



Elmhurst
University

School of Business

Institute for Professional
and Community
Engagement

Student and Faculty Stories

ALUMNI NEWS

CELEBRATING OUR AWARD WINNERS

Elmhurst University's Founders Medal and Alumni Merit Awards honor outstanding contributions by alumni and friends to the University and the world. This year's winners were recognized at the Founders Recognition Evening on Oct. 13.

FOUNDERS MEDAL

One of the University's most prestigious honors, the Founders Medal celebrates individuals who have distinguished themselves through philanthropic or personal service to the University. This year's medal honored Ed Momkus '74



and his wife, Betsy Goltermann. Both are accomplished business and civic leaders, as well as significant supporters of Elmhurst University. Momkus has chaired the Board of Trustees for the past five years, and the couple have provided generous support to the University's annual fund, Mock Trial Program, American Dream Fellowship and many other funds over more than 30 years of giving.

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ALUMNI MERIT AWARDS

The Alumni Merit Awards celebrate Elmhurst graduates who have made exemplary contributions to the community and their alma mater.



LEFT TO RIGHT: SHAHEEN WOLFF, JACOB STELTER, LYNDA F. NADKARNI

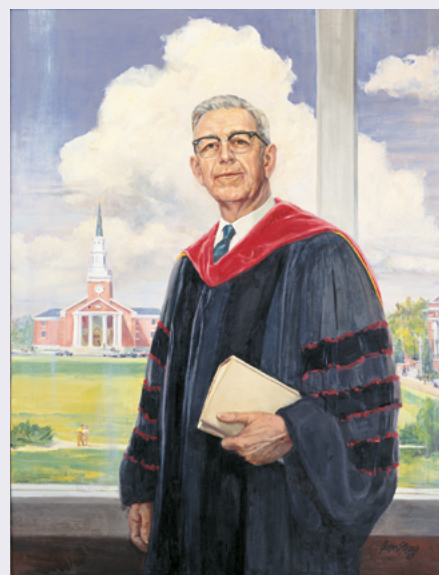
The Distinguished Young Alumni award winner this year was Jacob Stelter '11, a faculty member in emergency medicine and sports medicine at NorthShore University HealthSystem who also teaches emergency medicine at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. He also serves as lead physician at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon,

and has been an instructor for the Chicago Police Department.

Shaheen Wolff '87, co-dean of Elmhurst University's School of Business, received the Distinguished Service to Alma Mater award. Wolff spent more than a decade in mergers and acquisitions within the health care industry, but considers her corporate experience a warmup for her true calling—teaching. She has served for more than 20 years as a faculty member, and on numerous boards and committees.

Lynda F. Nadkarni B.S. '87, B.A. '92, was the winner of the Distinguished Service to Society award. Dedicating her life to service, Nadkarni serves as minister of mission and outreach at Riverside Presbyterian Church, and also is active in her work with RefugeeOne and the Riverside Refugee Resettlement Team, a group of 300 people dedicated to aiding refugees.

Did You Know?



Elmhurst's ninth president, Robert Stanger, was born on campus. His father, Christian Stanger, had been a music professor at Elmhurst Proseminary, where he taught for 50 years. Robert Stanger graduated from the Proseminary in 1918, attended Eden Theological Seminary, Yale University Divinity School and the University of Chicago, before returning to teach at his alma mater. He served as president from 1957 to 1965.

Whether he's teaching, coaching executives or hosting his popular podcast, Lawrence "LB" Brown is finding ways to help people reach their goals.

CASCADING LEADERSHIP

Lawrence "LB" Brown, MBA '15, and his friend Jim Kanichirayil were swapping stories about the experiences they've had as people of color in the workplace when they had an epiphany: What if they had known what to expect when they entered the workforce?

"And then we realized it doesn't have to be this way," says Brown, who spent 14 years at Allstate before joining the faculty at Elmhurst, where he's now assistant professor of business and economics and director of the MBA program. "We can tell people about some of the things they may experience. And more importantly, we can help them navigate those issues."

