



CPE Briefing

Telling the World About Elmhurst Honors

Representatives from the CPE traveled to the Netherlands recently to share the College's model for honors education.

The merits of Elmhurst's Honors Program have long been clear to people around the College, where students in the program are often campus leaders and innovators. Now that reputation for excellence has gone global.

Faculty, staff and a student from the Center for Professional Excellence and the Honors Program were among the presenters at an international conference in the Netherlands in October focusing on innovation in honors education. The group from Elmhurst told a multinational audience of educators at the University of Applied Sciences in Rotterdam how Elmhurst connects students with high-impact educational experiences outside the classroom.

The conference, titled "Evoking Professional Excellence in Higher Education," drew attendees from the United States, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Latvia and other countries.

"When I saw the call for proposals for this conference with the title, 'Evoking Professional Excellence in Higher Education,' I immediately thought, 'That's what we do!'" said Mary Kay Mulvaney, director of Elmhurst's Honors Program and professor of English. "It was an amazing opportunity to share our model of honors education, which involves the integration of challenging coursework and career education, international education and service-learning, with colleagues from across the globe."

Mulvaney explained that Elmhurst's Honors Program emphasizes not only classroom learning, but also experiential education. Elmhurst students move beyond campus boundaries to learn from internships, study abroad, Service-Learning experiences and collaborative research projects. As part of the CPE, she said, the Honors Program is positioned to provide students with "quality field experiences that are both academically

A group from Elmhurst spoke at an international conference in Rotterdam.



**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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challenging and highly personalized." The CPE forges partnerships with businesses, government agencies and nonprofit groups to offer students opportunities to engage the world beyond campus.

To illustrate how Elmhurst Honors students learn through collaborations with the College's partners, sophomore Jessica Mueller told conference-goers about the project she developed for Mercy Home for Boys and Girls, a Chicago charity serving at-risk children. Mueller worked with staff from Mercy Home to launch a support group for children of addicts or alcoholics.

Mueller said that her project was rooted in her personal experiences. "I wanted to use my experience and my personal background to share what I had learned about coming to terms with a parent's addiction," said Mueller. She thanked Elmhurst for helping to facilitate the project as a Service-Learning experience. The project was funded in part by donors to the Honors Program, Elmhurst's Center for Professional Excellence and Illinois Campus Compact, a group that promotes civic engagement among college students.

Mueller, who hopes to one day manage a group home for troubled youths, said she has learned much from her collaboration with Mercy Home. "The therapists from Mercy Home have been a great example of how to interact with students," she said. "They've helped me see what I'm doing well and what I can improve on."

Larry Carroll, executive director of the CPE, said Mueller's project was one example of how Elmhurst provides opportunities for students to reach their full potential.

"I was very proud of Jessica, and also proud of all the people at Elmhurst who helped her become so independent and innovative," he said. "That's what happens at Elmhurst. We help students go where they want to go in life."

In addition to Carroll, Mulvaney and Mueller, the group representing Elmhurst at the conference included Peggy Killian, director of career education; Wally Lagerwey, director of international education; and Mick Savage, director of Service-Learning. They were joined by Katelyn Dollard of Mercy Home for Boys and Girls.

Carroll said that responses from conference attendees to the presentations made by the Elmhurst group were very positive. The conference confirmed his appreciation for the work the College does with students.

"So many people at the conference wanted to know more about how we do what we do," Carroll said. "They let me know that we really have something good going here."

That's something people around the College have long known. Now, thanks to the International Honors conference in Rotterdam, that message is spreading worldwide.

Understanding the LinkedIn Advantage

More than 60 Elmhurst students learned more about the business networking site LinkedIn at a CPE event in March.

Anyone who has ever used the business networking site LinkedIn knows how easy it is to set up an account. But once you have taken that first step, how do you make LinkedIn really work for you?

