Corporate Connections That Advance Careers

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Corporate Connections That Advance Careers

Cover Page Footnote
DePaul’s deep connections with corporations and firms help students develop marketable skills and prepare them for in-demand careers. Showcased are the sales leadership education program, the Marriott hospitality scholarship program, the McGladrey master of science in taxation program and Corporate and Employer Outreach Initiative partnerships that helps working professionals attain advanced degrees without coming to campus.

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Claire Hanold (BUS ’13)
Corporate Connections That Advance Careers

Presenting business solutions to industry leaders as class projects. Connecting with executives for real-life lessons in the field. Learning without leaving the office. The Driehaus College of Business’s deep ties to the business community allow DePaul students to benefit in all of these ways and more, whether through undergraduate opportunities or graduate-level linkages.

Connections with corporations and firms help students develop marketable skills and prepare them for in-demand careers. For alumni, these connections help build career-advancing networks, as well as DePaul affinity and pride. Read more about some of the initiatives that connect DePaul to industry and showcase how a real-world, career-focused business education benefits everyone involved. 

By Jennifer Leopoldt
The program’s case-study structure lets students merge theory with practice and provides immediate interaction with company representatives. **Leah Sbigoli (BUS ’11)** remembers working with Walgreens and Roundy’s in a space management class to create a business plan for optimizing energy drink sales. “In the end, we got to present to the actual category managers at the company and show them our recommendations. I felt like I was seeing the immediate benefits of my education,” says Sbigoli, who now is a space management analyst for partner company Walgreens.

**Ren Stoecklin (BUS ’13)** agrees. “You knew that you were being given real-life data and that at the end of the quarter, you’d be presenting to industry experts. It really forced you to not just consider it a school assignment, but to consider it a job interview every time you were presenting a final,” says Stoecklin, who worked as a category analyst in partner company Red Bull’s graduate program, an 18-month rotational program for leadership training.

Another program graduate, **Claire Hanold (BUS ’13)**, was impressed by how welcoming the corporate partners were. “They never once treated us like we were college students; they treated us like their business partners and wanted to help each of us individually in any way they could,” says Hanold, who is now a category analyst for partner company PepsiCo’s Foodservice Division. “As an alumna looking back, I owe my success to this program. The professors provided me with the tools and resources to be successful and helped me make connections with our incredible business partners along the way.”

**Alexis Gordon (BUS ’14), Tyler Hensala (BUS ’13), Claire Hanold (BUS ’13) and Simone Caron-Vera (BUS ’15) connected to careers at PepsiCo through DePaul’s corporate partnerships.**
When Tom Blaze decided to earn his Master of Science in Taxation, he benefited from a partnership between McGladrey and DePaul. “McGladrey had a program where DePaul instructors would actually come to our seminar room, which made it very, very convenient. It was almost like it would be foolish not to do it,” says Blaze, a partner in McGladrey’s State and Local Tax group, who earned his degree in 2008.

The partnership program began in 2005, and at first, DePaul faculty would go to McGladrey’s main office and teach classes that were broadcast online through the company’s technology. Two years ago, DePaul took over the technology, and now classes are taught and broadcast from DePaul’s Loop Campus. Students can either come to class on campus or log on remotely to view the lectures. While most of the students are located in Chicagoland and the Midwest, the program also draws McGladrey employees based as far away as California, New York and Washington, D.C.

The partnership between McGladrey and DePaul came about in part because an advanced degree is a necessity in the tax field. “The MST brings the knowledge you need in order to function as a tax professional. It takes a lot longer to get this knowledge if you’re just getting it doing client work. You’ve got to have both—you need that real-world experience as well as this knowledge,” says DePaul Instructor Diane Kuhlmann.

Kuhlmann offers an interesting perspective on the program. “For 10 years, I was the director of training for tax professionals at McGladrey. I was involved with the MST program when working there, and now I’m at DePaul working on the other side,” she explains. “What we’ve worked really hard to do is to make sure this online program is equivalent to DePaul’s regular program. Students who are attending the McGladrey program are not getting an ‘MST light.’”

Blaze also has seen the program from both sides, first as a student and now as an instructor. “While I was in the MST program, I developed a lot of respect for the DePaul instructors. They all had practical experience, and they brought examples of what they were doing in their day-to-day jobs,” says Blaze, who now teaches ACCT 570: State and Local Tax at DePaul.

After 10 years, the program is still evolving. The format used to be synchronous, meaning it was designed so all students were watching together at the same time, no matter where they were located. Now, Kuhlmann says, DePaul is moving to an asynchronous platform with prerecorded lectures. The class also includes a weekly webcast. Students can choose to attend the webcast and interact with the instructor in real time or access the recording whenever is convenient for them. “As time goes on and as technology and platforms change, we’re continuing to upgrade the program.”
A new university initiative is giving employees at large Chicago corporations another way to attend DePaul. Thanks to DePaul’s Corporate and Employer Outreach (CEO), instead of hopping on a bus or train and commuting to campus, employees can head to a classroom or conference room at their workplaces to earn degrees.

“The flexibility of being able to walk down the hall and start a graduate degree right after a busy workday is a real benefit to the employee,” says Suzanne Depeder, DePaul’s associate vice president for Graduate Admission in Enrollment Management and Marketing. “Employers benefit as well because talent development is a key driver of organizational growth and success. They are able to offer their employees an onsite degree program and tuition reimbursement as part of a strategy for improving their talent and keeping them from moving to competitors.”

The CEO Initiative partners with area corporations to identify and customize degree and certificate programs that help employers develop their workforces. The partnership involves DePaul offering scholarships to employees, who then either take courses through an onsite program or attend any of the 150 undergraduate or graduate degree programs offered on campus. DePaul lets employees know about potential degrees through onsite information sessions, as well as lunch and learn seminars featuring professors.

For companies that choose onsite programs, it’s a significant benefit that employees don’t have to commute to campus. One such company is Medline, a major manufacturer and distributor of healthcare supplies that is headquartered in Mundelein, Ill., near the Wisconsin border. The company launched an MBA cohort in 2014.

“The CEO Initiative helps DePaul reach a broader prospective student base, in that we can connect with students who might not have considered us simply based on location,” Depeder explains. “The Medline cohort is a great example of how this initiative has allowed us to expand our geographic reach.”

Associate Professor of Management William Marty Martin says he appreciates what the programs offer to all parties. “The benefits to students and alumni are invaluable, from securing employment to moving up the ladder. For DePaul, we get exposure and placements for our students,” says Martin, who has spoken at onsite lunch and learns about DePaul’s Health Sector Management MBA concentration and other degrees.

In its first year, the CEO Initiative recruited two onsite cohorts, bringing in 70 students. Depeder expects the program to grow because of its utility to students and corporations alike. “Employers are looking at things they can offer to their employees as benefits, so the fact that we are able to offer a flexible delivery model is attractive. Plus, it’s a good retention strategy for their employees,” Depeder says. “It’s much easier to figure out how to give people professional development and benefits to keep them than to recruit all over again.”

The Medline DePaul MBA cohort takes classes at the company’s Mundelein, Ill., headquarters through a partnership forged by DePaul’s CEO Initiative.