So the two launched *Cascading Leadership*, a weekly podcast that addresses questions of diversity and equity in the workplace while

offering insights into organizational effectiveness, talent strategy and other key leadership issues.

In addition to drawing on their own professional experiences—Kanichirayil is an HR and talent acquisition technology consultant with a doctorate in education—the hosts spotlight the leadership stories of women, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ+ community and people from other diverse backgrounds.

"We didn't want our voices to be the only ones heard. We wanted to bring in people from different backgrounds," Brown says. "Our goal is to hear the differences in people's stories, but at the same time to hear the similarities. And we have found that there are recurring themes of access to opportunity, intellectual pursuit, agility and code-switching."

Launched in early 2022, the podcast has aired nearly 100 episodes to date. With more than 25,000 downloads, it's been recognized by Thinkers360, a global thought leadership platform.

"We thought only a handful of people would listen, but it's been very popular," Brown notes.

"Each individual has a lived experience, and we need to recognize that."

At Elmhurst, Brown tries to be the coach and mentor he wishes he'd had in the early part of his own career. "I know all the things to do wrong, because I did most of them," he says. "But now I can teach other people and show them that there are different ways to achieve." ■



A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT

Elmhurst faculty and administrators helped pave the way for a summer internship in finance.

When Karam Hasan '24 arrived in the United States from Jordan in the beginning of 2020, he was excited for new opportunities—and had no idea a pandemic would put those opportunities on hold.

But when the world began to seem more normal in 2021, he searched for the best place to pursue his dreams. He found it at Elmhurst University, where he quickly delved into finance and economics classes. A visiting talk from a senior managing director at Guggenheim Partners, a boutique investment firm, gave Hasan a glimpse of his potential future. “I thought, this is the place I want to be, and these are the types of people I want to surround myself with,” he says.

He applied for a summer internship at the firm’s New York City office and was excited when he got it—only to start panicking when he realized he needed a place to live.

That’s when Elmhurst faculty and administrators jumped in. Visiting assistant professor Kortney Peagram sent out a call for help, and the Elmhurst team helped secure housing for Hasan at St. John’s University in Queens.

“I think that if I had gone to a bigger school, I wouldn’t have gotten such humane and personal assistance,” Hasan says. “I was proud to say the people from Elmhurst helped me.”

As a compliance intern, Hasan worked on multiple projects, including crafting compliance manuals for federal regulations. He networked across the company and presented his ideas to senior management.

“From my finance classes, I knew what I was talking about,” Hasan says. “And at Guggenheim, they taught me how to think strategically and manage projects by breaking them down into small parts and collaborating with the right people.”

As Hasan prepares to graduate in the spring, he’s looking for career opportunities around the globe where he can leverage his real-world experience in finance together with his native knowledge of Arabic.

“It’s great that Elmhurst recognizes the capabilities and potential of its students and invests in them,” he says. “Without that, I wouldn’t have had this opportunity. I wouldn’t have had these doors opened for me.”

GUGGENHEIM



Through a TEDx talk at Elmhurst and his work at NBCUniversal, Marvin Malone is creating spaces where everyone knows they belong.

LEADING WITH COMPASSION

Marvin Malone, MBA '23, has always been passionate about inclusivity, belonging and racial equity. Then the murder of George Floyd in 2020 sparked a national reckoning on race, and he was inspired to make his voice count.

So Malone started writing about advocacy and exploring avenues for action. Lawrence “LB” Brown, director of Elmhurst’s MBA program, told him about the annual TEDxElmhurstUniversity conference and encouraged him to participate. Malone submitted an audition, and in April gave his first TEDx talk, “Speaking to the Crowd.”

“The mission of my life is to create spaces where everyone knows they belong,” Malone says.

“So that’s what my TEDx talk was about: How do we lead with compassion and build spaces where everyone feels safe?”

