



CPE Briefing

In-Depth Explorations

Engaging in scholarly research helps Elmhurst Honors Program students develop their skills and prepare for graduate study.

Academic research is most often associated with graduate studies, but Elmhurst's Honors Program is providing opportunities for undergraduates to engage in significant research and share it in scholarly forums.

Seven Elmhurst Honors Program students presented research from a diverse array of disciplines March 29-31 at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) in Ogden, Utah, a meeting that attracted more than 3,000 students and advisors.

The presentations by Elmhurst students covered research ranging from an ongoing study at the College into what causes breast cancer cells to spread to other parts of the body, to why people stutter, the spiritual aspects of graffiti, bilingual education, Native American children's literature and the science of plant diseases.

Mary Kay Mulvaney, director of the Honors Program and professor of English, said the experience not only enhanced the students' knowledge of their specific disciplines but also improved their communication skills.

"All of the students agreed that their written and oral communication skills were significantly developed through the requirements of producing a professional-quality written report and presenting at a formal conference," Mulvaney said.

Independent research is a core component of the Honors Program, which enhances classroom experiences with cultural, social and professional opportunities. The research component allows students to work closely with a faculty mentor to design a project in their major field of study, and the College helps identify funding to cover travel and equipment expenses.

Mulvaney notes that conducting undergraduate research can pay dividends when students apply to graduate programs, law schools or medical schools.

"Most competitive graduate programs today expect that students will have conducted significant undergraduate research. It is invaluable as preparation for graduate-level study as well as for professional preparation on many levels," she said.

Patrick Brambert, a junior biology major from Bloomingdale, Ill., who worked on breast cancer research with Assistant Professor of Biology Stacey Raimondi, said the project

taught him how to ask the right questions and determine the best ways to collect and analyze data.

"The research itself enabled me to become a much more independent thinker. I had to set up optimal experimental conditions, troubleshoot on the fly and think about mechanisms currently unknown to the scientific community," Brambert said.

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Seven Elmhurst College Honors Program students presented their research at a prestigious national conference in March.

To learn more about Elmhurst's Honors Program, visit elmhurst.edu/honors

TRUE PROFESSIONALS

Established in 1997, the Center for Professional Excellence (CPE) helps deliver the Elmhurst Experience, a framing of liberal learning that helps students determine who they will be and what professional field they will pursue. Students who take advantage of the many services and rich experiences offered by the CPE will be better prepared for their future careers—as well as being effective contributors to society. The CPE is proud to connect mentors and organizations with students from one of the top tier master's universities in the Midwest, as ranked, repeatedly, by *U.S. News & World Report*. It is one of the many ways that Elmhurst College demonstrates its synergy between liberal-arts learning and professional preparation.

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The Power of Personal Relationships

Elmhurst's mentoring program matches students with professionals who can help them launch their careers.

Hannah Thompson '12 wants to become a motivational speaker after she graduates from Elmhurst.

But there's a catch: she'll be a motivational speaker without a voice. Diagnosed as a child with cerebral palsy, Thompson, a communication studies major, has limited powers of speech and movement. She "speaks" through a voice simulator, a touch-screen communication device.

Still, she has a powerful story to tell, so she enlisted the assistance of the CPE's mentoring program to help her find new ways to share it.

Matches between mentors and protégés, as they're called in the program, are determined by the student's needs, not by major. "The power is in the personal relationship between the two individuals," says Julie Nearing, coordinator of education enrichment for the CPE.

Nearing started looking for a mentor who could help Thompson build a marketing platform. She found an ideal match in Sean McGinnis '88, vice president of sales and marketing for DotCO Law Marketing, who is a professional speaker himself.

"We knew Sean was a social media guru who could help Hannah connect to this new world of marketing," Nearing says.

McGinnis was impressed with his protégé's accomplishments and "boundless optimism" despite the challenges she faced. "I'm constantly learning from Hannah," McGinnis says. "She reminds me to be vigilant and focused on what matters—something able-bodied people can easily forget."

