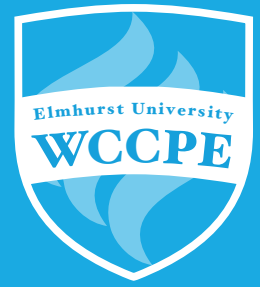


WCCPE Briefing

FALL 2026



A Path to Dentistry



As a child, **Sherlyn Cebrero Flores '28** was often teased about her teeth, making her self-conscious about her smile. Then she got braces—and discovered a passion for dentistry.

"Because of my teeth, I grew up not having a lot of confidence," says Cebrero Flores, a biology and Spanish major. "But once I got my braces off, I could see myself in other people and really wanted to change that for them."

As an Elmhurst student, she started pursuing opportunities to learn more about the field. One position in particular stood out: an internship with Radianté Dental and Facial, a dental and skin-care practice in Elmhurst. She applied for the internship and was accepted.

Since joining the practice in October 2025, Cebrero Flores has worked closely with the dental team, spending three days a week at the office during the summer and one day a week during the academic year. She works primarily as a chairside assistant, handing materials to the dentist, talking with patients and delivering appliances. She also assists with office operations such as patient communication and organizing.

Dr. Ivan Valcarengi, who runs the Radianté practice, hired his first Elmhurst University intern some 30 years ago and has had a close relationship with the University ever since. "I've hired quite a few

young people from Elmhurst University, and one thing I've noticed is they have fantastic values and a great work ethic," he says. "I continue to hire Elmhurst University students because they're the best around."

Cebrero Flores says the hands-on experience has given her a deeper understanding of both patient care and the business side of dentistry.

"I thought dentistry was all about cavities and other types of teeth issues, but Dr. Ivan has really expanded my view," she says. "It's about more than just teeth: It's about how the patient feels. Having a connection with the patient is really important."

The internship has also confirmed for Cebrero Flores that she's on the right career path. Seeing patients overcome fear and regain confidence has made a lasting impression, especially one patient who became emotional after receiving a full smile makeover before her wedding.

"That really showed me what it means to help others," she says. "I've learned a lot about dentistry, but also about myself."

Looking ahead, Cebrero Flores hopes to continue the internship throughout college while shadowing specialists to explore different areas of dentistry. She credits the WCCPE for checking in regularly, offering advising, and connecting students with valuable opportunities.

"Doing this internship feels more real, because I'm doing what I want to do," she says. "I'm not just learning through a screen or memorizing things. Being there helps you understand what the career is really like."

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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Fighting for Justice

As the oldest child of immigrant parents, [Amy Bedolla '27](#) grew up helping her family navigate the world. From translating documents and filling out forms to overcoming language and cultural barriers, she learned at a young age how to support people through complicated and unfamiliar processes.



Those early experiences gave Bedolla a firsthand look at the tremendous impact the legal system can have on people's lives—and propelled her toward a career in law. So when she got an email from the WCCPE about an internship with Future Justice Lawyers of Chicago (FJLOC), she knew it was perfect for her. She applied right away and got accepted to the eight-month program.

Designed for students who are interested in pursuing justice-oriented careers in law, FJLOC internships combine mentoring, training, practical projects and community support to prepare students to confront injustice and work to improve the legal system. Students work on group research reports as well as individual projects focusing on injustices they are passionate about.

For her group project, Bedolla focused on healthcare for individuals in the prison system. She and her peers conducted research, interviewed women in prison, and explored underlying causes and potential solutions.

"It's something people don't really think about," says Bedolla, a psychology major with a minor in legal studies. "How are women treated in the prison system? What kind of healthcare do they receive? We did a deep dive on what's happening not only in Chicago but across the United States."

After completing the internship, Bedolla was invited to return to the program to participate and provide support for other students. As part of her group project this time around, she and her peers are working to launch a nonprofit foundation to support immigrant families in Chicago and Texas.

Before Bedolla got involved with FJLOC, she planned a career as a criminal defense lawyer. But the internship opened her eyes to a wide range of new possibilities, including family law and immigration law.



Amy Bedolla '27 (center) with fellow participants in Future Justice Lawyers of Chicago

"The experience inspired me to think about what is happening in the world right now, like all the issues with immigration and family separations," she says. "It touches my heart, especially because I have family who are immigrants."