For Malone, who studied performance in college and worked as an actor before pivoting to an MBA at Elmhurst, presenting on the TEDx stage was a transformative experience.

“Speaking about something that I care about and seeing people use it as a springboard to learn more about other cultures or even to change their lives—that’s been really exciting,” he says. “It was a moment for me to feel affirmed in what I know and believe.”

Today, Malone leans on that ethos in his work as a creative project manager at NBCUniversal, where a key part of his job is collaborating with minority-owned small businesses across the U.S. For an evergreen campaign called Open Doors, for

example, he and his team spotlight a different small business for several months throughout the year through videos and other marketing collateral, providing a national platform across NBC’s portfolio of brands and networks.

Since Malone earned his MBA, several growth opportunities have presented themselves. But wherever his career takes him, he’s committed to continuing to use his skills to advocate for others and create spaces where people can learn without judgment.

“It will be small changes that make a difference,” Malone says. “If we can actually see, care for and appreciate the people who are standing in front of us, we can quite literally change the world.”



PHOTO BY BLAKE MARTIN



ADVOCATE FOR ATHLETES

Basketball player Payton Schmidt is the voice of Elmhurst's student-athletes.

Payton Schmidt's first season as a guard on the women's basketball team at Elmhurst was no ordinary time.

Schmidt, now a senior majoring in business administration and sports management, made her debut as a Bluejay in the depths of COVID-19 lockdowns, when the team was playing games without spectators and student-athletes were some of the only people on campus.

"It was such a strange experience, being pretty much only with your teammates," Schmidt says. "But knowing you

had 20 friends there as a support system to get through this difficult time was a huge help. We found out that we weren't just a team but a family, too."

That kinship remains one of the things Payton treasures about being a student-athlete. And it's one of the things she promotes as president of Elmhurst's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, the governing body for Elmhurst's 531 student-athletes. Schmidt has been involved with SAAC since her first year and became its president as a junior. Her leadership that year earned her Student Organization



PHOTO BY BOB COSCARELLI

Members of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee include (from left) Kellyn Kennedy '25, Lauren Marshall '24, Uzair Ali '26, Payton Schmidt, Jenny Guerrero '24 and Kayton Garrett '27.

President of the Year honors. The committee's advisor, assistant football coach Jim Phelps, was named Student Organization Advisor of the Year.

"It was an honor for me and for SAAC," Schmidt says. "Coach Phelps is an amazing advisor."

The committee serves as a voice for Elmhurst's student-athletes, voting on proposed legislation from the NCAA and the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin. Each intercollegiate team at Elmhurst selects two members to serve as representatives on the council.

The council hosts an annual kickoff event at the start of the school year to welcome new students to the Bluejay family. It has teamed up on service projects with a local

assisted-living facility, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and Special Olympics. And, having survived a season without fans, Schmidt is especially proud of the council's efforts to promote attendance at contests and support for all of Elmhurst's teams.

"I know from experience what a difference fans can make," she says.

Schmidt's days as an advocate for student-athletes might not end with her graduation from Elmhurst. One of her potential career goals is to become a college athletic director.

"I love that Elmhurst lets you be more than an athlete," she says. "I'd like to work to help other student-athletes have the best possible experience." ▀

A generous gift establishes a new student-managed investment fund.

AN INVESTMENT IN KNOWLEDGE

Finance students who don't want to wait until graduation to apply their skills in the stock market now have an opportunity for hands-on practice at Elmhurst: a student-managed investment fund.

The new, \$1 million Kloet Student-Managed Investment Fund was established with a lead gift commitment from Elmhurst Trustee Emeritus Thomas Kloet and his wife, Margaret. The fund, which is scheduled for a soft launch this fall, will be a part of the University's endowment.

