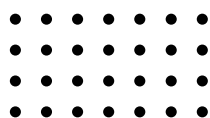


driving forward

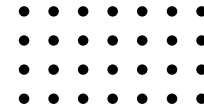
2025 Program Review

Celebrating our 2025 program,
students, donors, and volunteers



[DRIVINGFORWARD.ORG](https://drivingforward.org)

Executive Summary



Driving Forward celebrated its sixth year in 2025. Our 29 outstanding undergraduate interns completed our flagship program. We have 250 program alumni, representing the scale of our impact on first-generation and under-resourced college students.

We are excited to share the results of this year's program, the students, volunteers, and supporters who made it happen, and our plans for growth.

Sections



**2025 INTERN
TEAMS**



**VOLUNTEERS
& ALUMNI**



WORKSHOPS



**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

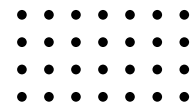


SUPPORTERS



**2026
ROADMAP**

2025 Intern Teams

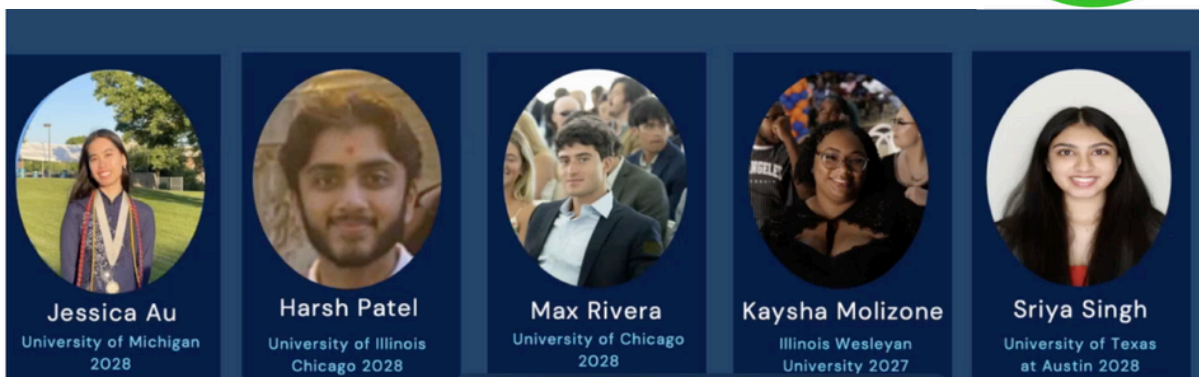


Our 29 interns hailed from nine U.S. universities, with the majority of students hailing originally from the Chicagoland area. 26 of the students were either freshmen or sophomores in their first professional internship.

Our interns delivered project recommendations across a variety of business topics. The winning team for 2025 named themselves the 5Gs. They completed and delivered a set of technology stack recommendations for a mid-sized logistics company.

Best Overall

Team 5: 5Gs



"During the summer of 2020, Driving Forward was the exact opportunity I needed in a time with so much uncertainty. Without the experience I gained through the multi-disciplinary case, the speakers, and the endless available connections to expand my network, I would not be where I am today."



Sam Resnick

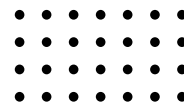
Driving Forward 2020 Intern
Univ of Indiana Class of 2023
Ernst & Young
Senior Finance Consultant

"Driving Forward wasn't just an internship, it was a turning point that helped me take a big step into my future. My mentor helped me by providing valuable feedback and insights on career paths. Her guidance encouraged me to explore opportunities beyond what I had considered."



Niyati Naresh

Driving Forward, 2025 Intern
University of Illinois Chicago
Class of 2028



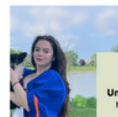
2025 Intern Teams

Two projects had a healthcare focus. Teams provided solutions to reduce administrative burdens for primary care physicians and go-to-market recommendations for a new brand competing with Botox. In the technology sector, the team delivered recommendations on AI training modules for new consulting staff.

Winner of the “Best Storytelling award”, the Green Dream team delivered novel recommendations for reducing the carbon footprint in the city of Chicago.

Best Storytelling

Team 1: Green Dream



Abby Hernandez
University of Illinois at Chicago
Majoring in Accounting & Finance
Minor in Sociology



Hailey Valaya
University of Chicago
Majoring in Business Economics
Minor in Inequality & Policy



Sandy Chen
Northwestern University
Majoring in Economics & Psychology
Minor in Data Science



Jason Flores
Illinois Wesleyan University
Majoring in Computer Science

Isaac Soto
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Majoring in Real Estate and Finance



Innovation Award

Team 6: Stallion Styles



Charles Mueller
UChicago, Economics, Junior



Saksham Shori
UT Austin, Data Science/Econ,
Freshman



Anushka Vasudev
UChicago, Economics, Freshman



Nina Zhang
UMich, Business, Freshman



Iscleiry Pujols
UIC, Accounting, Sophomore



Winners of the “Innovation Award”, the Stallion Styles team created a playbook of sustainability practices across manufacturing and packaging for an international clothing brand.

“The Driving Forward program had a significant impact on my professional development as I began college. I had the privilege of working with an incredible mentor, coach, and team. Despite being spread across different states and coming from various majors, we collaborated effectively.”



Analise Wang

Driving Forward 2024 Intern
Purdue University
Class of 2027

“Driving Forward was an outstanding opportunity to explore consulting, collaborate with a team, and sharpen technical and soft skills. The Udemy coursework, weekly webinars, and three rounds of presentations to industry professionals created an engaging, feedback-rich process to grow as problem solvers and communicators.”