This spring, the Center for Professional Excellence set out to answer that question with LinkedIn Advantage, an event designed to help students and alumni successfully navigate the networking site. More than 60 students attended the event in March, receiving advice from business communications experts about how to use LinkedIn to create professional opportunities.

"So many students do what I did. They start an account and then let it just sit there," said Lisa Caravelli, a junior marketing major from St. Charles who helped organize the event. "Students may know how to get set up, but not really how to use all the tools. We wanted to help by introducing them to some of the ways to optimize their profiles."

Among the experts who offered advice and insights at the event was Craig Engstrom, an assistant professor in

the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at Elmhurst. He offered tips on how to join LinkedIn groups as part of a networking strategy and on how to deploy key words likely to attract prospective employers. A professional photographer was on hand to take business-appropriate headshots for students to use in their LinkedIn profiles.

"We know how hard it is to find a good photograph to use on LinkedIn, so having a photographer there made it really easy," said Caravelli, who works on social-media initiatives at the CPE. "No more selfies!"

Holly Coffin, coordinator of internships at the CPE, said one hurdle students must overcome is the reluctance to connect and interact with professionals on the site. "They think, 'Oh, I can't contact that person,'" said Coffin. "Sure you can. That's why they're on LinkedIn!"

Coffin said the event was so popular that the center may soon present it a second time.

"I think most students have a sense that LinkedIn is an important resource, but they're not sure how to use it," she said. "This kind of event gives them some answers."





Picturing Your Professional Future

Elmhurst's First Leap program gives first-year students an early introduction to the world waiting for them after graduation.

If you had asked Sean Sullivan during his first year at Elmhurst what he wanted to do after graduation, he probably would have replied that he hoped for a career in business.

But even Sullivan, a 2013 Elmhurst graduate now working in sales for Hart, Travers and Associates, a manufacturer's representative for the plumbing industry, admits that, at the time, he had little idea what that meant.

"I was 18 years old, and like most 18-year-olds I didn't know much about how my interest in business would translate into the real world," said Sullivan.

Then Sullivan signed up for First Leap, a program of Elmhurst's Center for Professional Excellence. First Leap aims to give first-year students an early introduction to the world waiting for them beyond graduation. First Leap combines interactive classroom instruction with on-site observations at some of the top corporations, nonprofits and governmental organizations in the Chicago area.

As a first-year student participating in First Leap, Sullivan spent time shadowing executives at pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and at family-owned Blistex, a Chicagoland-based manufacturer of lip-protection products.

"It was so helpful to be able to see two such different companies," Sullivan said. "I think I came to understand more about the professional world and about my own interests because of First Leap."

First Leap was launched in 2008 as an opportunity to help students explore their career options and gain exposure to the professional world.

"It's all about early career preparation and exploration," said Ingrid Becton, program coordinator at the CPE. "Some of our students come to us absolutely sure about what they want to do. Some have no idea. What we do is help them explore their interests."

The week-long program, open to all first-year students, takes place each May. Participants hear presentations from visiting professionals and learn about everything from basic professional etiquette to strategies for networking.

"Most of our students have had work experience, but maybe it was at a fast-food place or as a lifeguard. They

may not have ever stepped foot in a corporate office," Becton said. "So we cover how to dress for professional settings, how to shake hands, the importance of staying in contact with the people you meet professionally."

Becton works to connect students with observation sites that match their professional interests. She arranged for one student who was interested in working in a canine police unit to spend a day in training with a DuPage County police narcotics unit. Theatre majors may find themselves backstage at a performance in the Loop. Accounting majors may have the chance to visit a top auditing firm.

Among the observation sites students have visited are U.S. Foods, the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine, Wolf & Company accounting, the Elmhurst Police Department and the nonprofit aid group Feed My Starving Children.

Becton said that the ultra-competitive job market has made it even more important for students to begin their professional preparation early in their college careers.

"By the time they are juniors, many students have had one or two internships already. If you're just starting to think about careers

then, you're really a couple years behind," Becton said. "The first year is a great time to start exploring, even if you're not sure what you want to do."