Together, they decided that Thompson needed a website to promote her new speaking career. They partnered to create www.hannahspeaks.net, with McGinnis designing the site and guiding Thompson on content development. Though still in progress, the site is already helping

establish Thompson as a professional speaker open to new opportunities.

"I absolutely feel like Sean has taken my dream to the next level," Thompson says. "I mean, I have a website!"

Mentor Debbie Carey wasted no time emphasizing the power of networking with her protégé, interdisciplinary communication studies major Chablis Scornavacco '12.

"We know it's incredibly important in today's market. Not just what you know, but who you know and can connect with," says Carey, a leadership development consultant for Advocate Healthcare.

The protégé's first assignment: searching Carey's list of LinkedIn connections to find professionals with careers in fields that interested her. With Carey's network spanning multiple industries, Scornavacco found at least 10 potential contacts right away. Like many students nearing graduation, she found the idea of networking intimidating. "I was always nervous about meeting new people, especially important ones like vice presidents or CEOs," she says.

Carey provided an initial introduction to her connections, and then left the follow-up with her protégé. "I made Chablis responsible for everything else, which gave her good experience for coordinating interviews," she explains.

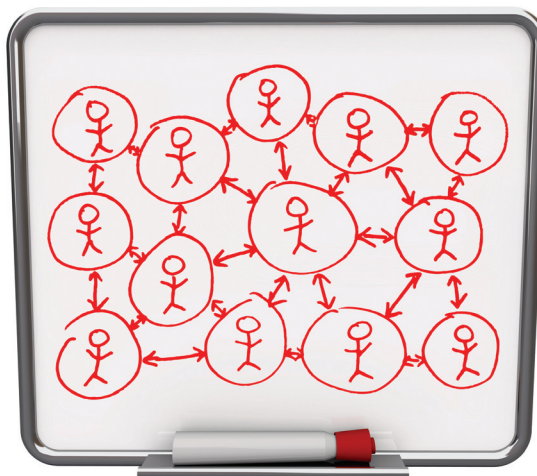
Her protégé coordinated two in-person meetings through the experience—one in advertising and the other in public relations—which reduced her anxiety about networking. "Now I have no problem talking to people, and I know how to prepare for meetings and interviews," she says.

Today, Scornavacco can offer advice to her fellow classmates. "I recommend the mentoring program to all students who are serious about their future," she says.

By Shelby Sheehan-Bernard



"I absolutely feel like Sean has taken my dream to the next level." Hannah Thompson '12



Mentor Sean McGinnis (left) helped a graduating senior launch a career as a motivational speaker. Chablis Scornavacco '12 (center) developed her networking skills with help from her mentor, Deb Carey (right).



From Intern to Employee

For some Elmhurst students, an internship leads to full-time work



Top: Christina Reed '10 parlayed an internship at Desert Rose Design into a full-time job. Below: Desert Rose principal Kathy Steele says Reed was a "rock star" intern.

Many Elmhurst students rely on internships to gain practical work experience and to boost their résumés for their post-college job search. These real world practical experiences can lead to full-time employment with the internship employer.

That's what happened to Christina Reed. In the fall of 2010, Reed, a marketing major in her last semester of senior year, interned for Desert Rose Design in Lombard, Illinois. Halfway through the internship, Reed approached Kathy Steele and Helen Levinson, the agency's two principals, about potential job opportunities.

The marketing agency didn't have a specific job opening at the time, but Steele says that since Reed proved to be a "rock star" intern from day one, they tailored a position for her.

"It became evident that she would be key to keep on staff once the internship was over," says Steele. "We created a role that was really based on how she fit into the organization—the things she was able to do, along with the things we needed somebody to manage."

The Monday after finals, Reed began her full-time job as a sales and marketing coordinator. "I didn't give myself any break, but I was so excited about it, I wanted to get started right away," says Reed, who credits the CPE's career exploration course she took freshman year with helping her choose a major and career path.

