



Doane

CLASS OF 2025
EDITION



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Doane Magazine is a publication for students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the University.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Doane University Graduates,

Congratulations! Today marks a significant milestone in your life, and on behalf of the entire Doane community, we couldn't be more proud of you. You've put in the hard work, met challenges head-on and grown into the kind of person who's ready to make a real difference in the world.

At Doane, we believe our mission goes beyond academics—we build leaders. Leaders who think critically, communicate clearly and lead with integrity and compassion. You've been challenged to grow, to step outside your comfort zone, to get comfortable being uncomfortable and to use your voice—and you've risen to that challenge. You leave here not just with a degree, but with the skills, values and confidence to be a leader for your families, in your careers, in your communities and in the world.

As you head into this next chapter—whether that's a new job, graduate school or something still unfolding—I hope you carry the lessons, friendships and experiences from Doane with you. The road ahead will have its twists and turns, but you are ready. More than that, the world needs you—more Doane in the world makes a better world.

Remember, you'll always be part of the Doane family. Stay connected, lift others up as you rise and never stop learning and growing. Know if you need us, we'll be right beside you!

Graduation is not the end—it's the beginning of a lifelong journey of purpose and impact.

Congratulations, Class of 2025.
Go Tigers!

With pride and warmest wishes,
Roger Hughes, Ph.D. '82
President, Doane University

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DO YOU KNOW DOANE?

LET'S SEE IF YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE DEEMED A DOANE HISTORY BUFF.

1

Which campus building is not on the National Register of Historic Places?

- A. Whitcomb Lee Conservatory
- B. Gaylord Hall
- C. Boswell Observatory
- D. Frees Hall

2

Which building once housed a swimming pool in its basement?

- A. Perry Campus Center
- B. Butler Gymnasium
- C. Gaylord Hall
- D. Communications Building

3

What occupation did college founder Thomas Doane hold?

- A. Blacksmith
- B. Teacher
- C. Farmer
- D. Engineer

4

What is the name of the alleged and friendly female ghost of 'The Con'?

- A. Anna
- B. Emma
- C. Grace
- D. Mary

5

The white pergola north of Frees Hall was built on top of what?

- A. a natural spring
- B. the old site of Merrill Hall
- C. the exact center of the U.S.
- D. a former cave entrance

6

What Doane structure is named after the university's first president?

- A. Merrill Tower
- B. Perry Campus Center
- C. Hansen Hall
- D. Fred Brown Center (Lincoln)

7

What residence hall is named after the university's first Dean of Women who also taught math and English literature?

- A. Hansen Hall
- B. Smith Hall
- C. Sheldon Hall
- D. Frees Hall

8

Which one of the following cannot be found on the Crete campus?

- A. a gravestone
- B. a hitching post
- C. an anchor
- D. a caboose



ANSWERS
1. D. Frees Hall is not on the National Register of Historic Places.
2. B. Navy V&S and V12 trainees used the pool in the basement of Butler Gymnasium for training purposes.
3. D. Thomas Doane was a chief engineer for the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad.
4. B. Emma was the daughter of Henry Whitcomb, who donated money to build the Conservatory.
5. A. The Dean Memorial Pergola is situated on what once was a natural spring (it no longer flows).
6. B. Perry Campus Center is named after Doane's first president, David Brainerd Perry.
7. C. Sheldon Hall is named after Margaret E. Thompson Sheldon, who also graduated from Doane in 1886.
8. A. You cannot find a gravestone on Crete's campus. The hitching post is near Padou Walker, and was
without Lane in the southeast corner of campus. The anchor was donated by the U.S. Navy and brought
to campus by alum Dean Petersen V12. The caboose sits on the exact center of the plot of land the
Burlington and Missouri River Railroad donated for the Doane College campus in 1871.

YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE A HOME AT DOANE

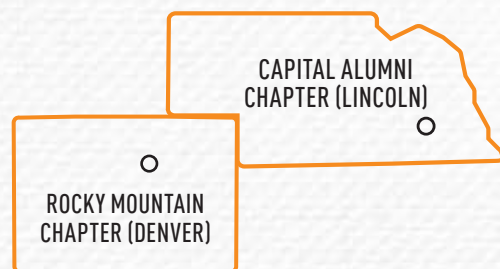
YOU'LL ALWAYS
HAVE A HOME *at* **DOANE**



JOIN YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER

Alumni chapters are one of the best ways to stay connected with Doane in a meaningful way and meet other alumni of all ages!

CURRENT CHAPTERS



MEET JENN NYFFELER LECHNER '17, '20L

WHY SHE JOINED

"I wanted to give a voice to recent graduates to help keep them involved."

PERSONAL BENEFIT

"As a more recent graduate, giving financial donations isn't always feasible, so being able to 'donate' my time and energy is a good way to still support the university."

PROFESSIONAL BENEFIT

"I get to know and make connections with alumni of all ages and backgrounds. Staying involved also shows employers that I'm a lifelong learner and care about the success of future generations."

To join an alumni chapter — or start a new one — contact Michelle Dusharme Faltin '99, Director of Alumni Engagement.
michelle.faltin@doane.edu | 402.826.6709



ATTEND UPCOMING ALUMNI EVENTS IN 2025



CHICAGO RIVER CRUISE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS | JUNE 8



MINNESOTA TWINS BASEBALL GAME
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA | JUNE 10



JAMES ARTHUR VINEYARDS
RAYMOND, NEBRASKA | JUNE 12



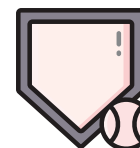
KANSAS CITY STUDENT SENDOFF
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI | JULY 11



SECOND CHAPTER BREWERY
OGALLALA, NEBRASKA | JULY 24



DENVER STUDENT SENDOFF
DENVER, COLORADO | JULY 26



LINCOLN SALTDogs BASEBALL GAME
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA | AUGUST 1



HOMECOMING
CRETE, NEBRASKA | OCTOBER 3-5



LINCOLN CAMPUS HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA | DECEMBER 5



**HOMECOMING
WEEK 2025**

SEPTEMBER 28 - OCTOBER 5

Round up your crew and come back to campus
to visit your favorite spots and classmates!

STAY IN THE KNOW

To ensure you continue receiving the Shield newsletter each month, please make sure to share your preferred email address with alumni@doane.edu.

USE OUR RESOURCES

Doane's Career, Leadership and Service (CLS) office is still available to you as an alum. The CLS team can help you navigate the job search and provide feedback on your resume. And they're always looking for alumni to share their professional experiences at classes and networking events.

Contact career@doane.edu to learn more.



BUILDING LEADERS

Brody Mueller's Journey from Student to Educator

Written by Zainab Al-Zubiadi, *Class of 2026*



The field of education is filled with plenty of challenges, setbacks and victories, both big and small. **Brody Mueller '25**, a Doane alum who is the current care program director in Crete, Nebraska, believes that every day is about making a difference in the lives of students who need it most. Despite initially choosing the special education pathway somewhat randomly, his passion for the field grew immensely during his practicum experiences and classes at Doane.

The Doane motto, “we build leaders,” stands very true for Mueller as a postgraduate. Mueller, who was a soccer captain for three years and member of Student Athlete Leadership Team (SALT), was very familiar with leading and the challenges associated with it. His leadership abilities were immediately tested post-graduation after being thrown into a leadership position right away.

At his job, he oversees two students within the specialized care program. In this position, he is responsible for tracking their progress, maintaining good communication with families and school officials and ensuring students receive the support they need.

“I owe Doane a lot of thank-yous for giving me the opportunity to be a long-term sub as a practicum student, as well as letting me student teach right away as the program coordinator,” said Mueller, reflecting on his time at Doane.

He expresses deep gratitude for the hands-on learning experiences that shaped him in his job.

“The courses and studies that I did were very hands-on. It

wasn't a lot of lecturing, it was trial and error with all my classmates and professors. That really shaped me and built my confidence going into my first year of teaching,” said Mueller.

In addition to his undergraduate experiences, Mueller has earned 12 master's credits through Doane, furthering his educational endeavors. However, he continues to learn many new things through his job as well.