Max Rivera

Driving Forward 2025 Intern
University of Chicago
Class of 2028

45 Professional Volunteers

Driving Forward interns were supported by 45 volunteers with an average of 20 years of professional experience. Mentors provided individualized career guidance and networking. Seven coaches supported the intern project teams with project guidance in weekly meetings. Eight individuals supported candidate interviews, curriculum review, and project reporting.



"Driving Forward provided the framework to easily support my mentee. I was inspired by the work of these college students and can't wait to follow my mentee in her career journey for years to come!"

Morgan Faley, 2025 Mentor

250 Driving Forward Alumni

Since our inception in 2020, 250 college students have completed the Driving Forward Flagship Program. Over 180 of our interns have earned their undergraduate degree and have entered the workforce or graduate school.

CAREER SUCCESS



- Full time employment: 144
- Avg. annual salary: \$103,000
- Enrolled in graduate school: 31
- Unique universities: 41

"I've frequently drawn on the lessons, approaching new challenges with confidence and shaping my personal brand. The skills have been invaluable in helping me grow professionally."



Mishwa Bhavsar

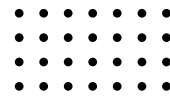
Driving Forward, 2022 intern
Illinois Wesleyan, 2023 grad
MasterCard
Software Engineer

Professional Development Workshops

Interns participated in results oriented workshops supporting their projects, teamwork, communication, and presentation skills.

Workshop Topic	Speaker	
Top Five Internship Mistakes and How To Address Them	Jodi Glickman <i>CEO, Great On the Job</i>	
Presentation Skills	Meghan Kane Benjamin, <i>CEO, Studio Reinvent</i>	
Confident Communications	Randy Dojutrek, <i>Proj. Engineering Executive Director</i>	
Market Research	Jennifer Accera, <i>Vice President, Walmart</i>	
Data in Decision Making	Emily Stucker, <i>Vice President Farmer's Fridge</i>	

Professional Development Workshops



Interns participated in professional panels to learn about pathways in popular careers for college graduates.

Careers Panel

Consulting

Darryl Baltimore,
*Financial Services
Executive*



Lakshi Mittal,
*Senior Consultant
Simon Kucher*



Jordan Kelly,
*Manager, GEP
Worldwide*



Joe Reifel,
*Insurance Exec. &
Advisor*

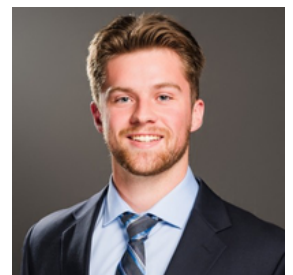


Finance

Patrick Phillips,
*Private Foundation
Executive*

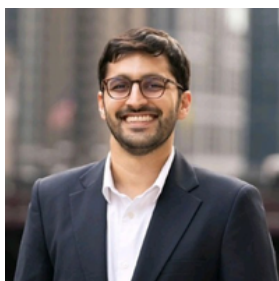


Trevor Hummel,
*Relationship Mgr.,
First Financial Bank*



Marketing

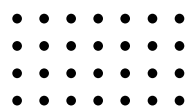
Siddharth Seth,
*Associate
A.T. Kearney*






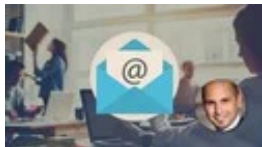

Ned Flanagan,
*Vice President,
The Marketing Store*



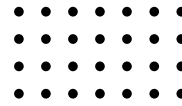
Career Skills Development



Thanks to an in-kind gift, Driving Forward interns have access to Udemy, the leading online training platform. The classes support their project and career development. Highlights of the curriculum are included below:

Training Topic	Instructor	
Work From Home: Time Mgmt. & Productivity Techniques	Jamal Lazzar	
Leading Effective Meetings: Beginner's Guide	Markus Amanto	
Management Consulting Techniques, Tools, & Frameworks	Asen Gyczew	
Write Better Emails: Tactics for Smarter Communications	Hassan Osman	
Job Crafting: Creating Meaning in Your Work	Amy Wrzesniewski	
Communication Skills for Professionals	Alex Lyon	

2026 Roadmap & Support



Roadmap

Driving Forward's roadmap for 2026 includes new programming to support career exploration.

Career Services Support - Tools include guides for university career resources and campus career support, e.g., clubs, student jobs, alumni.

Fall Semester Recruiting Content - Fall semester is the season for competitive internships and jobs. We deliver how-to guides including career fairs, employer research, networking, & interviews.

2026 Flagship Program - In its 7th year, the program supports 30+ paid internships with substantive projects, mentors, coaches, training & workshops.

"Completing Driving Forward, I truly saw how much I had grown—both professionally and personally. I learned how to effectively collaborate with a team of people I had just met, working toward a shared goal—an experience that continues to guide how I show up in internships and future roles."

Iscleiry Pujols
Driving Forward
2025 Intern
University of Illinois -
Chicago
Class of 2028



"The structure and format of the program made it easy to guide and encourage them while also learning their unique perspectives. Watching my mentee develop professionally over a few weeks was incredibly rewarding. I'm proud to have played a small role in their journey."



Maya Devakiamma
2025 Mentor

Support

Volunteer - We have many opportunities including interviewing prospective interns, mentoring interns, and coaching project teams.

www.drivingforward.org/volunteer

Donate - Donations support student scholarships for completing the internship and our career programming resources.

www.drivingforward.org/donate

Sponsors

Our sponsors provide us financial resources and access to business professionals that support our interns' professional development and their projects.

Platinum Sponsor



Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



In-Kind Sponsors



University Partners



Donations support student scholarships for completing the internship and our career programming resources

Donate Now