

# DOUGHERTY FAMILY COLLEGE

## Newsletter



### DEAN'S CORNER

It is hard to believe another academic year at the Dougherty Family College is ending. Wasn't it yesterday when we welcomed a new first-year class? We delightfully celebrate that they are the largest class in our seven-year history! The DFC is transitioning from being one of the best-kept secrets to being one of the best the Twin Cities has to offer underserved scholars who know they can thrive within a community of care where they will experience a deep sense of belonging.

I will name just a few other marvelous causes for celebration. We had an impressive turnout for our career fair and mock interviews. Our women's networking event was a fantastic evening of connecting DFC scholars, alumni, and community leaders. Overall, we offered many academic and career events where scholars could imagine their future selves. Our scholars are now more aware of the resources available to them for academic and career success, and they've been energized by what they've learned.

We provided great programming that elevated the personal and professional growth and development of our scholars. However, what I love about our college is that we have intentionally created a culturally affirming learning environment that promotes a strong sense of belonging and community.

According to research, we live in a world where many young people struggle with loneliness. At Dougherty Family College, we have created a culture that allows young leaders to live their authentic lives. Many of our current scholars and alumni consider DFC as part of their extended family (a.k.a. Ohana). We make sure our scholars feel seen, heard, valued, and empowered to become transformational leaders.

As a result of building a strong culture of belonging and the academic and tangible resources we provide, we have graduated 312 scholars with their associate's degrees and 95 graduates with their bachelor's degrees. Our scholars have proven over and over again that through hard work and resilience they can achieve their college dreams.

The great educational outcomes of our scholars and alumni could not have been achieved without the ongoing support of our committed community partners. The investments you have made in our scholars will impact their families and communities for generations to come. I am extremely grateful to our determined and hardworking scholars, staff, faculty, and community partners for co-creating a college that is transforming the landscape of higher education.

Much Gratitude & Love,

*Buffy Smith*

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



## Spotlight: Graduating Seniors with Bachelor's Degrees

**Name:** Rose Say

**Major:** Elementary Education

**Career Plans/Goals:**

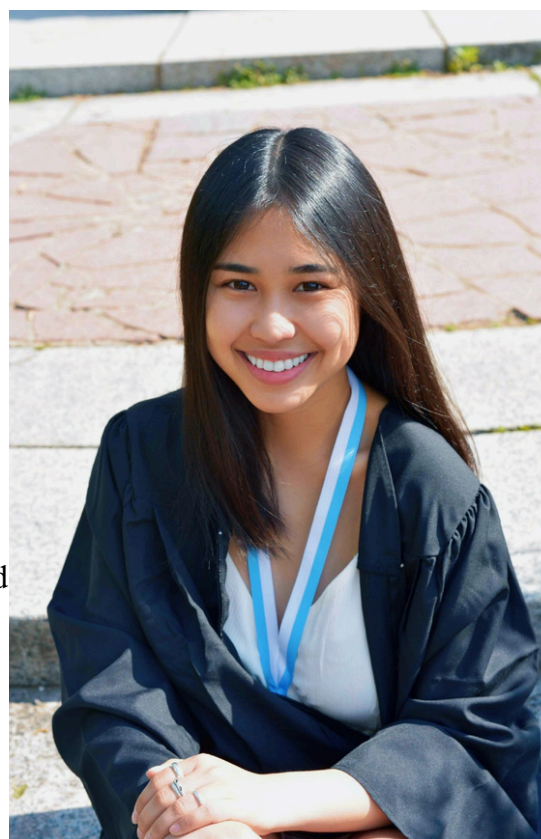
After graduation, I plan to work at Maxfield Elementary. It does not matter what grade I teach, after being with the 5th graders, I'm pretty sure I can deal with any grade.

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

Some lessons I learned at DFC that helped me succeed in my bachelor's degree program were getting my work done ahead of time, using my resources, reaching out to my professors, and being responsible for myself. I learned to get my work done ahead of time so I don't have to worry about falling behind and struggling to make deadlines. Using the resources around me is a big part of my success. The resources at DFC have helped me research my career goals. It also assisted me in drafting a resume, practicing interview techniques, getting an internship, reviewing possibilities for my major, and landing a job. I learned that college professors can be flexible when you email them and ask them questions or for an extension. When I was confused about an assignment, I would always email my professors and share my point of confusion, and they would always provide me with helpful information. I learned to build connections with every professor and I had strong relationships with them. Lastly, I learned to be responsible for myself. I learned to use my time wisely. I learned to take accountability for myself, take notes in classes, take care of the materials I use, and prepare ahead of time. Overall, DFC has helped me grow academically and personally.