He emphasizes that much of what he knows comes directly from the students he works with.

“I've probably learned more from my students about how they cope, and coping strategies that work for them since it's a lot of trial and error,” he said.

His first year in education was a learning curve, but with time, he has discovered strategies and coping skills to help students navigate their emotions more effectively.

“What works for one student isn't going to work for another,” he said.

Mueller further emphasizes the importance of treating his students as individuals with their own particular needs. He finds that this strategy is the most effective in helping the students overcome certain challenges. He aspires to be the foundational person his students need. This is important to him since he's known many students who don't enjoy school or desire to be there. Mueller's focus on being a comfort person for his students allows them to feel safe and motivates them to show up.

Education is something that Mueller will not be giving up anytime in the near future. Within the next five

to 10 years, he envisions himself continuing on his journey as an educator. Building relationships and connections in the field of behavior is important to him.

Mueller is very familiar with the notion of relationship building and working with others, as that is something Doane allowed him to experience during his undergraduate years. He recalls countless hours of soccer training and how that gave him the chance to grow bonds with teammates.

“I was treated like family when I came here,” he reflects.

The prevalence of these bonds remains for Mueller, as he remains in regular contact with his former teammates, classmates and professors.



[Doane] really shaped me and built my confidence going into my first year of teaching.

Brody Mueller

The most impactful lesson he received at Doane was creating a balance between his work in education and personal life.

“I'll stay late if I have to but I will never bring work home,” he said.

He strongly emphasizes the importance of stepping away from work during his time off.

While this is now a staple to his job, he didn't always believe this mentality. At the beginning of his education journey, Mueller would often take work home.

“All of the trauma would come home with me. I learned this semester that it's important to take time for myself,” he said.

To recharge, he prioritizes self-care by reading, walking his dog and continuing to advocate for men's mental health.

For current Doane students considering a career in education, Mueller's advice is simple yet powerful: “It's worth it,” he says. He acknowledges the challenges that come with teaching, but it's the small victories that make it fulfilling. Finding victories in the day, no matter how small, reminds Mueller why he continues to pursue education.

Mueller wants to continue his education journey as a teacher for the next few years. His ultimate goal is to be a principal one day. He remains driven by the Doane motto “we build leaders,” and is living proof that leadership opportunities during his undergraduate years have shaped him into the impactful educator he is today.



FROM DOANE TO SPAIN

A Tiger's Journey Abroad

How a passion for Spanish and exercise science opened doors to unexpected opportunities



Q&A WITH LUCIA MCKEAG '23

What inspired you to pursue both Spanish and exercise science during your time at Doane, and how have those fields shaped your journey so far?

I initially chose exercise science because I was considering a career in healthcare. I also began a minor in Spanish while I was still undecided, and after about a year, I completed it. My professor, **Jared List**, encouraged me to go for a major in Spanish alongside exercise science. At first, I thought, "What am I going to do with a Spanish degree?" I was completely unaware of the incredible opportunities it would open up for me. It allowed me to explore the beauty of different cultures and the importance of stepping outside my own.

How did you come across the North American Language and Culture Assistance Program (NALCAP), and what motivated you to apply for the English teaching assistant role in Spain?

My other Spanish professor, **Josh Pope**, recommended NALCAP when I was approaching graduation. He thought my experience studying

abroad in Costa Rica made me a strong candidate. I was initially hesitant, wondering if it was the right time or if I should stay in the U.S. and continue working. But on the final day of the application window, I decided to go for it, just to see what would happen. If I got accepted, I felt it would be meant to be.

Spain was actually my second choice when I considered where to study abroad during my final semester in 2023, so this felt like my chance to explore that dream. I was especially motivated by the opportunity to immerse myself in my second language, knowing that the best way to improve is by living within the culture and surrounding yourself in the language daily.

What has been the most exciting or surprising part about living and working in Martos so far?

One of the biggest surprises and challenges has been adapting to the Andalusian accent. When I first got here, I often wondered if we were even speaking the same language

I thought I knew. Here, people tend to speak very quickly and drop the "s" at the end of words, among other letters—locals call it "eating letters." At first, it was discouraging, but now I see it as a valuable challenge.

