

# WCPE Briefing

SUMMER 2024



## Accounting for an Internship

When **Leyla Rusan '25** decided to attend the WCPE's Finance and Accounting Job Fair last fall, she wasn't sure what to expect. A transfer student from Columbia College who had recently switched her major from jazz studies to accounting, she didn't have much experience in business apart from keeping the books for her grandfather's construction company. Arriving at the fair, she felt a bit overwhelmed.



"There were so many students there, and it seemed like all of them already knew everything about business," Rusan recalls. Feeling out of her depth, she handed out her resume to a couple of companies but didn't expect to make any real connections.

Then she came across a booth for MichaelSilver, a Deerfield-based firm that provides accounting and other services to local, national and international clients, and everything changed.

"The second I walked into MichaelSilver's booth, I felt comfortable," Rusan says. "The people there wanted to get to know me. One of the reps told me all about how the company is flexible enough that she can work from home, because she has kids. I got really good vibes."

Rusan gave the representatives her resume and said goodbye, reasoning that even if she didn't get an internship, at least she'd had a good experience. But a few days later, she got an email from the company's HR director, who wanted to schedule an interview.

The interview went well, and Rusan joined the company's A&A team as an intern. For three months during Spring Term, she learned how to use accounting software, analyzed cash flows and completed 1099 forms for the company. She even went on an audit trip, spending two days at a client's worksite analyzing statements and asking questions.

**"Auditing feels like a puzzle—it's like you're pulling a thread and seeing where it's coming from," Rusan says. "I had so much fun, and the experience made me realize that this is what I'm meant to do."**

The Finance and Accounting Job Fair was a new addition to the WCPE's career offerings this year. The center typically hosts two big career fairs in the spring—one for students interested in careers in nonprofits, health professions and other fields, and the other for business, communications and IT. But this year, WCPE staff saw an opportunity to create an additional event tailored specifically to students in the growing fields of accounting and finance.

"We usually do a 'Meet the Professionals' event focused on these types of firms, but we realized we could make it much bigger since we know so many people in these industries," says Emily Korkowski-Dvorak, senior coordinator of career experiences. For the event, the WCPE brought together professionals from 10 finance, accounting, banking services and investment organizations to meet with students and share their insights. In addition to MichaelSilver, participating firms included BMO Harris, Byline Bank, the Illinois Department of Revenue and Porte Brown LLC.

### 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.

### IN THIS ISSUE

Accounting for an Internship  
First Generation  
Radio Sports  
Navigating the Supply Chain  
Social Life



## First Generation

As the first member of her immediate family to go to college, **Jocelyn**

**Garcia '25** knew she might face challenges navigating the journey from high school through college to a career. But at Elmhurst, she found a supportive environment and the career resources she needed to succeed.



Garcia, a mathematics major who plans to pursue a career in data analytics, connected with the WCPE early in her time at Elmhurst. She attended career fairs, met with advisors to plan out her courses, and made a strong connection with Christina Danno, associate director of career experiences, who supported her at every step of the way.

**“Even in the presentations they give, you can tell that every person in the WCPE is totally engaged and wants to see students succeed,” she says. “That was inspiring to me, and it made me feel more comfortable going to them to ask all my questions.”**

Her connections on campus soon led to an internship opportunity with Patrick Yanahan, entrepreneur in residence at the WCPE. After she successfully completed several assignments for him in his role at Elmhurst, Yanahan hired her as an intern with his company, USA Strategies, where she gained technical skills while learning about real-life applications of business and technology.

Now she's leveraged her Elmhurst experiences into a summer internship opportunity with JLL, a Fortune 500 investment company based in Chicago. Starting in June, she'll be working in the company's Westmont location as an operations analysis intern, working with data, drawing trends from it and helping company leaders use that data to improve their business practices.