Becton said that some students have landed internship opportunities and job offers as a result of their First Leap experiences. Others benefit by learning that a field they thought was right for them might not be a good match, after all. But Sullivan said that, more than anything else, First Leap gave him confidence in his ability to thrive in the professional world.

"College is supposed to be about getting to understand yourself, and exploring your strengths and weaknesses," he said. "That's what happens in First Leap. You see that, 'Yes, I'd be good at that.' And you start to paint a picture, in broad strokes, of what your future could be. That way, by the time you graduate, you have a much more complete picture."

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January Term: A World of Experiences

For Elmhurst students, January has become an ideal time to see the world.

During the College's annual January Term, students can choose from a diverse menu of travel courses and service trips with destinations as varied as the cultural capitals of Europe, the ancient cities of Israel, and the bustling urban plazas of Central America.

"Going someplace new and immersing yourself in the culture is always a growing experience," said Laura Wilmarth Tyna, director of leadership, service and engagement, who led a group of 12 students to El Salvador as part of a Habitat for Humanity building project in January. The group spent several days exploring the country's vibrant capital, San Salvador, before moving on to the market center of Usulután, where they helped a local family build a house with support from Habitat for Humanity. Wilmarth Tyna said that working alongside the family gave the Elmhurst students insights into everyday life in El Salvador that no ordinary tourist could hope to find. "We connected

with these people and came to a deeper understanding of life in that country," she said.

A more profound insight into other cultures is a goal of all the travel experiences the College offers its students. For example, a group of students traveled with Professor of Religious Studies Paul Parker in January to Israel and Palestine, where they visited sacred sites associated with Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and saw firsthand the challenges of everyday life in the impoverished villages of Palestine.

Music professor Judy Grimes led students on an annual two-week trip to Jamaica to work in the financially challenged schools around Montego Bay. Grimes' students taught music to Jamaican children and donated music supplies to launch and sustain band programs there. They collaborated with Jamaican teachers and learned, as Grimes says, "that music really is an international language."

The Center for Professional Excellence's Mary Kay Mulvaney, a professor of English, led a City-as-Text class that traveled to Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris and Prague in January. City-as-Text, a method of learning based on the ideas of anthropologist Clifford Geertz and learning theorist David Kolb, emphasizes concrete experiences, observation and reflection to form a new understanding of places, people and issues.

Wilmarth Tyna said that travel experiences introduce students to cultures that are too often neglected in American primary and secondary school education. She and the students learned firsthand how the long-running civil war of the 1980s devastated El Salvador. A mason working alongside the students at the building site told them of being conscripted by the government's army to fight in the war.

"It was eye-opening to hear his stories," Wilmarth Tyna said. "We challenged students to learn about the complexity of this history."

One student was able to return to the site of an El Salvador Habitat for Humanity project he worked on in 2013 and visit with the family he came to know there. Wilmarth Tyna said she is looking forward to doing the same thing next year.

"You think you are going there to build a house," she said. "But really you are building relationships. You come to feel invested in this place and these people. I can't wait to go back next year."



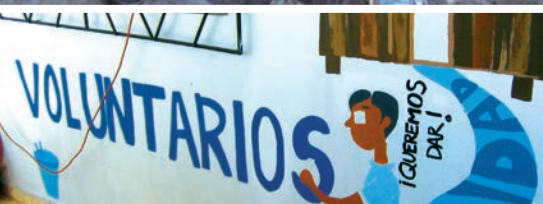
In El Salvador, student Christina DiCristofano helps build a house as part of a Habitat for Humanity service trip.



Twelve Elmhurst students spent January Term in El Salvador, helping a family build a house. At left, Laura Wilmarth Tyna, director of leadership, service and engagement at the College, poses with

Rosa, whose family will move into the new house. Above right, the group enjoyed a spectacular view from Perkin Lenca, a mountain hotel in Morazan Department. The students saw a variety of artworks, including

(bottom right) a mural depicting the history of El Salvador at the civil war memorial wall in San Salvador, and (left, middle) a mural at a local nonprofit agency.