Bedolla says she's inspired to start making a difference. "I want to be an advocate for those who feel unheard or believe they don't have a voice," she says. "I want to help people understand their rights, ensure they are treated fairly, and provide support during some of the most difficult moments in their lives. Above all, I hope to make the legal system more accessible for individuals and families who, like mine, may feel that opportunities or justice are out of reach."



Accelerating Careers

Internships and other real-world experiences are critical in helping undergraduates build both the hard and soft skills they need to succeed in the workplace. But for some students, it can be challenging to fit such opportunities into their busy schedules.

To expand access to these important experiential-learning opportunities, the University recently launched the Global Career Accelerator in partnership with Podium Education. Offered entirely online, the accelerator brings together virtual cohorts of peers from universities all over the world, including Harvard, Columbia and the University of Michigan.

Together, cohort members work on real-life projects for big-name employers such as Netflix, L'Oréal or OpenAI. Along the way, they build skills such as teamwork, time management and Elmhurst introduced the accelerator this summer in a pilot program with 10 students, and 26 students have already registered for the fall version of the course.



Mai Vo '27, a biology major from Vietnam, signed up for this summer's session of Global Career Accelerator because it offered a convenient way to explore careers and gain experience. "You do most of the program on your own time, so it fits into my schedule," she notes. "And it's a great chance to participate in other fields besides your major and do projects for real-world companies."

For one project, Vo's group partnered with L'Oréal to build an app focused on helping consumers create skin-care routines. She learned how to use AI to code and how to design—two skills that were previously outside her comfort zone. For another project, she and her peers conducted data analysis for Intel.

"Everyone in my group was so helpful, and the more we collaborated, the more efficient we were," she says. "It was great to meet people from different backgrounds and different majors who are on the path to figuring out their career."

In a recent survey conducted by Podium Education, two out of three past participants said Global Career Accelerator was one of their most valuable college experiences.

"This program has a strong impact on participants, both academically and from a professional development standpoint," says Martin Gahbauer, executive director of the WCCPE. "We're excited to be able to offer it to our students."

Global Career Accelerator Outcomes

95%

of Global Career Accelerator alumni report career benefits

84%

of past participants said the program made their college degree more valuable

78%

say Global Career Accelerator made them more competitive for jobs

Source: Podium Education

Meet Our Newest Team Members

Please join us in welcoming Kara Van Marion, Dennis Watkins and Rhonda Humphrey-Jenkins to the WCCPE family.



Kara Van Marion is the Center's new director of career education. She joins Elmhurst from Trinity Christian College in Chicago's southwest suburbs, where she worked for 15 years in a variety of student-focused roles, including dean of experiential learning, vocation and career development. She also taught courses on professional readiness and career competencies.

As director of career education at Elmhurst, Van Marion oversees career advising, mentoring programs, job shadowing, informational interviewing, and more. Looking forward, she hopes to get more students involved in the WCCPE's robust offerings.

"Since joining the team, I've been working primarily with recent graduates who are in the job search process," she says. "I've really enjoyed that perspective, and the fact that they're continuing to use our services after graduation shows that they really see us as a valuable resource."



Dennis Watkins joins the WCCPE from the University's Department of Communication and Media, where he teaches multimedia journalism. A journalist with a focus on science and health, he has written for publications including Scientific American, Men's Health and the Baltimore Sun.

At the WCCPE, Watkins oversees the Jans STM Internship Program, which provides funding for students interested in science, technology or mathematics internships tied to security and defense. In this role, he hopes to expand the internship options available to students.

"I hope to create more opportunities for students to apply for," he says. "In addition to local placements at Argonne National Laboratory and Fermilab, I'd like to explore opportunities at places like NASA, the National Institutes of Health or Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, where I worked as an undergraduate."



Rhonda Humphrey-Jenkins recently joined the WCCPE as Entrepreneur in Residence for the E-celerator. In this role, she will provide support, guidance and resources to help students develop new entrepreneurial opportunities. She will also develop programming for students and the broader community to share her real-world expertise.

"Rhonda comes to us with entrepreneurial experience as well as years of marketing, innovation and branding work on Fortune 500 brands, including at Leo Burnett while I was there," says Martin Gahbauer, executive director of the WCCPE. "I am looking forward to working with her again. She's a fantastic person and will be a great addition to the team."

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