She applied for the position on a whim, not knowing much about the company. When she got an interview, she remembered a tip she'd gotten from Yanahan: Learn something about your interviewer before your meeting. “So I looked up my interviewer on LinkedIn and found out that she had worked in Elmhurst,” Garcia says. “I brought that up in the interview, and it was a really good conversation.”

Garcia says her internship experience with Yanahan was a critical factor in preparing her for her experience with JLL. In addition to learning job-related skills, the experience offered a deep dive into the softer side of career preparation.

“As part of the internship, I went to networking events with Patrick and his other interns,” she recalls. “That was my first step out of my comfort zone, because I'd never done anything like that before. I shook a few hands and got a few business cards and realized I was actually having fun.”

Looking back, Garcia says she's glad she took advantage of the resources she found at the WCPE, and she encourages other students to do the same. “Elmhurst has a lot of great resources,” she notes. “At other schools, it can be harder to make that personal connection. But everyone I've met at Elmhurst has been super helpful, and they really want to see you succeed.”

## Radio Sports

**Charlie Ucen '23** has always loved sports. A football player during high school in Brookfield, Wisconsin, he came to Elmhurst in large part to play for the Bluejays.

But Ucen has also always had a passion for storytelling. And at Elmhurst, he found an ideal way to combine his interests when he joined Elmhurst University's radio station, WRSE 88.7 FM, and started broadcasting a weekly roundup of Chicago sports news.

“I thought it would be fun to try out radio, and I just fell in love,” he says. “I've always been interested in movies and storytelling, and combining that with sports is perfect for me.”

Ucen, a multimedia journalism major at Elmhurst, went on to become the sports director at WRSE-FM. He also pursued his burgeoning career interest through two internships—one with the Chicago Union, a professional ultimate Frisbee team in Chicago, and the other with the University's own sports communication department. As an intern, he gained real-world experience in video editing, broadcasting, announcing, scoreboard work and more. “Seeing how a team operates during a live broadcast was something I had never experienced before,” he says. After graduating in December 2023, Ucen returned to Wisconsin and landed





a part-time job as a producer at 1250 AM The Fan, a local sports radio station that recently reopened under new ownership. In his new role, he produces content for “Wisconsin Sports Daily” and helps run the Milwaukee Bucks postgame show. He also handles social media and creates podcasts for the station.

“It’s a very creative line of work,” he notes. “There’s a lot of freedom in it, and I like that because it gives you an opportunity to be creative and pursue your own ideas.”

Uczen says the transition from college to the professional world was seamless, thanks in part to his Elmhurst experience. In addition to building hands-on skills in the classroom and on the job, he credits the WCPE with helping him prepare for the professional world by getting organized and ensuring he had all his paperwork in order for his internships. More broadly, he says, he appreciates the deep support that he received at Elmhurst.

**“What I liked most about my time at Elmhurst was how supportive the community is of everybody’s dreams and aspirations,” he says. “Radio is a niche thing nowadays, and the outpouring of support that I got for doing what I love was really cool.”**

## Navigating the Supply Chain

**Tanuksha Mathew MS ’25** came to Elmhurst from Bangalore, India, to pursue a master’s degree in supply chain management. She was a bit nervous when she first arrived, unsure of what to expect in her new surroundings. But she soon found herself embraced by a supportive and vibrant community that made her feel like part of a family.

Once she had adjusted to a different culture and dived into her coursework, it was time to face the next hurdle: getting ready for the job market. “Things are different back in India,” as Mathew puts it. She knew she needed extra guidance in navigating career preparation in the U.S.

So she started going to the WCPE’s career fairs. Then, when a potential employer invited her to interview for an internship, she signed up for a mock interview with Julie Nosal, director of career education.

“Julie gave me some great suggestions on how I can improve my interviewing skills,” Mathew says. “And a couple of her interview questions were spot-on, because I got similar questions at the real interview.”

But Mathew’s involvement with the WCPE didn’t end there. When she heard about the center’s Career Closet, which provides students with professional clothing free of charge, she knew she had to check it out.