"Margaret and I believe strongly in the mission that higher education aspires to," Kloet says. "We hope our funding of the seed capital for the Kloet Fund will result in a rigorous program that provides students with hands-on experience studying asset allocation, investment in financial markets, and financial analysis of market sectors and individual companies."

Business students will manage the fund in collaboration with School of Business leadership. After learning to analyze and value companies in a class, they will apply their knowledge by choosing stocks for the fund's portfolio and pitching them to Siaw-Peng Wan, the Kloet Fund's faculty advisor, and a panel for inclusion..

This spring, juniors Rob Grant (pictured) and Mike Zimmerman worked with Wan to develop the course. "I never thought I would be able to take a class like this in college," says Zimmerman, a finance major who already invests in the stock market as a day trader. "I've heard of funds like this in bigger schools, so it's a great opportunity for a place like Elmhurst."

As part of the course, students will hear talks from financial-industry professionals, including analysts who will provide tips on valuing and picking stocks.

"I've learned how to analyze financial statements in other courses, but this takes it to the next level," says Grant,

a finance and mathematics major who has an internship as a credit analyst this summer. "We are learning how to analyze the value of companies, which will help us be much better situated for our careers."

A global business leader, Kloet served as the CEO of Toronto's TMX Group Limited, parent of the Toronto Stock Exchange and other Canadian financial markets. He is currently an independent director of Nasdaq Inc., and chairman of the board of The Nasdaq Stock Market LLC.

"We believe this investment experience will give participating students an advantage as they compete for jobs in the finance industry," Kloet says.

"Imagining a graduating Elmhurst student proudly showing his or her financial analysis of a company, and the results of the fund's actual investment following that analysis, is an exciting outcome for us—and, we hope, a difference-maker for the student." ■



PHOTO BY BOB COSCARELLI



ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Tagen Pearson isn't letting diabetes stop him from reaching his goals.

Every year, the men's basketball team at Elmhurst plays a softball game to raise money for a select charity. This year, the choice was clear: JDRF, a national not-for-profit organization that supports life-changing research on Type 1 diabetes (T1D).

JDRF was chosen in honor of one of the team's own: guard Tagen Pearson '24, who was diagnosed with T1D at age 8. A chronic condition without a cure, T1D destroys the cells that produce insulin, requiring a lifelong balancing act of monitoring blood-sugar levels and dosing with insulin.

The game was a great success, raising nearly \$1,000 for JDRF. Energized by the experience, the team signed up to participate in JDRF One Walk, the organization's annual 2K walkathon.

"The guys on the team, they're like my brothers," Pearson says. "Having them all come out for the fundraiser and walk right behind me was a powerful experience."

Pearson, who joined the team as a first-year student, says the support he gets from his teammates and coaches has been a key highlight of his Elmhurst experience. "It's not always easy, having diabetes, but knowing I have people I can rely on is a big help."

The JDRF fundraiser turned out to be just one of this year's highlights for Pearson. In February, the Bluejays captured the 2024 CCIW Tournament title and earned a berth in the NCAA Division III men's basketball championship.

"I've always dreamed about winning the tournament and playing in the championship," Pearson says. "Contributing to the team's win against Illinois Wesleyan was an unbelievable experience. It felt like we weren't just playing a game—we were representing Elmhurst and getting its name out there."

Pearson credits his Bluejay experience with keeping him on track and showing him that anything is possible. And he's determined to pass that inspiration along to the next generation.

"I want kids who have diabetes to know that they can do anything," he says. "You can be a lacrosse player; you can be a basketball player; you can be a swimmer. I've always wanted to inspire people, and showing kids that you don't have to let diabetes conquer you is one way I can do that." ■

Kenneth K. Riemer '63
Jan. 15, 2024, Victor, Mont.

Richard W. Hoglund '64
Dec. 1, 2023, Tempe, Ariz.

Gerald M. Stringer '64
Jan. 18, 2021, Midlothian, Ill.

Kurt K. Kunze '65
Dec. 14, 2023, Buchanan, Va.