READY FOR SUCCESS

At the Center for Professional Excellence, Elmhurst students find the mentors, internships, international study opportunities, service-learning experiences and career guidance that prepare them for lives of achievement. We asked two recent Elmhurst graduates to tell us how their experiences at Elmhurst and the CPE prepared them for their professional lives.



What he does: “As a consultant, I help hospitals install information systems that will let them share knowledge and gather data to improve the way they care for patients.”

Health care for the information age: “Health care has lagged way behind in its use of information technology, especially compared to other industries. The systems I help install are designed to save physicians time and decrease the risk of error. They pull in data from patients’ charts, like medical history, vitals, labs and allergies, to improve patient safety. I read recently that medical errors are the third-leading cause of death in the United States. Through the immediate and prominent display of important patient information and the integration of clinical decision-support tools like real-time medication interaction warnings and pre-operative checklists, we can substantially reduce the risk of errors. That makes this a very exciting time in health care.”

Listening skills: “I try to garner buy-in from health care providers using these new systems. Some of the physicians I work with have been doing their jobs in the same way for 40 years. Change can be frustrating for them. So I listen. I empathize. I say, ‘Let me help make this easier for you.’ Building the system is easy. But technical proficiency isn’t enough. The relationship with health care providers is what it’s all about. It’s important for people to feel that they have been heard.”

On the road: “For the past year I’ve been commuting weekly from Elmhurst to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where I work with Saint Francis Health System. I’m also working on a master’s degree at Northwestern University in medical informatics—the application of data and information to improve care and decision making. I fly out on Monday morning and come back on Thursday night. On weekends I try to finish my papers and other work for school. My schedule doesn’t exactly leave me a lot of personal time.”

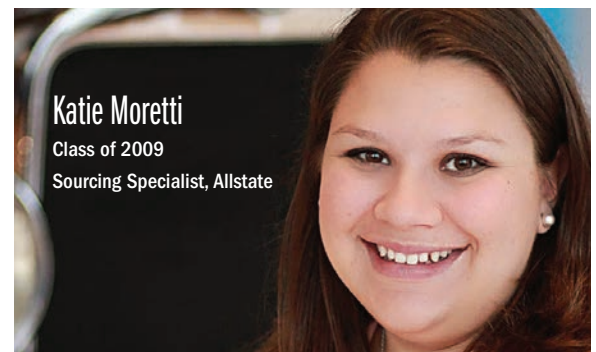
How to survive a long-distance commute: “I think it’s important to establish a routine. Sunday night before I fly out, I make sure everything is booked, then I shut off my electronics and make sure I get a good night’s rest. And I try to make room for time for myself. Set some work boundaries. In the long run, if I don’t keep myself sane and balanced, I’m not going to function as well at work.”

How his Elmhurst nursing education helps: “My job is not just to install systems, but also to work with physicians and nurses to meet their clinical

needs. The knowledge I offer as a nurse is very important. I have a certain credibility among the people I work with because of my training and clinical experience. That’s why, in my professional communication, I always include the letters BSN, RN after my signature.”

Critical thinkers: “Elmhurst produces such good nurses because the emphasis there is on critical thinking. I say that you can always tell an Elmhurst nurse because they have the ability to question, the ability to think for themselves. That is so important in a health care team.”

The Elmhurst Experience at work: “I wouldn’t be where I am now without the people I met at Elmhurst and at the CPE. The mentors you meet there, the connections you make are so helpful. They are a wonderful resource. I use the things I learned there every day in my work.”



What she does: As a sourcing specialist, she helps Allstate locate the most qualified candidates for positions that require a complex skill set.

In good hands: “Allstate is one of the great brands. Everyone knows it. I don’t have to spend a lot of time explaining to people who we are. I like to say that I got my dream job early in my career.”