**What advice would you give to future DFC scholars on how to thrive in college?**

Some advice I would give to future DFC scholars on how to thrive in college is to set high personal and academic standards for yourself and live up to them. When you have high personal and academic standards for yourself, you are more likely to do better in school and outside of school. Another piece of advice I would give students is to take care of their mental health. I know we all want to get our work done. There are so many things to get done that sometimes we forget to take a break and take care of ourselves. My advice is to pause for a moment in this busy world and take a moment to breathe. My last piece of advice for future DFC scholars on how to thrive in college is to take school seriously. School is work, it is not play time, so if you take it seriously, you will get to where you want to be in life.





## Spotlight: Graduating Seniors with Bachelor's Degrees



**Name:** Cheyene Bialke

**Major:** Journalism & Media Production

**Career Plans/Goals:**

After graduation, I plan to go back to my high school and teach journalism and videography during the summer. Students will learn about journalistic storytelling and hopefully, create a news club or organization. After that, I intend to find a full-time job or a paid internship to enhance my work experience and build my resume.

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

Two lessons I learned at DFC that helped me succeed in my bachelor's degree program are learning how to advocate for myself and believing in myself. During my time at DFC, we had to take a public speaking course

that truly taught me how to advocate for myself effectively. It's easy to be indirect and unclear and for things to be missed so that class taught me how to be precise when I am advocating for myself. This has benefited me in my college classes when speaking to my peers and professors to make sure my questions or points are understood. I can present myself better when sending emails and having 1:1 meetings with professors. Advocating for myself has given me opportunities I wasn't aware of, like on-campus student jobs.

The second lesson I learned was to believe in myself. I grew up being told as a student that I would not graduate high school, let alone, go to college. I had a lot of self-doubt, and I continue to struggle with self-doubt. However, during my time earning my bachelor's degree, I learned that if you don't believe in yourself and don't see yourself achieving a goal, like a bachelor's degree, you may never get there. At least from my experience, going to college has taught me to be my own person while also not being afraid to advocate and believe in myself. Even in tough situations or moments where I don't have the energy to do an assignment, I tell myself that I will graduate, and I will figure this out; it will get done. I am beginning to understand my limits, but every time something feels too overwhelming, I tell myself that I got this, that I will figure it out, and that I will graduate. That usually works for me. You have to believe in yourself, so others will too. I remind myself of this in moments of self-doubt.

**What advice would you give to future DFC scholars on how to thrive in college?**

I know everyone says this but my advice is to build connections with staff and faculty on campus because college is the time to network. If you build a connection with a staff or faculty member, it could open doors for new opportunities. Also, it's always good to have a human connection with your professors and that's what you get at DFC. The college helps students build networking skills and learn the importance of making connections. Connecting early with your professors can be beneficial for building strong relationships with them. They will see the effort you are putting in to get to know

## Spotlight: Graduating Seniors with Bachelor's Degrees

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them and/show interest in the academic content. Also, as a first-generation college student, building connections in college is important for navigating the college experience. While networking and meeting people, you can find lifelong friends or study partners to help you get through the course load. Meeting people and networking are important, regardless of where you go or what you pursue, so take advantage of the opportunity.

**Name:** Priscila Guadalupe Chávez Romero

**Major:** Digital Media Arts (Production Track) and Communication Studies

**Career Plans/Goals:**

Right now, I am taking steps to start up my own LLC. I am currently thinking of pursuing both photography and videography projects. To prepare myself, I plan to enroll into a self-paced business course here at UST, and create a digital portfolio. Also, I will start to take on small projects for people in the community. In the future, I would like to be able to collaborate with bigger and more established individuals or businesses.

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

I learned quite a few things during my time at DFC. I learned how to advocate for myself by asking for assistance as early as possible. I learned that forming a

close friend network will really help you persist and even improve your mental health. I learned that being in a small-knit community, including taking courses with my cohort, and being surrounded by others who reflect me, reminded me that I can help create welcoming environments for others, as well. Together, my experiences have helped me stand out among my classmates, especially in my soft skills and technical skills. The biggest lesson I learned was that you'll get as much out of college as you put into it.