The most exciting part has been experiencing the culture of Andalucía! Trying new foods, interacting with locals, and attending local events has been incredible. Every day, the teachers at my school go to "breakfast" at 11 a.m. at a small cafe a few blocks away. This tradition has been a wonderful way for me to connect personally with people here. The breakfast break is a significant time for everyone to catch up, and many jobs offer this pause to enjoy the meal, which I found fascinating. As an American, I use this as my lunch since their lunch isn't until 2-3 p.m.

I also tutor a family here, and they've truly taken me under their wing, showing me the beauty of Spain through their eyes. They love introducing me to typical Spanish foods and even took me on a family

trip to Málaga, where I got to try seafood unique to that region. I feel incredibly blessed to know them.

They've helped me settle in and experience the culture firsthand. I feel like I've found a second family here in Spain—they even call me their oldest daughter. They treat me as one of their own, and having that kind of connection has made my time here feel so much more like home. Now, they've invited me to spend Christmas with them, and I'm beyond excited—I can't wait to be part of their holiday celebration!

How do you plan to integrate your academic background in exercise science into your experience teaching English in Spain, if at all?

I found a way to use my exercise science background by helping with P.E. classes. My knowledge of anatomy, biomechanics and fitness training enhances the curriculum, creating a more structured and beneficial experience for the students. I design warm-up routines, exercise circuits and even mini-lessons on

topics like injury prevention, nutrition and body mechanics.

What advice would you give to other students or recent graduates considering opportunities to work or study abroad?

My advice is simple: just go for it! You're young, free and have nothing holding you back—there's a world of opportunities waiting for you and you won't know what is out there until you take that leap. Living in Spain has been an incredible experience, pushing me to grow in ways I hadn't anticipated.

Stepping outside your comfort zone helps you adapt to new cultures, become more independent and gain a global perspective that's invaluable both personally and professionally. The challenges you'll face will be worth it, and the memories and skills you gain will last a lifetime! I strongly encourage anyone who's interested in living or studying abroad to give this experience a try.



A NEW ACT

How Blake Tobey Is Directing Change in Theatre

Written by Izzy Uecker,
Class of 2028

Photos by Matthieu Helaine,
Class of 2027



Director, educator and Master of Fine Arts (MFA) student, **Blake Tobey '09, '11E** plays many parts at Doane University. His current — and arguably most important — role is his effort to redefine how theatre is created and experienced.

Tobey's Doane debut began as an undergraduate when he earned a degree in English education. He stayed on for the second act — completing his first master's degree — and is now back on for his encore as he works toward his MFA.

"I just had such an amazing, profound experience here as an undergraduate student," Tobey said. "I knew I wanted to come back someday and give back to the university."

Now, more than a decade after earning his undergraduate degree, Tobey is doing just that. His work on Doane Theatre's spring performance of "A Map of Virtue" serves as the final project for his MFA. But for Tobey, it's more than an academic requirement — it's an opportunity to explore a new philosophy of directing, one rooted in mental well-being and sustainability for artists.

"This show is 'an exploration of evil,'" Tobey said, "and it's heavily trauma-focused. That makes it the perfect show to test my hypothesis."

The hypothesis? That actors can deliver powerful performances without sacrificing their mental or physical health in the process.

"I truly believe that theatre artists can make really good, impactful theatre without sacrificing ourselves to the art," Tobey said.

His passion behind the project comes from his background as a high school director. During his tenure, Tobey experienced burnout himself after putting in anywhere from 60-80 hour work weeks over the years, without taking much-needed breaks.

"That's just not a sustainable way to live," said Tobey.

Tobey has taken a step further to ensure his efforts to combat burnout extend across all areas of theatre, including both the cast and production team as well.

He sees "A Map of Virtue" as an ideal testing ground for his philosophy. The emotionally intense nature of the show presents a challenge: Can a cast and crew navigate such heavy material without leaving rehearsals mentally and emotionally drained?