“Back in India, formal wear is kurti and salwar or a sari, and none of that is applicable here,” she says. “The Career Closet helped me get a better picture

of what American formal attire looks like. I ended up taking a couple of blazers, and I wore one of them for my interview.”

Mathew has attended nearly every career fair the WCPE has hosted since she first arrived on campus. And her persistence paid off: As a result of this year’s career fair, she got an internship offer from Essendant, a national wholesale distributor of office supplies. This summer, she’ll be working in the company’s continuous improvement department.



**“There is no question that the WCPE has helped build me as a professional—from resume reviewing or how I should sit in an interview or what questions to expect,” she says. “And I’m thankful to the WCPE for that.”**

Mathew is particularly excited about working at Essendant because the company shares her commitment to inclusivity and empowerment. “It’s a huge dream of mine to involve people with disabilities in the workforce,” she says. “I’ve seen too many people struggle to get hired, and the supply chain field could be a good fit for them. Essendant has a similar goal, and I feel like I’m taking an important step by joining a company where people share my passion.”



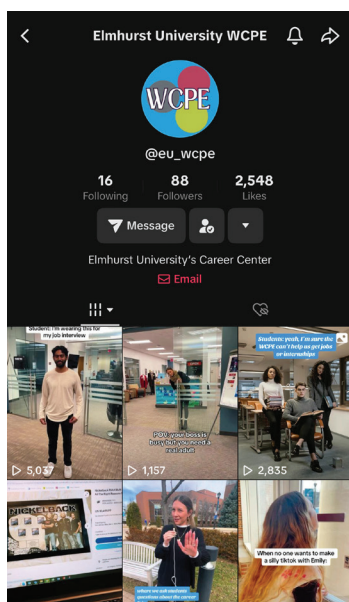
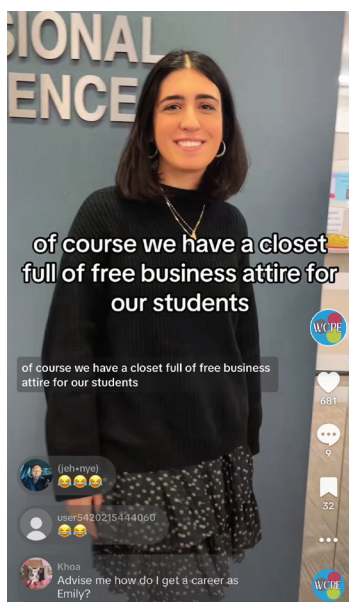
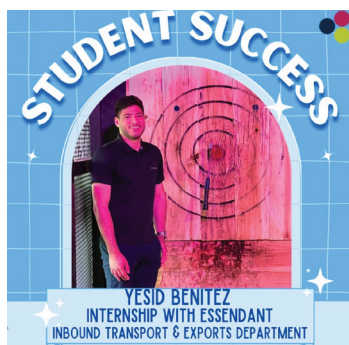
## Social Life

As Americans increasingly turn to social media channels for news, information and fun, the WCPE has turned up the volume on social media. In recent months, the center has boosted its presence on Instagram, TikTok and other channels, posting about everything from upcoming events and interviewing tips to trivia contests about the Career Fair.

“We’re taking social media more seriously this year, because that’s where students spend their time,” says Emily Korkowski-Dvorak, senior coordinator of career experiences and the creative force behind the WCPE’s social media presence. “We research trends and keep up with our stats, and we use our channels to showcase everything the department does.”

The center’s efforts are paying off. Between Instagram and TikTok, the WCPE gained nearly 100 new social media followers in Spring Term alone. Korkowski-Dvorak says, people across campus are noticing the center’s new approach.

“We’ve gotten a lot of good comments about what we’re doing,” she says. “I’m glad to see that we’re making a name for ourselves in that area.”



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