competitive pay, direct patient contact, rewarding work and the potential for advancement. But there aren't enough qualified candidates to meet growing demand from hospitals and other healthcare providers.

Elmhurst and Northwestern Medicine aim to fix this through innovative clinical partnerships that provide specialized training programs for talented students. "Whatever your goal is, it's great to have a clinical background," says Heather Mallett, program director for Northwestern Medicine's clinical schools and faculty director of its School of Radiation Therapy.

Elmhurst's partnerships with Northwestern Medicine offer students special consideration or early admission to programs in nuclear medicine technology, radiation therapy or diagnostic medical sonography. A cardiovascular sonography track is planned for fall 2026. Elmhurst students must meet certain requirements to participate, including majoring in health science technology and maintaining a minimum GPA. They graduate with both a bachelor's degree and practical workforce training, putting them on the fast track to promising careers.

Program participants have a high success rate for passing their board exams and finding work in their chosen fields. "We find that Elmhurst students are kind of a slam dunk when we enroll them. We know they're going to achieve their clinical goals and have excellent academic achievement," Mallett explains. "We always want more Elmhurst students, and we are always excited to enroll them."

Nuclear Medicine



Emma Pawela '24 came to Elmhurst with an interest in sonography, but after learning more about the options available in healthcare, she discovered an unexpected interest in a field she knew nothing about: nuclear medicine. "I just fell in love with it after shadowing," she says.

As Pawela went through the process of exploring careers and applying to the nuclear medicine program at Northwestern Medicine, she relied on Erica Ashauer, director of pre-professional advising at Elmhurst, for support. Ashauer helped Pawela navigate the program's requirements, checked on her progress and prepared her for interviews. "I felt very supported by Elmhurst," she says. "Even after I graduated, I still felt like I could reach back out with questions."

Pawela was accepted to the program, which trains students at an accelerated pace. She cycled quickly through clinical rotations in nuclear cardiology, general nuclear medicine and CT while taking classes—a schedule that was demanding but doable. "Everybody makes it clear that they want you to succeed, but you do have to put the work in to get it done," she says.

Working in a large hospital with plenty of resources gave Pawela valuable hands-on experience in building strong patient connections, engaging with cutting-edge technology, and combining diagnostic and therapeutic elements in a developing field. Even before she graduated, she was accepted to the Siemens Healthineers Apprenticeship, where she's learning about the technical side of nuclear medicine by testing and troubleshooting SPECT-CT systems.

"As much as I loved the hospital, there's a different way of thinking when you're working behind the scenes," Pawela explains. "It's rewarding to know all the work you're doing is going to touch a lot of people."

Radiation Therapy

After watching her grandmother battle brain cancer, **Jocelyn Aranda '24** knew she wanted to explore a career in oncology—but she didn't think medical school was the right choice for her. Then she found out about Elmhurst's affiliate program with Northwestern Medicine in radiation therapy, which offered a different pathway to work with cancer patients. She earned her associate degree close to home, transferred to Elmhurst and began gathering information about the program. "I was able to graduate with my bachelor's and complete the radiation therapy program at the same time. It basically saved me a year," she explains.



At Northwestern Medicine, Aranda experienced a rigorous combination of classes and clinicals that provided her with real-world experience; in addition to Northwestern Medicine's downtown campus, students were able to complete clinical rotations at the

Proton Center and Lake Forest sites, as well as at Rush University Medical Center. Aranda enjoyed seeing how each location handles patient care, and she developed closer ties to patients as the program progressed.

Now that she's graduated, Aranda is a radiation therapist for Northwestern Medicine in downtown Chicago. She's working alongside former classmates and considering what her future in the field might look like, including her potential for professional and educational advancement. Her work has also given her a chance to make a difference in the memory of her grandmother.

"I'll meet certain patients, and they kind of remind me of her, or the family dynamic will remind me of her and my mom. I'll text my mom and say, 'Oh, I just got reminded of you both.' It's special to be able to see that and to communicate with the families—they're also going through a hard time, and they have to try to stay strong for their loved ones. Having been in that position, I can understand."

Diagnostic Medical Sonography



By the time **Rutu Patel '24** graduated from high school, she'd explored healthcare careers and landed on sonography as her top choice. She applied to Elmhurst in large part because of the University's affiliation with Northwestern Medicine, which would enable her to earn a bachelor's degree while getting clinical training at Northwestern Medicine.

"The program saved me a lot of time, because I knew I wanted to do this," Patel explained. "If I hadn't gotten in, then I would have to do four years at Elmhurst and then do a separate program." After volunteering at a hospital and exploring specializations such as MRI, CT and nuclear medicine, she got into Northwestern Medicine's sonography program—her top choice.

For the sonography classes, Patel commuted to Northwestern Memorial Hospital in downtown Chicago, as well as clinical sites throughout the area, where she got firsthand experience with different ultrasound specialties. Though some aspects of the program proved challenging, such as board exams and the physical strain of ultrasound scanning, Patel is committed to a future in sonography. "Even though it was tough, it did not change my mind," she notes. In a compressed, 18-month timeframe, she learned to safely conduct ultrasound scans and prepared to find a job in her chosen field, landing a position at a Northwestern Medicine OB-GYN clinic prior to graduation.

Today, Patel works with doctors, conducts procedures and navigates sensitive interactions with patients. "I love it," she says. "All my coworkers are super amazing, and everyone is so friendly."

For Elmhurst students considering the Northwestern Medicine partnership program, Patel recommends factoring in not only the logistics of commuting to clinical sites, but the licensing and certification requirements for different specialties. She also notes the value of working with the WCCPE to schedule classes and otherwise prepare. "Erica helped me a lot," she says. "She guided me throughout my time at Elmhurst and was honest about my options and how competitive this program can be."

A Perfect Fit for the Career Closet

Launched in 2020, the WCCPE's Career Closet offers free professional clothing for students to wear for interviews, internships and job fairs. Most students look to the resource for business attire, but last year **Nicoletta Boik '26** came to the Career Closet in search of scrubs for a healthcare-focused job.

No scrubs were available, so Erica Ashauer, director of pre-professional advising, jumped into action. She reached out to campus departments and off-campus organizations, and the WCCPE held a donation drive for the Career Closet during Elmhurst's Homecoming—but still, no scrubs.

Then Ashauer thought of another way to meet Boik's needs. "I took a chance by contacting John Paolucci at Custom Promos to see if he could help me locate some discontinued scrubs," she says. Paolucci, whose company creates promotional products such as clothing and signage, followed up with something even better. He reached out to SanMar, one of his company's corporate partners, and together the two companies donated \$500 to the Career Closet to buy scrubs.

This wasn't the first time Paolucci or Custom Promos had worked with Elmhurst. Paolucci's father, who started the company in 1981, went to college with Larry Carroll, who recently retired from the Elmhurst faculty and co-founded the WCCPE in 1997. Paolucci himself has been working with Elmhurst since 1994, when he provided 40 custom hats for new-student orientation.

For Paolucci, supporting the Career Closet was a natural extension of his long-standing practice of giving back to the community. "It's just something my father and I have always done," he explains. "My partnership with Elmhurst is one I value. It's successful for both parties, and it continues to grow."



Erica Ashauer (left) and Nicoletta Boik '26 display some of the Career Closet's new scrubs.

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