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# The DePaul Difference

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# THE DEPAUL DIFFERENCE

Employers seek the thorough preparation and strong work ethic that distinguish DePaul alumni and interns.

*By Marilyn Ferdinand | Photos: Tom Vangel*

**G**etting a college education is a good investment in the future. Statistics show that those who earn their degree can expect higher lifetime earnings—from nearly twice to nearly four times as much—than those who don't. Nonetheless, landing a great job can be a challenge.

In a competitive hiring environment, DePaul graduates have an edge. They have a strong reputation among employers for practical preparedness for the workplace, drive for excellence and consistent, high-quality work. They have one more advantage as well—a large network of alumni employers who recognize the value of a DePaul education and actively seek DePaul graduates and interns to join their workforce.

## ALUMNI HIRING ALUMNI

**Ed Grossman (JD '81)** is co-founder and executive director of the Chicago Legal Clinic, a provider of low-cost and no-cost community-based legal services to underserved and disadvantaged individuals. Grossman says, "Every week I get solicitations from people looking for jobs. I look for a demonstrated commitment to what we do, and DePaul provides a solid basis for familiarity. I know students who go to DePaul have a certain history—a strong public interest ethic that the university helps them explore."

Grossman is impressed with the College of Law's emphasis on the practical aspects of practicing law. "The law program is a lot more hands-on than merely theoretical," he says. "Another thing DePaul is good at is placing a much greater emphasis on technology and the law. DePaul graduates have computer research skills, and they know about computer privacy."

**Scott Steffens (BUS '89)**, partner in audit services for the international tax, audit and advisory firm Grant Thornton, appreciates the sophistication of DePaul graduates. "They take advantage of what DePaul has to offer. They do their homework and get to know potential employers through evening events downtown, so they have

a better understanding of how business life works. They are able to make a better culture fit for themselves."

Steffens finds this preparation pays off for his firm. Not only do his DePaul hires perform at their peer level, but they also have longer tenure with the firm. "This is in an industry with 25 to 35 percent turnover. That's the value proposition for me," Steffens asserts. "Whenever colleagues talk about choosing DePaul as a core school, I point out the numbers on performance, work product quality and tenure. There's great consistency. I can't remember a single mistake hire from DePaul."



**Ed Grossman (JD '81)** finds a strong public interest ethic among DePaul law students.

RELATIONSHIPS, ETHICS AND INTEGRITY MATTER. THAT'S THE DEPAUL DIFFERENCE. —DAVID NYGREN



**Samantha Falbe (THE '98)** enjoys offering on-the-job training to lighting program students.

Nygren Consulting's founder, David Nygren, often seeks out DePaul alumni as job candidates to work alongside him to provide governance, management and change management advice to Fortune 500 companies and nonprofit organizations alike. A former executive vice president and psychology professor at DePaul, Nygren says, "I find DePaul graduates are immensely competent in both the scientific and applied psychology of business. In addition to hiring them, I also recommend them. I see how deeply trained they are, but with a degree of humility and drive for superior performance. I trust them. I don't have to give them direction."

Like Steffens, Nygren also appreciates the high retention rate of his DePaul colleagues. "I think they stay with me because we have a fantastic team and work ethic," Nygren says. "We're all trained in the same discipline, and we have a lot of fun."

## CAREER CONNECTIONS

When asked to name her favorite thing about DePaul, Lily Wu, a student in the master's in accountancy program, enthusiastically replies, "The Career Center!" Gillian Steele, executive director of DePaul's Career Center, works hard to help students and recent graduates put their training immediately to use in the workforce. "We're here to guide students through the process of career identification and job search," she says.

Career Center staff help students decide on a major through an assessment of their interests, values and personalities, and then connect those majors to potential career opportunities and industries. An important Career Center function is to help students gain experience by arranging networking events, mentorships, internships and career shadowing. Finally, students learn how to apply and interview for jobs, as well as evaluate job offers.

"We serve all students," Steele says. "Alumni who are up to a year out of school get full access to our services. After that, they still have access to many of our services."

The Career Center encourages alumni to get involved by inviting them to meet students through job fairs and share their expertise during networking roundtables and panel discussions. Another way alumni stay connected is through Blue Demons at Work, a program that encourages alumni to host a group of students at their workplace. "A group went to United Airlines, where three alumni hosted them,"

says Steele. "It's an opportunity for students to have a quick look, meet people and talk to them about their work."

**Samantha Falbe (THE '98)**, president of Intelligent Lighting Creations, is enthusiastic about offering internship opportunities to students because of her own on-the-job training when she was a student in The Theatre School lighting program. "The beauty of the conservatory is that you're in school and you can be a working professional at the same time," Falbe says. "We worked at the Marriott Lincolnshire Theatre when we were still students."

Falbe and her husband and business partner, Scott, who also attended DePaul, are happy to open their lighting and rigging company for summer internships and shadowing. "The thought process, the ability to break down schedules and work as a team, carry over from the DePaul lighting program. We're working with hundreds of lights and thousands of feet of cable, and you have to have lighting processes in your head like any architect or engineer. The students come to us with the knowledge."

## THE DEPAUL COMMUNITY

The alumni who continue their relationship with DePaul by actively recruiting employees from among its graduates and offering students a chance to explore career options do so with an appreciation for what DePaul offers. "We enjoy the DePaul community and love to support students," Falbe says. "It's so important."

"A value doesn't belong to any one group, but there is a collection of Vincentian values that underpins the way DePaul alumni practice law and learn," Grossman reflects. "The school can take a lot of pride in that."

"I really focus on creating a community of DePaul alumni," says Steffens. "I watch my DePaul people, and I think they would say they appreciate the additional level of attention that makes the world a little smaller in a firm of 30,000 employees. It is understood that being part of that community means they will give back as they progress in their careers."

"DePaul is a distinguished institution with amazing graduates. DePaul graduates focus upon the common good, ethics and justice—all fundamentally Catholic and academic values," Nygren says. "Relationships, ethics and integrity matter. That's the DePaul difference." •



**Scott Steffens (BUS '89)** appreciates how well DePaul graduates understand a business environment.