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Executives-in-Residence Help Students Navigate Career Paths



Left to right: Accounting student Brooklyn Campos with her executive-in-residence mentor Ken Singh, who is senior manager of assurance at Plante Moran and a DePaul business alumnus.

“Large, multi-firm recruiting events and formal interviews can sometimes be overwhelming” for students beginning their accounting career journeys, says Brooklyn Campos, a DePaul junior majoring in accountancy.

To build her confidence, Campos participated in the School of Accountancy & MIS’s executive-in-residence program last year. Launched in 2019 out of the school’s Office of Student Success & Engagement, the program connects students with accounting executives for casual conversations about the workplace, career choices and tips for job search success.

“It’s really informal, which calmed my nerves,” she says. “It gave me an idea of what a day in the life of an accounting professional is like.”

Campos met with executive Ken Singh, CPA, a DePaul alumnus and assurance principal at Plante Moran, who has participated in every round of sessions since the launch of the program. “The structure of the program, where it’s not focused on recruiting but rather on engaging with students and offering mentoring advice, really allows me to explain what they can expect from different career options and paths, including opportunities available at Plante Moran and elsewhere,” Singh (BUS ’09) says. “It allows students to see what they may benefit from and what fits their personality the most.”

Campos says her discussions with Singh “opened my eyes to the corporate world and that the people who work there aren’t scary. They’re normal people who have lives outside of work.”

Singh’s mentoring gave Campos the confidence to apply for and land an internship at Plante Moran, which begins in January. “I feel like I could be really happy there,” Campos says, adding, “I see myself studying for the CPA and then going to work for them, if they decide to hire me.”

During the previous academic year, the Office of Student Success & Engagement facilitated more than 300 meetings between students and accounting professionals through the executive-in-residence program.

“The 10 largest accounting firms in the world all recruit here at DePaul, and they each schedule a day where a manager, partner or director will meet with students,” says program director Margaret Tower, a senior instructor. Students sign up for 15-minute conversations with the executives, meeting either remotely or in person. The accounting firm sessions are scheduled for fall and winter, aligning with their recruiting cycle. In the spring, the program hosts meetings between students and executives from corporate and governmental agencies that recruit at DePaul.

What makes the program different, Tower says, is the opportunity for students to access senior executives for professional conversations before they get involved in the formal recruiting process. “Students are better prepared and more successful in their interviews because they have practice communicating in real-time with someone that senior,” Tower says.

It also prepares students for their future roles as accountants, she adds. “I think being able to use communication skills is beneficial, especially during the last two years when there have been fewer opportunities for students to do that. When they go to work, students need to be able to converse with clients. They can’t just do it through text or email; they actually have to talk.”

As an alumnus, Singh says it’s rewarding to give back to DePaul and the next generation of accounting graduates. “We recruit from all the major universities throughout Chicago, and I want to see more individuals come from DePaul because I know there’s a great curriculum there,” he says. “The talent coming out of DePaul would be great to have at Plante Moran.”

Interested in learning more about the School of Accountancy & MIS executive-in-residence program? Contact Margaret Tower at mtower@depaul.edu.

By Robin Florzak