

# DOUGHERTY FAMILY COLLEGE

## Newsletter



### DEAN'S CORNER

Dear Dougherty Family College Friends,

What started as a dream is now in its 8th year of developing transformational leaders. This time of political transition and cultural conflict has stirred feelings of uncertainty within many of our scholars. However, I am comforted by knowing our scholars have a strong community of support. Your support reminds our scholars that they have intrinsic value and worth and they will be cared for and loved especially during difficult times. I am grateful to each of you for the many ways you help our scholars pursue their dreams. Thank you for standing in solidarity with them.

As a community, we can be proud of our numerous achievements. This year, we welcomed 146 first-year scholars. 96 second year scholars have returned and are committed to completing their associate's degree. In total, 242 scholars are enrolled at DFC. This is the highest number of scholars since we opened our doors. We are happy to report we've seen a 48% increase in DFC graduates; 378 scholars graduated with an associate's degree and 129 are bachelor's degree holders.

We continue to look for innovative ways to provide our scholars with the best educational experience. This fall, we launched our Pre-STEM concentration, which allows scholars to complete up to 16 credits of STEM coursework on the St. Paul campus. Nine scholars are enrolled in the Pre-STEM concentration, and mid-term reports show they are excelling.

In addition to the Pre-STEM concentration, we have designed two academic enrichment programs, Academic Advantage and Mutual Accountability Partnership (MAP). Both programs provide additional peer tutoring and social and emotional support to our scholars. The goal is to increase academic performance, persistence, and sense of belonging. We are intentional in creating a learning community that incorporates the principles of shame resilience and empowerment.

The success and impact of our college is the direct result of our hard-working, committed, talented, and gifted scholars, alumni, staff, faculty, community partners, and friends. Our collective efforts are paying off, and we are witnessing the impact we are making on this generation of future leaders.

Finally, I want to express gratitude to our partners who contributed to our student emergency fund. This fund helps our scholars with housing, food, and other life emergencies. Due to the growing needs of our scholars the goal was \$60,000. Our partners responded with great love and generosity, and we exceeded the goal with \$84,730.

I am extremely grateful to all of you for your part in creating a more just and equitable world.

Much Gratitude & Love,



Buffy Smith, Ph.D.  
Dean and Frey Endowed Chair  
Dougherty Family College





## Welcome New Board Member

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### James P. Gearen

James Gearen, Principal/Executive Vice President and founding partner of Zeller Realty Group. Jim was named one of Twin Cities Business Journal's "40 under 40." He is a third-generation Tommie ('83) and has been a Trustee of the university since 2009. Jim's grandfather came to the College of St Thomas in 1899 on a full need-based scholarship and went on to a successful executive career in the meatpacking industry. It is in gratitude for that trajectory-changing scholarship that Jim joins the DFC Advisory Board.

## The Power of Internships

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A shared mission has united sister companies Sovran, Inc. and Crescent Career Center, with DFC in advancing education and IT industry exposure. Under the leadership of Owner Lisa Loken and President Traci Leffner, Sovran, Inc. provides personalized, high-level IT management services to businesses and nonprofits across the region. Their leadership extends to Crescent Career Center, a leading computer training facility that offers education and career resources.



In Fall 2024, Sovran, Inc. and Crescent Career Center joined forces with DFC to create a quality learning environment for two Dougherty Family College interns. Abdulmed Beder, Sovran's intern, has been gaining hands-on experience with the technical team and learning about various roles within an IT organization. His tasks have included direct help desk support, shadowing system administrators on client visits, and working behind the scenes with the engineering and cybersecurity teams. Tyler Ruble, Crescent Career Center's intern, has been instrumental in managing social media campaigns, supporting the student center, and collaborating with the Operations Coordinator to improve office efficiency.

# The Power of Internships

“I have learned a variety of skills, from processing checks and handling bills to understanding the intricacies of social media marketing,” Ruble shared. “The highlight for me has been getting to know my coworkers and experiencing an office environment. I’ve enjoyed learning about their roles and contributions to the company.”