"Can we have a rehearsal process that involves enough joy throughout that we are excited to come back?" Tobey added.

Tobey believes the real test will be how everyone feels once the show closes. Instead of the usual post-production crash, he hopes his cast and crew leave feeling proud, energized and ready for what's next — proof that theatre can be both powerful and sustainable.

Tobey is more than a director, educator and student — he is a visionary in the world of theatre and an integral part of the Doane community. His approach offers a model for sustainable, meaningful theatre-making. In a field where burnout is common — especially among those juggling both performance and academic demands — Tobey's philosophy provides a hopeful path forward.

D



TO THE CLASS OF 2025

FROM OUR FACULTY & STAFF

You did it!



Stop Day this year
was legendary



CATHERINE ARCHIE-JOHNSON
DIRECTOR OF LINCOLN CAMPUS
& OMAHA LOCATION

Right now at this very moment, you have survived your hardest days. Not to say that more won't come, but for now just celebrate the moment.



BRIAN STUTZ
DIRECTOR OF RESIDENCE LIFE & EDUCATION

Stay connected, be involved and promote your Doane experience to your new communities.



QUINT GEIS
DIRECTOR OF CAREER, LEADERSHIP & SERVICE

Give yourself some grace as you transition to the next step. Then, work to build the ethos of the Doane community in your new community. We need leaders like yourself to help shape our world and it starts with each community you are a part of. That community needs you and you need it.



BLAKE TOBEY
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE
ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

Prioritize building and investing in your immediate community. Learn how to rest.

Go Tigers!



ANDREW FEYES
DIRECTOR OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Make the best of everything that comes your way. Leave the people and world around you better and you will be better for it.

Keep in touch!



EMILY GRIESCH
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION

Congratulations on your recent graduation from Doane! Best wishes as you embark on the next part of your life journey. We wish you all the success and never forget to reach back out to your Doane family if you ever need anything!



STEPHANIE HEMJE
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COORDINATOR

You all have so much potential! Don't give up, keep up the great work and remember that we are always here for you if needed!



THOMAS THE TIGER
DOANE MASCOT

Go Tigers forever!

It was the best
4 years!



A Career-Defining Achievement

Written by Sara Hinds

COLUMBUS MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH TEACHER AND DOANE ALUM WINS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL TEACHING AWARD

As a seventh-grade math teacher at Columbus Middle School, **Joni Ebel '06E** takes concrete thinkers and introduces them to new concepts: math can be abstract and fun.

Up until then, her tween students have lived in the world of the four basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The abstractness begins when positive and negative integers, variables and probability enter the equation.

A classroom of wide eyes, filled with panic and confusion, stares back at her. They're in good hands, though. Ebel's teaching toolkit is uniquely equipped with 24 years of

experience, an emphasis on out-of-the-box thinking, a master's degree in educational leadership and as of early 2025, a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) — the highest honor a K-12 science or math teacher can receive for teaching in the United States.

No more than 110 teachers receive the award each year (two from every state, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories and Department of Defense Education Activity schools). If that doesn't paint prestige, the extensive application process certainly does.

Ebel submitted reference letters, 15

essay questions and a 60-minute video of her teaching. A state selection committee consisting of STEM educators, researchers and other professionals selects six finalists — three math and three science teachers. From there, a national selection committee selects two awardees, one math and one science teacher.

Committees review the candidates based on criteria that improves student learning, such as content expertise and leadership in and out of the classroom. The odds of being chosen are slim, even for qualified candidates like Ebel, who applied four times since 2015 and was a finalist twice.

"Earning this, I want to stand on a roof and just shout for joy, because it is so cool, and not very many people get this honor," Ebel said.

As a PAEMST awardee, she will receive \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation and an all-expenses-paid trip to the award ceremony in Washington D.C.

And the process, as laborious and tedious as it was at times, "was so instrumental in my professional development," Ebel said.

Twenty years prior, her drive for professional development and a suggestion from her then-administrator found her researching master's degrees and considering a move to principal.

