

DOUGHERTY FAMILY COLLEGE

Newsletter



DEAN'S CORNER

The spring semester started with clouds of despair, grief, and uncertainty with Operation Metro Surge in Minnesota. Thankfully, as a community we stood together and took good care of each other and our neighbors. There is nothing more powerful than our collective love and respect for the human dignity of all people. We are better and stronger when we work to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to flourish in our society.

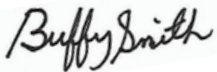
I am grateful for the abundance of love, support, and kindness that was given to our DFC scholars during the surge. We had generous board members and staff members provide grocery gift cards and donations to our student emergency funds. In addition, the Come to Believe Network, Constellation Fund and Interfaith America provided grants to help our scholars with emergencies related to rent, utilities, transportation, food, and other household expenses. Anytime we encounter a crisis, our loving and benevolent partners walk alongside us and give us the encouragement we need to continue to pursue our mission and help our scholars achieve their college dreams.

Speaking of dreams, we are on track to graduate over 80 scholars with their associate degrees in May. Also, we are excited to celebrate our first group of graduates with the Pre-STEM concentration. The Pre-STEM concentration has been supported by generous gifts from 3M, DFC board members, and long-time partners. Most of our AA graduates plan to enroll immediately into bachelor's degree programs.

This year, we celebrate 15 scholars who won the DFC Excellence Scholarship, which covers the full cost of tuition and fees to attend St. Thomas for the next three years to complete their bachelor's degrees. The DFC Excellence Scholarships were made possible through the donations of the Ryan/Sterbenz Estate and Dr. Eugene and Mary Frey. In addition, we were able to help 5 more scholars attend the four-year program at St. Thomas through the generous donation of the Heim family. Another joy we celebrate this spring is our partnership with the Wallin Education Partners. As a result of this partnership, 5 DFC graduates received Wallin scholarships to pursue their bachelor's degrees at private or public universities.

As this newsletter reflects, our scholars and team are resilient, and we press forward with our mission and our goal to create a more just and equitable world. As we journey toward justice, we are intentional to take time to celebrate the joys in life as well. We are grateful for the unwavering support, care, and love from all of our dedicated partners. We are stronger, better, and more whole, together.

Much Gratitude and Love,



Buffy Smith, Ph.D.
Dean and Frey Endowed Chair



The Power of Internships

Maxfield Internship Program Provides Hands-On Experience for Future Educators

Amy Kadrmas, Professional Internship Program Director

For the past three years, Maxfield Elementary has partnered with DFC to host student interns, providing them with valuable in-classroom experience and firsthand exposure to envision a career in education. Through the Maxfield internship program, students gain the opportunity to work directly with young learners while developing the skills and confidence needed to pursue careers in teaching and other youth-focused professions.

The Maxfield–DFC internship was founded through a SEED grant awarded to the UST School of Education’s Special Education department and is now supported through a private donation. The goal of the internship is to create a pathway for students interested in the teaching profession and in working with young people to make a real impact. By placing interns in classrooms with experienced mentor teachers, the program allows students to learn through observation, practice, and reflection while receiving consistent support from supervisors.

This year, five Maxfield interns are actively learning and growing in the classroom while also participating in weekly professional development workshops designed to strengthen their instructional skills, classroom management strategies, and knowledge of child development. The combination of hands-on experience and guided training allows interns to progress quickly and take on meaningful responsibilities as the year goes on.



“Because our interns receive weekly professional development, they develop skills at a really impressive pace,” said Molly McGraw Healy, UST Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships. “At this point in the year, it is amazing to see our interns interacting with students, leading small groups, and supporting their host teachers. They are true educators.”

For many interns, the experience has been both meaningful and motivating. Fatima Barranca Romero, one of this year’s interns, shared that working closely with students has been the highlight of her internship.

“A highlight for me in my internship has been supporting students in their reading, math, and behavioral development. It has been incredibly rewarding,” she said. “Every time I walk into the school, I’m greeted with, ‘Ms. Fatima, I missed you. I’m so happy you’re here,’ which reminds me why this work matters. I’ve been able to closely shadow my mentor and observe how she teaches, manages the classroom, and responds to student behavior. The support of my mentor and supervisors, Kellie and Molly, who have supported DFC students throughout their journey in education, makes this experience even more meaningful to me.”