Finding the right candidates: “We don’t just wait for the right resumés to come in. I really like the challenge of finding the right people. I jokingly tell people that I’m like a professional stalker. I go to LinkedIn, I make cold calls, I poke people, I send a lot of emails. It’s my job to reach out and rope candidates in, to tell them what’s great about working at Allstate. You have to be bold and you have to sell the position.”

How Elmhurst prepared her: “The CPE did so much to prepare me. One of the best ways to prepare is to do their mock interviews. My advisor, Larry Carroll [executive director of the CPE], was always encouraging me to sign up for mock interviews, so I did a lot of them. By my senior year, I was so relaxed and comfortable in interviews that the interviewers would notice and comment on it. I was never scared.”

Finding the right fit: “I thought at first that I wanted to go into project management. So I must have shadowed seven different project managers while I was at Elmhurst. I finally realized, ‘No, this is not for me.’ Then the CPE helped me shadow a human resources director, and that felt like a good fit right away.”

Student Spotlight

A New Home for Brooklyn Native

Anthony Nuñez credits Elmhurst College's Center for Professional Excellence with helping him prepare for life after graduation. But first, the senior marketing major said, the center did something even more impressive. It helped a native of Brooklyn—the famously diverse and boisterous borough of New York City—feel at home in Elmhurst.

"I had a tough time adjusting at first," Nuñez said of his transition from Brooklyn to the Midwest. It wasn't because people at Elmhurst were not welcoming. Just the opposite. "Everyone kept saying hello and thank you," Nuñez laughed. "I'm not used to that, being from Brooklyn. It freaked me out a little."

Nuñez's roots may be in Brooklyn, but when the time came for him to choose a college, he looked toward the Chicago area, where his mother had been born. Impressed with the College's business offerings and its leafy campus (Nuñez pronounced it "beautiful" on his first visit), he chose Elmhurst. But it took Nuñez some time to get used to his new home.

Elmhurst and Brooklyn are separated by about 700 miles, but the cultural distance is even greater. Elmhurst's campus is tree-lined and placid; Brooklyn's streets are loud and crowded. If Elmhurst is amiable, Brooklyn is in-your-face.

Then there's the language difference. Nuñez's Brooklynese didn't always translate to the Midwest, sometimes leaving his new Elmhurst friends wondering what he was talking about. "And I thought everyone at Elmhurst sounded like Sandy from SpongeBob," said Nuñez, referring to the drawling squirrel from the popular children's cartoon series.

But help came early in his first year, when Nuñez went to enroll in the CPE's mentoring program.

"I can't tell you what a huge impact that had on me," he said.

Nuñez connected with Caitlin Moran, a 2008 Elmhurst graduate who is a marketing manager at the Chicago-based supply-chain technology company ArrowStream.

The two began meeting weekly to discuss school, careers and other matters on Nuñez's mind. "She became like an older sister to me," he said. Moran still serves as a mentor to Nuñez.

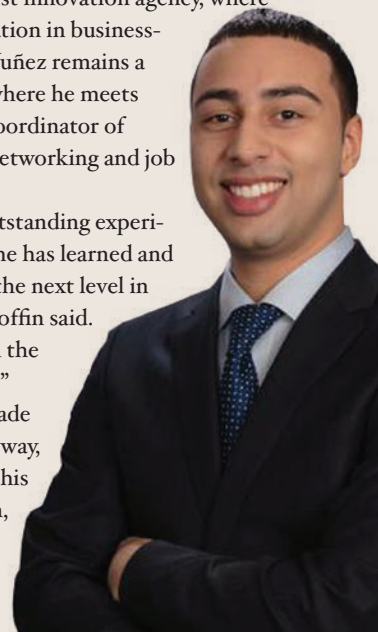
At the same time, Nuñez was becoming more acclimated to his adopted home and more involved in campus life. He became an executive member of the student chapter of the American Marketing Association and is active in H.A.B.L.A.M.O.S., the Latino student organization. And with help from the CPE, he landed an internship at Naperville-based PharmAffectiv, a medical and pharmaceutical consulting group, where he participated in market research.