"I thought, 'Well, okay, sounds kind of scary. I don't know if I want to join that dark side,'" Ebel joked. "I started looking into colleges, and I knew I wanted it to be fairly quick, not drawn out over years."

Doane's master of educational leadership (EDL) program met on the weekends and during the summer over two years. It was the perfect fit.

Though Ebel ultimately decided not to pursue principalship, she serves on committees and in other leadership roles at the school and state level. She also recognizes how leadership weaves into her everyday job as an educator. Ebel uses strategies and techniques she learned in the EDL program to de-escalate and resolve conflict among peers, parents and students. And she guides students through what is, for many, a hard subject.

While the PAEMST award is a career-defining achievement, Ebel is proudest of the relationships she's built with students over the years. She'll receive letters from former students or parents, thanking her or reminiscing about activities

done in class. And for good reason — Ebel brings jolts of creativity to her classroom. Math and creativity usually don't go hand-in-hand, then again her students didn't expect math and abstractness to coexist, either.

"I try to think of unique ways [to teach], because we're dealing with 12- and 13-year-olds," Ebel said. "We're up, we're moving around, we're doing stations, we're doing all sorts of things."

Ebel is thrilled when they learn something or enjoy the process.

"Math might not have been their favorite subject, but because of the way I taught [them], they learned something," Ebel said.



Earning this, I want to stand on a roof and just shout for joy, because it is so cool, and not very many people get this honor.

Joni Ebel



Stand Out With an Advanced Degree!

Are you a lifelong learner craving a classroom experience? A teacher working toward a leadership position? A professional wanting to broaden your skill set?

Check out the graduate programs Doane offers!

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DOANE
UNIVERSITY



Making the World Better

ONE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AT A TIME

Written by Sara Hinds

Learning new things can be hard. Maybe it's the subject matter itself that's complex. A language barrier or technology gap can also present challenges. How an instructor teaches can also impact how well a student learns.

Whitney Fritzinger '21B, '23T looks at all those factors and says, "game on."

Falling into instructional design

Fritzinger herself fell in love with chemistry, all because of how her high school teacher taught it. After graduating

from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2010 with a degree in chemistry and working in a laboratory for eight years, she pivoted to a career in information technology.

Fritzinger served as an administrator for her company's learning management system (LMS). She wrote procedures and led employee training. Despite having a strong skill for technical writing, Fritzinger felt an advanced degree would complement her career change.

While in Doane's Master of Business Administration (MBA) program, she took a learning management systems class. One wasn't enough to quench her passion for the subject matter. Luckily, Doane also offered a Master of Science in

Instructional Design (IDT) program. Fritzinger earned her MBA in 2021 and graduated from the IDT program two years later.

"I just love looking at 'how do we learn, how do we have better learning experiences and how do we make it more meaningful?'" Fritzinger said.

Putting her degree to work

The propensity to problem solve and think critically stems from her chemistry background. So when it came time to complete her capstone project for the IDT program, Fritzinger jumped at the opportunity to help ECHO Collective.

Fritzinger was, and still is, a volunteer with ECHO, which stands for "empowering communities through her opportunities." The nonprofit in Lincoln provides learning opportunities for new American women. Fritzinger taught cybersecurity classes, showing the women how to be safe online.

The class was part of ECHO's refinery cohort, which offers broader business and personal development subjects like entrepreneurship and financial literacy with the ultimate goal to set up the women to run successful businesses.

"It gives them autonomy, it gives them independence, it allows them more flexibility [and] financial freedom," Fritzinger said of the cohort. "Seeing that program really got me interested in ECHO and what ECHO was doing."

She noticed an opportunity for ECHO to invest in an LMS. Technology is an expensive investment, especially for nonprofits that operate on tight budgets and grants. For her IDT capstone, Fritzinger researched LMS options and provided

recommendations to leadership. She collaborated with students and staff and redesigned classes to move to the chosen LMS.

The new American women could now access classwork, quizzes, calendars, presentations and a way to communicate with instructors from anywhere.



That's what excited me about doing this project for my capstone, because I could build something really practical.

Whitney Fritzinger

Fritzinger ensured the LMS was also easy to understand for the ECHO women, who come from different backgrounds of technology and English literacy.