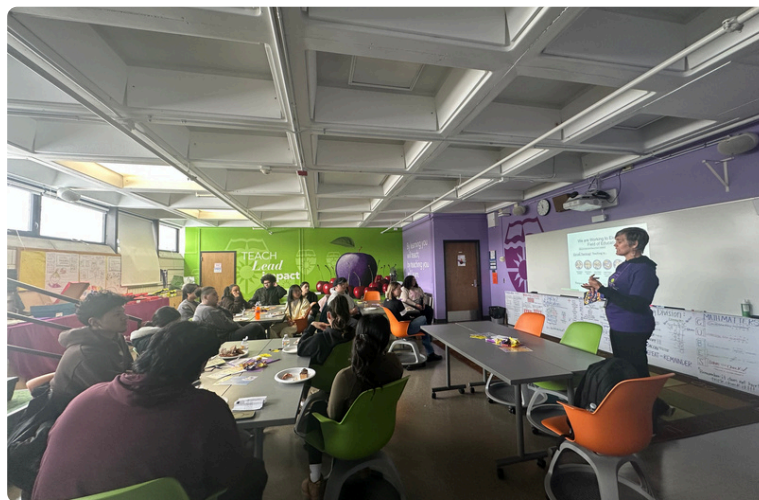
The internship has also helped interns explore different career pathways within education.

“I do plan to explore this industry more as a career pathway by learning about the different career fields in education, from teaching to social work or becoming a therapist for children,” Fatima said, “I have become very passionate about children’s development, and this is a great opportunity to explore all the different pathways. I hope to major in Elementary Education next year at the University of St. Thomas. I hope I can become a teacher one day and continue to support children, my community, and create a positive change within the education field.”

Program leaders hope the partnership with Maxfield will continue to inspire future educators and strengthen the connection between students and the profession.

“I hope interns will continue to be an important part of our collaborative work at Maxfield, and that many of them will discover education as a field that brings them professional and personal joy,” said Molly.

Through meaningful mentorship, real classroom experience, and ongoing professional development, the Maxfield internship program continues to open doors for students who are passionate about working with young people and making a difference in the field of education.



DFC Career Expo

DFC Career Expo: Building Confidence, Connections, and Career Pathways

Amy Kadrmas, Professional Internship Program Director



The DFC Career Expo brought together 135 talented scholars and 12 dynamic employer partners for a day of career readiness, networking, and exploring future opportunities. The event aligned with our core goals: to help scholars practice professional communication, build confidence, and connect with organizations eager to support emerging talent.

Participating employers included: ARC Homes, Black Men Teach, Children’s Minnesota, City of Minneapolis (Urban Scholars Program), Deloitte, Lutheran Social Services, Minnesota Autism Center, Minnesota Vikings, Monarch Healthcare Management, SPS Commerce, Wallin Education Partners (Upturnships), and WSB Engineering.

DFC scholars showed curiosity, professionalism, and a genuine interest in exploring career pathways. Employers shared overwhelmingly positive feedback about the preparedness and enthusiasm of DFC scholars.

“Students were very engaged and eager to ask informational questions,” said Ainsley Langerud, Guest Experience Associate, Minnesota Vikings.

“The students were so inquisitive and respectful; I truly enjoyed chatting with each and every one of them,” said Allie Olson, Talent Acquisition Coordinator, Monarch Healthcare.

Scholars also reported meaningful takeaways as they practiced networking and learned from industry professionals. The scholars' reflections highlight how the expo is more than a one-day event, it's an important milestone in each scholar's career journey.

"It helped me strengthen my professional approach to a conversation...how to carry the conversation well," said Shania Gibson, DFC first-year scholar.

"It helped me learn how to network and connect with people in the field I am interested in," said Maximiliano Deheza Hernandez, DFC first-year scholar.

"It has helped me gain insights from different professional fields and also helped me grow my network," said Pajxong Vang, DFC Alumni.

Thanks to the engagement of employer partners and the commitment of DFC scholars, the DFC Career Expo created meaningful connections and strengthened the skills scholars need to thrive in future internships, careers, and leadership opportunities.



Majors Exploration Fair

Padra Xiong, Transfer Counselor

The major Exploration Fair featured eight majors: The majors were:

- Department of Emerging Media
- Justice and Society Studies
- Morrison Family College of Health
- Opus College Business
- Pre-Health Professions
- Pre-Law and Political Science
- Psychology
- Risk Management and Insurance Program

A total of 105 students attended the Majors Exploration Fair, consisting of first-year and second-year students. The purpose of this event is to help students explore potential majors they can pursue after graduating from Dougherty Family College (DFC), learn about possible careers connected with each major and ask questions.

Students filled the atrium with energy and engaged in great conversations with department partners. First year student Litzy Larin Romero shared, “I was confused at first, but talking to the Morrison Family College of Health gave me clarity on nursing. It was nice to hear about how DFC students are doing in the college and what the college is doing to build more resources and connections for students.”

Eduardo Hernandez, a sophomore, also shared “I was able to ask questions about the majors I was curious about. I wanted to learn more about social work and the demands of the program.”