This isn't the first time Desert Rose has offered full-time employment to a former college intern. In some cases, an intern was hired to fill a specific job opening. In other cases, as in Reed's, the company created a new role for the intern. In every case in which Desert Rose interns gained full-time gigs at Desert Rose, they offered value, says Steele. "We were able to look through what we were

lacking in our team and create a role around a skill set they brought to the table," she says.

Reed also isn't the first Elmhurst intern to transition into full-time work for Desert Rose. After her internship there, marketing major Erika Mogan '09 kept in frequent contact with the agency, recalls Steele, sending ideas, emails and cards to convince the company to hire her. Her persistence paid off. "She proved to be an excellent person," says Steele. "We hired her and she'd still be with us today if she hadn't determined to move back to Ohio where her family was."

Steele offers some basic advice to interns who want to be seen as potential permanent hires: Always show up on time, be a team player and go beyond your daily duties. Steele says interns should also speak up if they see an area for improvement.

"Don't be afraid if you have a good idea to bring it to the leadership team. That really makes people stand out," she says.

Reed and Mogan aren't the only Elmhurst students who have made the transition from internship to full-time job in recent years. Dan Zarlenga '10 interned for Opportunity International, a Chicago-based nonprofit focused on micro-finance, during the fall of his senior year in 2009. When a full-time position as a prospect researcher in the fundraising department became available in May 2010, his former internship supervisor invited him to apply for it. He still holds that position today.

Matt Gragnani '11, a communication studies major, landed his job as account executive at Weigel Broadcasting Co. in Chicago through contacts he made while interning for NBC Chicago in the fall of 2010. Like Mogan, Gragnani continued to stay in contact with his internship supervisors

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Q&A

INTERNSHIPS

What are the first steps in getting an internship?

First, review the internship guidelines and complete the student internship application, both of which can be found on the College's internships website (elmhurst.edu/internships). Then register on ECconnect.com, where you can post your current résumé, browse internship opportunities and even apply for positions. If you need further assistance, contact Holly Coffin at hollyc@elmhurst.edu.

How far in advance should I apply for an internship?

Start searching for an internship the semester before you plan on interning. This will allow for résumé/cover letter revisions, job search time and interview preparation. Advance planning will also be beneficial for course registration with your advisor. For summer internships, which often have earlier deadlines, start the process in the fall.

Can I receive course credit?

You can receive credit for internships during the Fall, Spring and Summer terms. During January Term, you may receive credit for a field experience.

How do I find out about internship opportunities in my department?

Speak with your academic advisor or review the Elmhurst College Catalog for individual major opportunities. Most academic departments offering internship credit use the Center for Professional Excellence as the centralized monitor for student participation in the program.

Easing the Transition to a Career

The First Leap program encourages students to explore careers through visits to businesses and nonprofits.

The step from high school to college is a big one, but for many students, the step from college to a career is even bigger.

Elmhurst's Center for Professional Excellence is giving students a head start on the transition to a career with First Leap, a free, non-credit program open to first-year students who have completed the first-year seminar. Each May, about 25 students participate in the program, which combines classroom lessons with visits to businesses and nonprofit organizations.

program helped him narrow a broad interest in marketing to a focus on relational marketing, or connecting through relationships.

"I wasn't sure if I wanted to go into communication, public relations, sales or something in market analysis. First Leap helped me find a discipline that matches up with my interests and skills," said Sullivan, whose on-site observations were at pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. and Blistex Inc., a smaller company that makes personal-care products.

"I met with several people in both companies' marketing departments. These meetings helped me realize that I don't want to be in the market analysis part of marketing, and I belong more on the relational and sales side of things," he said. "Now I have a pretty good idea about what jobs and internships will best fit my skills and interests."

Becton believes some students have glamorized notions of certain professions, and spending time in the workplace adds reality to their dreams. To make the most from the program, students are encouraged to learn as much as possible about a given field, asking employees about the need for advanced education, the cost of graduate

school or medical school, and whether the demands of a job interfere with family life.