"That's what excited me about doing this project for my capstone, because I could build something really practical," Fritzinger said. "I

could build something that they could turn around and use. I could build something that would immediately support the existing students in the program."

Fritzinger's love of instructional design didn't stop at her capstone. She still volunteers with ECHO and serves as secretary on their Board of Directors. In her role as program manager at Perceptyx, she manages surveys for customers and provides software training. She also started her own instructional design consulting business in 2024, Jade Winds, LLC. And she teaches Visual Design & Accessibility as an adjunct faculty for Doane's IDT program.

Instructional design, Fritzinger said, is valuable and versatile even if it isn't your job title. It's at the core of developing employees, company culture and student learning.

"The more we can make our instructional design effective, meaningful, engaging, all those things, the better experience it is for the learners, and that's what I care about," Fritzinger said. "Can we make it better?"



POV: CAMPUS SECURITY

The People Who Protect the Doane Experience

Written by Kelly Stenka

Life at Doane University is full of energy—students rushing between classes, grabbing coffee with friends, heading to practices and rehearsals. And while all that activity goes on, there's a team working quietly in the background to make sure everyone stays safe: Doane's Public Safety Office.

For Public Safety Director **Russ Hewitt**, the mission is simple—help students feel safe to enjoy their college experience to the fullest.

"Our job isn't just about responding to emergencies; it's about preventing them in the first place," Hewitt said. "The more our community engages with us—reporting concerns, staying informed and taking precautions—the safer our campus becomes."

BEHIND THE SCENES, ALWAYS WATCHING OUT

The Public Safety team might not always be visible, but they're always working. They rely on three main ideas—communication, reporting and access management—to keep the campus running smoothly and securely.

They make sure students, faculty and staff get timely alerts when something important is happening on campus. They monitor campus security cameras and manage access to residence halls and buildings to make sure only the right people are coming and going.

And when someone reports a concern, Public Safety documents and tracks those incidents to identify trends and prevent future issues.

For **Erik Rezabek**, a safety administrator with nearly 30 years of experience in the criminal justice field, the mission at Doane aligns perfectly with what drew him to the profession in the first place.

"I originally thought I wanted to be a police officer," he said, "but after getting my first job in an emergency shelter, I quickly learned that my talents and passion pointed me toward working with youth and young adults. I never looked back."

When he saw the opportunity to join Doane as a Public Safety Officer, it felt like the right next step.

"It was a new challenge and a new approach, but it still paralleled what I liked to do—helping others and being a positive presence in their lives," Rezabek said.

QUICK RESPONSES WHEN IT COUNTS

Sometimes things go wrong—and when they do, the Public Safety team is ready. Whether it's a medical emergency, a security issue or a weather situation, the team works with local police and first responders to handle it quickly.

"The more our community reports concerns proactively, the better we can prevent emergencies rather than just respond to them," Hewitt explained.

That's why they take every call seriously, no matter how small it may seem.

Rezabek echoed that idea, adding that each day on the job brings something new.

"There's no owner's manual for this role. Every day we face new challenges, new situations and new opportunities," he said. "We have to make quick decisions, think on the fly. Our day can go from 0 to 100 mph in seconds."

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF CAMPUS SAFETY

Not everything is an emergency.

The team sometimes fields unexpected calls—like helping small animals or wildlife on campus that need assistance. They also aim to make their presence approachable rather than intimidating. That visible presence is by design.

"Our number one priority is outside threats to Doane," Rezabek explained. "And one way we deter those is by being seen. We're proactive—we're constantly checking systems and safety measures to make sure they're working right. And we're here to help—whether it's a jump-start, a lockout or even just walking someone back to their dorm late at night."

REAL-WORLD ADVICE FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

When asked for one piece of advice he wishes every student knew, Hewitt said: "Emergency preparedness isn't just about campus—it applies everywhere. If you think through safety scenarios here at Doane, you'll be ready for anything life throws your way."

Thanks to the quiet, committed presence of Doane's Public Safety team, the Doane community can move forward with confidence, knowing someone always has their back.