Jon J. Ritt '67
Jan. 8, 2024, College Park, Ga.

Arnold A. Trillet '67
Nov. 24, 2023, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Virginia R. Wachenheim '69
Feb. 4, 2024, Belmond, Iowa

Bruce Holman '70
Dec. 30, 2023, Bellevue, Neb.

Peter W. Mastro '70
April 13, 2023, Bartlett, Ill.

Barbara A. Deli '71
May 20, 2023, Arlington Heights, Ill.

William B. Hinkle '72
Oct. 5, 2023, Rockford, Ill.

Carole M. Babowice '73
Sept. 24, 2023, Melrose Park, Ill.

Solomon Williams '73
Nov. 19, 2023, Quincy, Fla.

Jeffrey J. Valaika '74
Sept. 20, 2023, Valencia, Calif.

Kristine A. Schwarz '76
Sept. 2, 2023, Elmhurst, Ill.

Jeffrey M. Novak '78
Sept. 3, 2023, Lombard, Ill.

Roberta A. Roeske '78
Nov. 6, 2023, Lombard, Ill.

William H. Wiessner '78
Nov. 7, 2023, Willowbrook, Ill.

Robert G. Kaucky '81
Jan. 7, 2024, Presque Isle, Wis.

Rocco Carioto '82
Feb. 18, 2024, Evergreen Park, Ill.

Patricia S. Poskocil '82
Nov. 8, 2023, Lombard, Ill.

Thomas M. Hickey '83
Sept. 21, 2023, Glendale, Ariz.

Dorothy A. McDermott '83
Nov. 12, 2023, LaGrange, Ill.

Gerald P. Fornelli '84
Aug. 10, 2023, Kansas City, Mo.

Judith E. Giffin '84
Dec. 18, 2023, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Michael P. Reed '84
Nov. 9, 2023, Lakeland, Fla.

Lorri L. Nastala '86
Feb. 25, 2024, Madison, Wis.

Mark R. Rau '91
Oct. 16, 2023, Round Lake, Ill.

Rita M. McGreal '92
Feb. 25, 2024, Elmhurst, Ill.

Raymond J. Bacci '93
Nov. 30, 2023, Villa Park, Ill.

Sister Patricia Crowley '98
Oct. 14, 2023, Palatine, Ill.

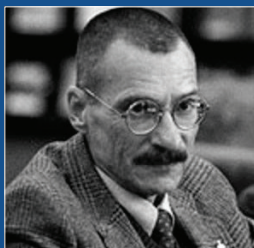
Sharon M. Swistak-Sobieck '01
Dec. 31, 2023, Tinley Park, Ill.

THOUGHT LEADER

Richard Gustav Niebuhr, H '97, a journalist and scholar whose work influenced how Americans think about religion, died on Oct. 20, 2023, at 68. As a reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and other media outlets, Niebuhr explored the role of religion in American society. He won many awards for his work, including his coverage of the 1993 Branch Davidian tragedy in Waco, Texas. Niebuhr also served as a scholar in residence at Princeton University and a faculty member at Syracuse University. Niebuhr was the grandson of H. Richard Niebuhr, a 1912 graduate of Elmhurst and a leading theologian who served as president of the University from 1924 to 1927.



ECONOMIST AND MENTOR



George A. Thoma Jr., who taught economics at Elmhurst University for nearly four decades, died on Dec. 15, 2023, at 78. The recipient of numerous teaching and advising awards during his time at Elmhurst, he helped design the University's MBA program and served on the Assessment and Teaching Effectiveness Task Force. In 1983, 1985 and 1987, he taught at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, where he established a modern economics curriculum, and in 1994, he was the Fulbright Professor of International Economics at Shandong University in Jinan, China. A 2009 Founders Medal recipient, Thoma said when he retired in 2009 that he planned to stay involved with the University because Elmhurst was "too much in my blood for me to just walk away from it."