

# WCPE Briefing

FALL 2022



## A Focus on Compassionate Care

For two Elmhurst students, an internship at a memory care residence taught valuable lessons about empathy and communication.

Internships are an important way for students to explore careers and get hands-on experience. But at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many employers weren't taking on student interns—especially in the health care field.



From left: Stephanie Melchor, Donna Germann, Jacqueline Gutierrez, and Erica Ashauer outside Artis Senior Living in Elmhurst.

So when it came time to find internships for two students taking a medical humanities course, Erica Ashauer, director of pre-professional advising and health professions advising at the WCPE, reached out to Artis Senior Living of Elmhurst, a 72-bed memory care community that has partnered with the University in the past. As a result, both students completed internships at Artis during Spring Term 2022.

Both students plan to pursue careers in health care, making the internship a perfect fit. **Jacqueline Gutierrez '23** has her sights on a career in respiratory therapy, while **Stephanie Melchor '23** plans to practice medicine. Both are majoring in Spanish with minors in medical humanities.

The Artis internship gave Gutierrez and Melchor a holistic view of a modern health care organization. Instead of working in one area for the full term, they rotated through departments, doing everything from checking the fire extinguishers and learning about food-prep regulations to shadowing nurses while they administered medications.

"Rotating through departments allowed our interns to really understand how the operation works," says Donna Germann, senior executive director at Artis. "We're a small microcosm, but we have all of the departments, and the interns can see how it all fits together."

Gutierrez and Melchor particularly enjoyed working directly with residents in the life enrichment department—planning activities and guiding residents through chair exercises, crafts, baking activities and more. But, they said, getting a big-picture view of the whole enterprise was an eye-opening experience.

"I learned that in healthcare, everything is very connected," Melchor says. "For example, we had to make sure the water heater didn't go above a certain temperature to prevent the residents from burning themselves. I never realized so much went into resident care."

They also learned valuable lessons about empathy and patience.

"Working with patients with dementia has taught me how to remain calm, pay attention to nonverbal communication and show compassion," says Gutierrez. "It's hard, because you pour out all your emotions, but if you really like helping people, then you enjoy the job."

For both students, the internship met a requirement of the medical humanities minor, which teaches students to take a humanistic approach to health care. Open to students in any major who are interested in the intersection of medicine, science and caregiving as a humane art, the minor focuses on ethical considerations in the clinician-patient relationship, as well as effective communication, integrity, excellence, compassion, altruism, respect for patients and colleagues, empathy and service.

### 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

A Focus on Compassionate Care  
Legal Aide  
Standing Out from the Competition  
Opening Doors for Military Veteran Students  
Exploring the Legal Profession



“The minor in medical humanities has helped me get comfortable with the uncomfortable and communicate more effectively,” says Gutierrez. “It’s also about showing compassion toward others and showing them that they have someone they can trust.”

At the end of the internship, Gutierrez and Melchor accepted part-time job offers at Artis. Today, leaders on both sides of the partnership say they’re looking forward to expanding the relationship. Already, Germann is in talks with Elmhurst University’s occupational therapy and public health programs about internships and other opportunities. “Our residents really enjoy engaging with youth and developing those relationships,” Germann says. “The payoff is big for the organization, and it’s a win-win for the students and the residents.”

## Legal Aide ●

A pro bono case gave a pre-law student a look at the human side of law.



**Lukas Munoz '23** was born in Chile and has several family members who’ve had challenging experiences with the U.S. immigration process. A double major in economics and philosophy who speaks fluent Spanish, he’s also planning a career in law.

So when Lisa Woods, Elmhurst University’s pre-law advisor and a licensed attorney, was looking for a Spanish-speaking student to help her on a pro bono legal case involving an immigration issue early this year, Munoz was quick to volunteer.

The case, facilitated through the nonprofit organization Project Corazon, centered on clients who had fled from Colombia due to safety concerns related to their political and social views. The goal was to secure employment authorization for the clients so they would be able to work legally in the United States while they awaited a decision on their underlying asylum claim. Woods reached out to Elmhurst’s pre-law student community for help because the clients didn’t speak English, and she doesn’t speak Spanish.

Woods and Munoz met with the clients several times via Zoom to understand their situation, explain their options and prepare the required immigration paperwork.

“Lukas was incredibly helpful throughout the entire process,” said Woods. “He was professional, empathetic and enthusiastic about helping the clients.”

In February, Munoz and Woods were thrilled to learn that their work had paid off. The clients received their work permits and social security cards and were empowered to seek employment.

For Munoz, the experience provided an up-close view of the client counseling process and the procedures of the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service. It also provided a welcome introduction to what he calls the human dimension of law.

“It was very fulfilling to help a family in that position,” he said. “As an immigrant myself, I’ve seen some of my family members in similar positions, so it was nice to be able to give back.”

The experience solidified Munoz’s interest in pursuing a legal career. But first, he plans to spend two years giving back in another way: as a middle school teacher in Dallas with Teach for America. He applied to the program in his junior year and was accepted.