We were unable to hold the fair last year due to a major snowstorm, so many of our department partners were excited to return this year! During the event, I was able to connect with a partner from the OPUS College of Business and the Department of Emerging Media. They shared that students came prepared and asked advanced-level questions; it was clear that they did their homework and had ideas of what majors they were interested in. It was energizing to see what the students are interested in, the careers they might want to pursue, and witness their passions on display.



Majors Exploration Fair

Padra Xiong, Transfer Counselor

Events like the Majors Exploration Fair help students feel more confident in their path after DFC. This event also allows students to connect with our department partners and learn about the different possibilities available to them. We look forward to having this event again next year and continuing to support students as they discover their future aspirations.



Interviews with Graduating Seniors



Name: Theodes R.E. Saine

Major: Social Work with a minor in Communication

Career Plans/Goals: I plan to work as a public policy advocate at a community-based organization. I also have a passion to work as a counselor and mentor at schools.

What lessons did you learn at DFC that helped you succeed in your bachelor's degree program?

One big lesson I learned is remembering my "why". Although it may change at times, it has still been an important part of my journey, and it has been helpful in grounding me through the stress of it all.

What advice would you give to future DFC Scholars about how to thrive in college?

The advice I would give is to not be afraid to make space for yourself. You'll encounter a lot of people and places in life, and they won't all be accommodating to who you are. So, prepare to be yourself and shine as brightly as you are.

Interviews with Graduating Seniors



Name: Riyadh Husain
Major: Real Estate Studies

Career Plans/Goals: My long-term goal is to become a city planner. My short-term goal is to get a job at a development company and open a property management firm.

What lessons did you learn at DFC that helped you succeed in your bachelor's degree program?
I learned how important it was to ask questions and reach out to professors.

What advice would you give to future DFC Scholars about how to thrive in college?
I would tell scholars to be curious and ask questions. Also, professors are one of the best resources across both campuses, connect with them and I bet you'll find they're cool people.

Interviews with Graduating Seniors



Name: Marielena Chacon

Major: B.S. Biology of Global Health (Pre-Med track), with minors in Business of Healthcare and Science, Medicine, & Society (SMDS)

Career Plans/Goals: I plan to pursue a career in medicine and become a physician. I am interested in addressing health disparities and working with underserved communities.

What lessons did you learn at DFC that helped you succeed in your bachelor's degree program?

DFC taught me about the importance of self-advocacy. I learned to ask for help when I needed it; whether that meant going to office hours, using tutoring resources, or reaching out to a mentor; which made a big difference in my academic success. DFC also pushed me to step outside my comfort zone and pursue new opportunities. Most importantly, it helped me believe in my own potential. As a first-generation student, imposter syndrome was very real, but over time I learned that I belong and can succeed.

What advice would you give to future DFC Scholars about how to thrive in college?

Be open to new opportunities even if they feel intimidating at first, some of the most meaningful experiences come from stepping outside your comfort zone. Take time to build connections with professors, mentors, and peers, because having a strong support system makes all the difference. And most importantly, give yourself grace because college is hard and that's to be expected, just keep showing up.

Interviews with Graduating Seniors



Name: Freddy Flores Dominguez

Major: Justice & Peace Studies with a concentration in Public Policy

Career Plans/Goals: My career goal is to become a policy analyst or researcher working in the field of foreign affairs. Coming from an immigrant background, I'm particularly interested in the role public policy plays in developing nations with varying political systems. Step by step, I keep getting closer to this dream and I thank my DFC family for holding my hand all the way. So, what's next? This fall, I am pursuing my Masters in Global Public Policy at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

What lessons did you learn at DFC that helped you succeed in your bachelor's degree program?

Networking: DFC taught me how to create lasting connections with professors and staff; these connections had saved me in many situations. When I needed guidance on my graduate school applications, I turned to my network for mentorship. When I experienced unforeseen difficulties in life, I turned to my network for support. And, even when I'm feeling down and tired, I always had someone in my network to remind me that I was strong enough to persevere.

What advice would you give to future DFC Scholars about how to thrive in college?

Don't be afraid of taking a chance on yourself. Even when others say it's impossible, you must keep believing it's possible for YOU! Nothing is ever out of reach; you have to be willing to take that first step and see where the journey takes you.



Dougherty
Family College



UNIVERSITY OF
St. Thomas

BLOCK PARTY



MAY 7

11am - 1pm

Register Here



Terrence Murphy Hall Atrium &
Courtyard

Main entrance is on the corner of 10TH Street S. &
La Salle Ave

Off street meter parking, parking lots or
parking garages near the premises



Dougherty Family College

UNIVERSITY OF
St. Thomas



PLEASE JOIN US TO CELEBRATE
DFC GRADUATION

**&
RECEPTION**

MAY 24, 2026



3:30PM | LEE AND PENNY ARENA

5PM-6:30PM | ASC 378 NORTH WOULFE

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2026