"It was a great experience," Nuñez said. "I learned so many little things about how to conduct myself in the professional world."

He has now moved on to another internship, at Maddock Douglas, an Elmhurst innovation agency, where he is getting a hands-on education in business-to-business marketing. And Nuñez remains a frequent visitor to the CPE, where he meets regularly with Holly Coffin, coordinator of internships, for guidance on networking and job searches.

"Anthony has had some outstanding experiences, and he has taken what he has learned and applied it to move himself to the next level in professional development," Coffin said. "He has taken advantage of all the opportunities the CPE offers."

Elmhurst seems to have made its mark on Nuñez in another way, as well. Now when he talks to his family back home in Brooklyn, they tell him that he sounds like a Chicagoan.



What she likes about her work: "I like meeting new people all the time. And I like getting to ask them lots of questions. So now it feels funny to have you asking me all these questions!"

Interviewer vs. interviewee: "Now that part of my work involves interviewing people, I can tell you that it is much easier to interview someone than to be interviewed. As the interviewer, you control the conversation."

Early recruiting experience: "When I was a member of Sigma Kappa sorority at Elmhurst, I helped with recruiting. It was exciting to meet the new girls. And it was a lot like the recruiting I do professionally now. You have to ask the right questions to find the right people. You have to sell the position, and you have to make sure the candidate understands the benefits."

Teamwork: "What I love about the CPE is that they have such a great team. I got to know everyone there because I took advantage of so many of the opportunities they offered, from internships to shadowing to international study. They're really open to helping students get the right start professionally."

A bit of advice: "Students should really take advantage of all the CPE has to offer. It's so important to develop their communication skills, so they know how to talk about themselves in an interview and make the most of networking opportunities. The CPE gives you so many ways to prepare yourself."

Career Fair Shows Shifting Job Market

The job market may still be moving slowly, but Elmhurst students who attended this year's CPE Career Fair found plenty of reasons to be optimistic about their career prospects.



From left: Students meet employers at the Career Fair; senior Maggie Potter checks students in at the registration desk; CPE staffers Annette Coduto and Holly Coffin take a break from helping students navigate the event.

On March 11, dozens of employers gathered in the Founders Lounge to talk to students about job openings and internships. Elmhurst College students and alumni flocked to the fair, wearing their best professional attire, fresh resumés in hand.

"We had more than 30 employers attend the Career Fair this year, representing a very diverse range of fields," said Holly Coffin, internship coordinator at the Center for Professional Excellence. "We make a point of including as many different professions as possible, because Elmhurst has such a wide variety of majors."

Maggie Potter, a senior speech-language pathology major, worked the registration desk at the event. She attends the career fair every year, and said she is always impressed by its scope.

"It's a great opportunity to talk to multiple employers, right here on campus—which is invaluable," Potter said. "It makes it easy to find a job if you're on your game."

Employers represented at the fair ranged from the Hub Group and Enterprise Rent-A-Car to Chicago Public

Media and the Center for Autism and Related Disorders. The fair offered an opportunity for students to network with companies they may have not considered before, and to make valuable professional connections. Sometimes, students are even offered positions on the spot.

Ben Moore, a junior supply chain management major, attended the career fair specifically to connect with representatives of two companies—Bosch and ID Logistics—but he also tried to step out of his comfort zone. "Seeing a vast array of companies instead of just targeting one or two, you can meet with 10 or 12 companies and make more connections," he said. "It's really helpful."

Coffin sees this year's success as a sign the job market is taking a positive turn.

"Within a week or two of the Career Fair, I heard from several students that they had received job or internship offers from employers they met there," she said. "Other students made good connections and continue to network for future opportunities."

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