“I’ve been interested in Teach for America for a long time, because it will give me the chance to work with communities that need help,” he says. “It’s going to be challenging, but I’m really excited and I know I’ll learn a lot.”

## Standing Out from the Competition

A new tool helps students prepare to ace the all-important interview.



When **Makayla Clark '22** was applying to medical schools last year, she was nervous about her upcoming admissions interviews. So she turned to Erica Ashauer, director of pre-professional advising and health professions advising at the WCPE, who led her through mock interviews and offered guidance on how to do even better.

Ashauer also suggested that Clark leverage StandOut, the WCPE's new interviewing tool, to get more practice—a suggestion that proved to be a game changer.

"With StandOut, I was able to record my responses and see how I was communicating," says Clark, who majored in biology at Elmhurst. "I was also able to pay attention to how long I was speaking, which really helped me go into more detail with my responses."

StandOut is an online video platform designed to prepare students for job, internship and professional or graduate school interviews. The platform records and transcribes students' responses to a set of prepackaged questions, giving them the chance to review their performance and determine where they need more practice. And because it's online, students can access the tool whenever and wherever it's most convenient.



**Armando Sanchez '22**, a health science technology major who's now studying radiation therapy at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, also found the tool very helpful in preparing for professional school.

"I didn't have that much experience with interviews, so I didn't really know how to prepare for them," he says. "With StandOut I could look at the videos to see how I responded and how to position my camera better. It really helped me get better at answering questions and made me feel more confident going into my interview with Northwestern."

Confidence was also a key benefit of the platform for Clark, now a first-year medical school at Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee. "I had never done a virtual interview before, so I was struggling with being able to communicate with a person behind the screen," she says. "Using StandOut, I was able to see what the interviewer would see. It made me more comfortable and confident."

## Opening Doors for Military Veteran Students

The Jans Family Endowed Internship Fund helps students gain experience in defense-related organizations.

**Joseph D'Addosio '22** started his career as a technician specialist in the U.S. Army, spending four years working on fuel pumps, heaters and other equipment. Today, he's leveraging those technical skills to build a career in information technology, starting with a 10-week paid internship at Argonne National Laboratory.



"The internship is giving me a chance to take what I learned at Elmhurst and apply it on the job," says D'Addosio, an information technology major with a concentration in cybersecurity. "I'm working on the research side of things, but I'm also getting to know what each person does in the cybersecurity realm."

D'Addosio's internship is supported by the Jans Family Endowed Internship Fund, which was established in 2021 through a gift from brothers Robert Jans and Tim Jans '74. Part of the largest gift the University has ever received from living donors, the fund is designed to support student internships in science, technology, engineering and/or mathematics at a military or U.S. Department of Defense-oriented institution.

The Jans brothers' \$3.4 million gift also provides funding for a director of military and veterans affairs and a dedicated gathering space on campus for military and veteran students.

"The purpose of the internship fund is to provide a pipeline to talent for our armed forces," says Martin A. Gahbauer, executive director of the Weigand Center for Professional Excellence. "At the same time, by supporting internship opportunities, it's opening doors for our students going forward."



D'Addosio arrived at information technology through a circuitous path. After completing his military service, he spent several years working as a warehouse manager for an international cargo company. He initially planned to study politics at Elmhurst ("because I enjoy debating," he says) but soon got interested in IT instead.

"I chose IT because I knew nothing about technology, and I like to learn," he says. "There's so much you can do with it, and the more I talk to other interns at Argonne and other people, the more I get excited about the possibilities."

Eventually, D'Addosio hopes to work with the military in some capacity, possibly through the Department of Defense. "As a vet myself, I understand what the military is," he says. "I understand the technology and the terminology, so I always wanted to go back to that."

Meanwhile, D'Addosio says he's grateful for all the support he's received at Elmhurst. "I particularly appreciate the support I got from Jacob Hill, director of the Veteran Services Office," he says. "And the Jans Endowment is fantastic for military vets, because it helps open the doors to opportunities. Having my internship paid for was an incredible opportunity."

## Exploring the Legal Profession ●

Some pre-law students have a strong understanding of career options in law and a clear idea of their specific goals. For the rest, there's Exploring the Legal Profession, a January Term course that provides an overview of the role of attorneys and other professionals in American law system.

Taught by Lisa Woods, Elmhurst University's pre-law advisor, the course introduces students to various practice areas through site visits to courts, law firms and legal aid organizations. As they speak with attorneys and judges and engage in legal research, participants gain the tools they need to discern whether a legal career is right for them.

In January 2022, a group of pre-law students visited the Chicago office of Spyrtos Davis, a law firm that provides a wide range of legal services for individuals and businesses throughout northern Illinois. This site visit allowed the students to observe their classroom learning in action. Without a doubt, they all have smiles behind their masks.



From left: Elmhurst students Alondra Alvarado, Katie Cacioppo, Angelo Spyrtos, Emily Leonard, Nayelli Maldonado and Kova Olson visited law firm Spyrtos Davis as part of the WCPE's Exploring the Legal Profession course.

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