**What advice would you give to future DFC scholars on how to thrive in college?**

There's so much I could say, but I'll try to be brief.

First, take advantage of the resources and opportunities around you. During my time at DFC, that was SRC, math recitation with Professor Isernhagen, transfer advice from Amanda Yang, and getting professional development and internship opportunities. The SRC and math recitation really helped me work on the areas I knew I was less proficient in, and showing up consistently helped me gain confidence in my ability to learn, and helped me connect with others. You'd be surprised by how empowering it can feel to have even just a few meaningful connections or interactions.



## Spotlight: Graduating Seniors with Bachelor's Degrees

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Second, reach out and talk to anyone with whom you may be interested in befriending or have as a member of your network. For example, you could ask your fellow cohort members if they'd like to be a study partner, or introduce yourself to staff and faculty you will work with during your second year. It demonstrates your willingness to engage, encourages you to take more risks, and provides networking practice. These skills serve you well in any field of work.

Third, do your best to take care of yourself. There are many structural barriers, and maybe even personal challenges that may make college difficult. Try to set aside even just thirty minutes for yourself. Use this time for a power nap, to journal, sketch, talk with a friend, drink more water, or to do whatever else you feel may help you. I neglected self-care for the sake of getting work done. It is important to be committed to getting work done, but you do not want to put yourself at risk for burnout or a deeper problem that will take a significant amount of recovery time and effort.

In the end, remember that everyone at DFC genuinely believes in you and is rooting for you, and continues to do so even after you graduate. I can attest to that since I still go back to visit, catch up, or even ask for help because I remind myself that I am worth it.





# The Power of Internships

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In 2023, Hennepin Healthcare, a leading healthcare system in the Twin Cities, began a meaningful partnership with DFC, enhancing the professional internship program with fresh healthcare opportunities. The mission, vision, and values of DFC correlate with the commitment Hennepin Healthcare has made to the communities they serve. Hennepin Healthcare takes pride in the diversity of the communities they serve and the individuals they employ; and that pride continues with the DFC interns who bring various backgrounds of knowledge, experience, and culture to Hennepin Healthcare.

As healthcare expands and younger generations prepare to take the reins in promoting community health and wellness, DFC interns stand as promising agents of change. In the inaugural year of this partnership, DFC interns not only filled crucial roles within Hennepin Healthcare, but demonstrated remarkable flexibility and attentiveness in doing so. Their invaluable assistance in addressing the ongoing challenge of nurturing the next generation of healthcare professionals illustrates the transformative potential of this collaboration. Beyond immediate staffing needs, the partnership between Hennepin Healthcare and DFC cultivates networking opportunities and establishes a pipeline of talent for future employees, providers, and industry leaders.

The future is bright for the Hennepin Healthcare and DFC partnership. Hennepin Healthcare is exploring ways to increase the number of departments offering internships. Together, DFC and Hennepin Healthcare are committed to empowering interns to realize their full potential and leave a lasting impact on the health and wellness of all members of the community. Interested in hosting an intern? Contact Amy Kadrmas, Professional Internship Program Director, to start the process of creating a meaningful and impactful partnership ([amy.kadrmas@stthomas.edu](mailto:amy.kadrmas@stthomas.edu)).



# Professional Development - Mock Interview Day

Every spring semester, our first-year scholars apply their classroom learning to real practice at our annual Professional Development Mock Interview event. This year marked a successful return to full in-person engagement, where we were thrilled to welcome 50 dedicated professional volunteers eager to lend their expertise to our scholars.

What begins as a nerve-wracking experience swiftly transforms into a journey of self-assurance and growth for our scholars. Through insightful interviews and personalized feedback from our exceptional volunteers, scholars evolve from uncertainty to confidence. Throughout the event, scholars refine their ability to respond to a variety of questions while also gaining invaluable insights into the importance of body language and how nonverbal communication impacts the interview process. Additionally, scholars carefully polish their responses to common interview questions and emerge from the experience with a newfound readiness to tackle future professional interviews.

Interested in participating in this enriching event next spring? Please reach out to Amy Kadrmas, Professional Internship Program Director, to have your name added to our volunteer list ([amy.kadrmas@stthomas.edu](mailto:amy.kadrmas@stthomas.edu)).

