

### **Viewpoint: Alumni engagement benefits all**

*By DCTC & Inver Hills President Michael Berndt, DCTC Alumni Advisory Board President Brandon Folson and Inver Hills Alumni Association President Reyne Branchaud-Linsk*

Each year, Dakota County Technical College (DCTC) and Inver Hills Community College (Inver Hills) send thousands of graduates into the workforce or on to further education. And like all colleges and universities, we hope our alumni look back on their collegiate experience with fondness.

Over time, graduates can lose their sense of connection with their alma mater. We have found though, that staying engaged offers benefits. As leaders of the DCTC and Inver Hills campus alumni communities, we have seen our graduates realize these benefits as members of our campus alumni associations.

First, alumni develop connections with other graduates. Many of our alumni are established in their fields and can provide advice and connect new alumni to opportunities. They also extend their own network of professional colleagues through alumni events, career fairs, and social networking platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook.

Participating in these networks leads to opportunities. This was the case for Clarence Fraser, who graduated from Inver Hills's EMS Paramedic program in 2017. After gaining experience in the field, he joined the college as a part-time instructor in June 2021, while continuing to work as a paramedic for M Health Fairview.

Of his student experience, Clarence said, "I understand the unique growing pains EMS students experience. I am compassionate in delivering a heavy curriculum and supportive in the interpersonal demands of the job."

Colleges and universities appreciate alums who donate time and talent, especially when it raises awareness of the institution or fosters community interaction. We love when alumni come back to serve. For example, Brandon will speak at the 2022 graduation ceremony and Reyne and other alums offered a panel at Student Success Day, answering questions from students about how to be successful.

DCTC Alumni Advisory Board Member Michaela Holman-Schmidt joined the board shortly after graduation. "I was inspired to join the Alumni Advisory Board by a colleague of mine who is also an alum of DCTC," Michaela said. "She thought that the board would be a good fit for me and a good way to boost my resume. I really wanted a way to join in the community because as a student I did not participate as much as I wish I had."

Michaela and Clarence's stories represent just a few reasons why alumni engage with their campuses, but the options are as varied as their creativity and capacity. Other ways to serve include sitting on program advisory boards, establishing partnerships between our institutions and employers, mentoring current students, volunteering at campus events, and contributing to student scholarships.

Whether you attended your alma mater a decade ago or will graduate this spring, maintain those connections, expand your network, and help others succeed. Your engagement will continue to benefit you and the institution for years to come.