"Every job has its nasty aspects, and the more information you gather, the more of an informed decision you will make. You have to get in there and get your feet wet," Becton said.

First Leap encourages students to visit more than one company to develop a broader perspective and maybe even explore more than one area of interest. For example, a psychology major with an interest in animals shadowed therapists who brings service dogs to visit hospital patients, and then she spent a day at a Humane Society facility.

Though First Leap lasts only five days, Becton said, the goal is to make it the foundation for further career exploration.

"When we regroup at the end of the week to discuss experiences, we also talk about how to continue this during their second year and beyond, whether that is academically, through networking or a mentoring program," she said.

By Rick Popely



Sean Sullivan '13 (shown with First Leap coordinator Ingrid Becton) refined his career goals with the help of the CPE's First Leap Program.

Launched in 2008, this five-day career exploration takes students beyond their previous work experience, which tends to involve jobs such as life-guarding, babysitting or taking orders at a fast-food outlet, said Ingrid Becton, First Leap coordinator.

"Most students have never stepped into a professional work environment before, and the work they've done usually is not in their area of academic interest," Becton said.

"This is a chance for students to find out what it's really like out there and to help them decide if a given job is what they really want to do. It's better to do that early than to say, 'I'm a senior, now what do I do?'"

Before students head out for company visits, they spend a day in the classroom with CPE staff and guest speakers who share experiences, tell them what to expect, and offer advice—from how to dress appropriately to making eye contact when shaking hands and asking meaningful questions.

For Sean Sullivan '13, a marketing major from New Smyrna Beach, Florida, who took First Leap in 2010, the

['IN-DEPTH EXPLORATIONS' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

The team has found links between protein and the growth of cancer cells and preliminary indications that protein influences tumor progression. The team's findings also have been presented at recent national conferences on cell biology and cancer research.

The conference also provided a chance to network. Brambert met students from Drexel University who are conducting similar breast cancer research but from a different angle, and he intends to stay in touch with them and perhaps collaborate in the future.

Elmhurst College Honors Program students take a break from presentations at the National Conference on Undergraduate



From left: Lauren Engel, Jennifer Rehbein, Tyler Weinecke, Jennifer Ackerman, Patrick Brambert, Abby Heider and Rachel Nelson

Sophomore Jennifer Ackerman, an organizational communications major from St. Charles, Ill., was the youngest Elmhurst student to present at the conference, held at Weber State University. Ackerman aspires to be an academic librarian and researcher, and she worked with A.C. Buehler Library Director Susan Swords Steffen on her topic of Native American children's literature.

"When I arrived at Elmhurst research was not even on my radar. This project has allowed me to develop critical thinking skills that are transferable to my other studies," she said.

Ackerman's research project was funded by a faculty-student collaborative research grant that also helped fund a collection of books on the topic for the library.

Abby Heider, a senior from Oglesby, Ill., majoring in English and secondary education with a minor in Spanish, conducted her research during a summer in Costa Rica. Her paper compared bilingual education in the U.S. and in Costa Rica. She wrote it in Spanish and translated it to English for the conference.

"The conference was a phenomenal experience because I was able to see what other students my age are capable of researching," said Heider, who plans to be a teacher. "I was also able to pick up on a few reading strategies that another student researched, which directly relates to my field of study and student teaching."

Elmhurst is a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council, and Mulvaney said several Elmhurst Honors Program students are preparing research to present at the NCHC's annual conference in Boston in November.

By Rick Popely

['INTERGRAL TEAM MEMBERS' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5]

after the internship ended. "As openings came about in the industry, they would notify me and their contacts and try to help me set up interviews," says Gragnani. He began his job in November 2011, after a two-month-long interview process.

Reed, Zarlenga and Gragnani all offer the same advice to Elmhurst students: Treat your internship as a trial run for a full-time job. "You have to go in with the mindset that you are more than just an intern," says Reed.