The sister companies share a mission with DFC: helping individuals succeed. “No matter where a student is headed, DFC focuses on each individual, finding ways to support their success. At Sovran and Crescent, we hold the same values. Our goal is to put our clients first and assist them in any way we can,” said Ciara Venne, Program Director at Crescent Careers Center.

“The experience has been fantastic. Abdulhmed arrives eager to learn each day,” noted Megan Killea, Director of Operations at Sovran, Inc. “Students are the future of technology. By helping them learn about our industry now, we better prepare them to pursue specialized areas of interest or careers in technology.”

“Crescent and Sovran value work-based learning, especially internships. The students that Crescent works with are pursuing new skills and certifications to start new careers or further develop their existing abilities. Internships offer a unique opportunity for those who might not have access to this experience in a traditional school setting,” Venne added.

With a shared mission, the partnership between DFC and these sister companies is thriving, working collaboratively to cultivate future talent and develop skilled IT professionals.

As DFC continues to grow, so does the need for companies with shared missions to host the next generation of young professionals. Interested companies are encouraged to contact the Professional Internship Program Director, Amy Kadrmas, at [amy.kadrmas@stthomas.edu](mailto:amy.kadrmas@stthomas.edu) to embark on this exciting opportunity as an internship host.





## College Fair: Transfer Success

At the annual DFC Fall College Fair, we welcomed representatives from esteemed colleges like Augsburg University, Concordia University (St. Paul), Hamline University, Metropolitan State University, St. Cloud State University, St. Mary's University, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and University of St. Thomas. This fair offered our students a firsthand look into the countless opportunities that await them. From liberal arts colleges to specialized institutions, our students had the chance to explore a diverse range of options.

The college fair experience was invaluable for our two-year college students as it provided them with the opportunity to start planning their academic journey and prepare for a smooth transfer. Our DFC scholars gained insights into the diverse programs and offerings available, learned about transfer requirements and the application process, and received personalized advice from admissions counselors. This early engagement helps DFC scholars make informed decisions, build strong relationships with potential transfer institutions, and position themselves for a successful transition.

As our scholars continue their academic journey, DFC is here to support them every step of the way. We encourage them to take advantage of our transfer advising services to explore options, develop a personalized transfer plan, and receive guidance throughout the application process. Together, we can ensure a seamless transfer experience and help our students achieve their academic goals.

Amanda Yang  
College Transfer Counselor



## Career Fair: Professional Development



The DFC Career Expo successfully hosted 130 attendees, including current scholars and alumni, promoting meaningful connections between young professionals and potential employers. Fourteen prominent organizations, including ACR Homes/ACR Healthcare, Agape Child Development Center, Allianz, AmeriCorps/ServeMN, Children's Minnesota, Jovie, Lutheran Social Service of MN, Minnesota Autism Center, Minnesota Vikings, PwC, SPS Commerce, Wallin UpTurnships, Western National Insurance, and WSB Engineering, participated in the event.

“I made many connections with employers and honestly I wasn’t expecting too. But I engaged in such nice conversations with some amazing people in the childcare field and that made my night,” said Taleah Jones, DFC Class of 2025.

“The event allowed enough time to visit with several students. The students asked great questions and continued conversations--great networking skills.” Emilie Hyatt, Recruitment Manager at Jovie shared.

In addition to networking and exploring career opportunities, participants benefited from LinkedIn and resume review sessions conducted by volunteers, as well as the chance to have professional headshots taken. The expo provided a comprehensive experience, equipping attendees with valuable tools and connections for their career development.



## Career Fair: Professional Development

When Mesum Haider, class of 2019, was asked what he appreciated most about the career fair, Mesum offered, “Seeing a diverse range of employers, the helpfulness of the live resume review, and the free head shots were all great.” Mesum also stated, “Usually, you only learn about industries through open positions, but what was mind blowing and genuinely inspirational was learning about the changes that are happening across industries.”

Planning is already underway for the 2025 DFC Career Expo, where we aim to bring together even more employers and young professionals for a dynamic and enriching experience.

Jessica Castellanos-Perez, Career & Academic Success Coach  
Amy Kadrmas, Professional Internship Program Director