"Never miss an opportunity that they present you with. When you show your interest and your passion for what you are doing, people take notice," says Gragnani, who also encourages interns to build strong relationships with their internship coworkers.

"Go above and beyond as often as possible," says Zarlenga. "It's very easy, especially for unpaid internships, to think of it as simply a volunteer position where you can be more flexible and relaxed with your responsibilities."

Reed, who now works with interns from the employer side, says interns should be careful to avoid checking Facebook or sending text messages while at work. "You want to give off a professional image and vibe, and doing this stuff at work isn't going to get you far."

In February, Reed received a promotion at Desert Rose: She's now the engagement manager, working as a liaison and production manager between clients and internal staff.

By Rita Colorito

Giving Back

Recent Elmhurst graduates return to campus to inspire and challenge today's students.

As a student at Elmhurst, Shelly Ruzicka '06 demonstrated an extraordinary passion for social justice. Winner of the College's Founders Day Award in recognition of her service work, she went on to become director of operations for Arise Chicago, a nonprofit organization that fights workplace injustice for both immigrant and native-born workers.

Today, Ruzicka is determined to inspire a similar commitment to advocacy in Elmhurst's current student body. That's why she regularly returns to campus to speak with current students about her work and how to get involved in community activism.

"It's important to give students a new perspective and to challenge them. That's my responsibility as an alum," she says.

Still, Ruzicka recognizes that not every student shares her current awareness and understanding of social justice issues. Growing up in the suburbs of Chicago, she herself didn't engage fully with activism until she came to college. "I know what it's like to live in a bubble, where you just don't know about these issues," she says.

Ruzicka doesn't hesitate to burst that bubble, however. In a recent discussion with a First-Year Seminar class, for example, she was initially taken aback by the students' lack of familiarity with the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, a controversial piece of legislation that would allow minor illegal immigrants to establish residency through higher education or military service. Then it came to her.

"I realized that I needed to meet people where they're at," she says. "Many of the students just didn't know anything about the issues."

Ruzicka says that moment helped her understand how the education process works: "It opened up a bigger discussion about why a group can be isolated and paid less."



Shelly Ruzicka '06, director of operations for Arise Chicago, challenges Elmhurst students to get involved in their communities. Photo: Jorge Mujica Murias

Ruzicka is one of many Elmhurst graduates returning to campus to give back to their alma mater. Dan Zarlenga '10, a finance major who works as a prospect researcher for the microfinance nonprofit Opportunity International, remains committed to the College's Global Poverty Club. He founded the club as an undergraduate and recently helped it acquire status as a nonprofit organization. In addition to helping with the club's annual LENS Walk (Learn, Empower, Nurture, Save), which supports both local and international charities, he is also working to expand the club to other schools.

Zarlenga admits his reason for returning to campus sounds a bit clichéd, but insists it's nonetheless heartfelt: "I had so many opportunities when I was an undergrad," he says. "I want to use my own time to help do the same for current students."

Both graduates have mentored students, either informally through a professor's recommendation or through the CPE's mentoring program, and have recruited Elmhurst students as interns or plan to. Perhaps their greatest service, however, is showing students what is possible with an Elmhurst education.

"It's nice to show that you can be happy in your career and can do valuable work," says Ruzicka.

By Shelby Sheehan-Bernard

"I had so many opportunities when I was an undergrad. I want to use my own time to help do the same for current students."

Dan Zarlenga '10

WHO TO CALL

Internships

Holly Coffin 617-6457

Career Education

Peggy Killian '94 617-3625

Mentoring and Shadowing

Julie Nearing '01 617-3188

Service-Learning

Dr. Mick Savage 617-6488

International Education

Dr. Wally Lagerwey 617-3604

Professional Bridges

Julie Nosal '03 617-3440

Intercultural Education

Dr. Russell Ford 617-3104

Employer Relations

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