

# Spotlight on DECA

Winter 2011

Alumni Edition

Volume 35, Issue 1

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## Can you believe it's almost 2012?

Sean Warren, Chairperson

When I woke up the other morning and looked out the window, I saw snow on the ground and realized 2012 is right around the corner. Moving into a new year always causes me to reflect on the passing of another year. Looking back on 2011, our organization has done some amazing things. We helped judge at District Conferences, planned and coordinated a successful State Conference for the first time in Grand Rapids, and worked tirelessly on night watch in Orlando. Over the summer we hosted a successful picnic, and more recently, went to Cedar Point as a group and were also guest speakers at the State Leadership Conference in Detroit. It's amazing to think of how much work we do for this organization, but looking back, I always forget the sore feet and Sunday naps, only remembering the amazing memories and people I meet from each conference. Strap on your most comfortable shoes and join us! Competitive conferences are coming up – this is the first opportunity to do what we do best. Read Tom's article on how you can get involved at the District Conferences in December and January.

The 2011-2012 Board of Directors recently went through some changes that will stay in effect until March 2012, when we can vote at our annual meeting. Our new board consists of 6 members - Sarah LaBean, Jason Whiteson, Courtney Clark, and myself will remain on the board as elected members. The previous Chairperson and Vice-Person have decided to step down from their positions; therefore, the remaining board members unanimously elected to include Tom Kusch and Kyle Studebaker to help with our yearly goals. They're really excited to work for our membership and I can't wait to see the new ideas they'll bring with their positions.

We want to create a newsletter that everyone enjoys to read. I know I'm guilty of not reading each article every quarter, so we want to hear from you! Do you have any ideas for an article? Would you like to write an article for our next newsletter? How would you like the newsletter delivered (traditional mail and/or e-mail)?

Please email me ANY feedback! [swarren@mideca.org](mailto:swarren@mideca.org)

For more information and to stay up to date, find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @MiAlumniDECA

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# Your Chance to Judge Locally = District Conferences

Tom Kusch, Board Member

What the heck is DECA? I am asked this question each year when telling everyone I'm spending the day at district conferences. The meaning has changed a lot for me in that time. As a student, DECA meant a sense of nervousness and giddy excitement, as well as a year's worth of preparation and hard work towards friendly competition. But, as an active Alumnus, it means a weekend of fun and mentorship, and a time of reflection on how much I have grown and developed professionally.

Every year of high school, I participated in DECA in Technical Sales Representative; and I worked diligently to make it to SCDC. As an alumnus, it is very cool to be on the other side of the table. I spend my time at the district conference running all around the campus of Eastern Michigan, judging different events and ensuring everything runs smoothly. I get to put on my game face, as students come in from all over the DECA district, just as nervous as I was. The students run through their role play as I go down the rubric, ranking them based on how well they meet expectations and core competencies. I always make a point to provide the students with feedback on how to do better in their presentations and give them things to consider and work on. I get a sense of satisfaction in mentoring students not only on the given criteria, but also providing them with skills that they will use in their future professional lives, because often, the smallest details can have huge determining factors in their outcomes.

Participating in DECA as an alumni member helps me brush up on my own professional skills, and makes me conscious of the choices that I make on a day-to-day basis. I remember how DECA helped me create bonds with individuals that still continue today, and helped me to come into my own, professionally and socially. After judging events, I always go to the Judges luncheon and network with other business professionals. This opportunity is fantastic, as I annually meet people from all different industries and make connections and catch-up with old friends. I learn about our community and different interests, and learn just as much at the DECA conferences as I did when I was a student.

If you have been away from DECA Alumni for a few years, I encourage you to sign up for a district conference, come down and be a judge. It's one day a year, and the success of the conferences depend on the continued support and mentorship of the alumni and business professional volunteers. Not only would you be helping shape the skill set of current DECA members, but it is a great and unique opportunity all in its own.

**Please visit [www.mideca.org/conferences](http://www.mideca.org/conferences) for more information and to sign up to help!**

District 1 – Saturday, January 21, 2012 at Northwood University

District 2 – Wednesday, January 4, 2012 at Ferris State University

District 3 – Tuesday, December 20, 2011 at Kalamazoo Valley Community College

District 4 – Friday, January 6, 2012 at Eastern Michigan University

District 5 – Thursday, January 12, 2012 at Eastern Michigan University

District 6 – Saturday, January 7, 2012 at West Bloomfield High School

District 7 – Saturday, January 14, 2012 at Lake Orion High School

District 8 – Friday, January 20, 2012 at Ferndale High School



# The Power of Internships

Kyle Studebaker, Board Member

The three tools that prepared me for my future career – DECA, college and my internship. Many students I've talked to understand that to get a career in the business world, a bachelor's degree is pretty much required. So how do students make themselves stand out in the application process when everyone applying will have a bachelor's degree?

The first step is taking advantage of practical application of your education through competition and experience in DECA. There is a reason why so many professionals, companies and educational institutions support DECA and it's because students can take what they've learned in the classroom and apply their skills and knowledge in a safe, yet competitive environment. As alumni members, we can help DECA make a better impact on the current members at the high school division by showing them specifically how DECA allows students to practice real life skills needed in their future careers. Use any opportunity to talk to students at the next conference to tell them about how practicing presentations, creative/critical thinking, networking and communication can help them in their future career. It will help students to better realize the impact DECA has already had on their life.

The second step to preparing students for a better career is to apply skills learned in the classroom and skills acquired in DECA by working as an intern. Whether it's a start-up, corporation or mid-sized company, paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time, an internship is one of the best next steps students can take in preparing themselves for their future career. I have seen many of my classes from college be directly applied to my current internship and it has helped me connect my classes to the business world and understand why each class is so important. My internship has also helped me understand what additional classes may help in acquiring needed skills in my field; this helped me to select my elective courses and make them more impactful on my future career.

Again, if the opportunity comes at the next conference, take time to talk to high school students about preparing themselves for their future career through an internship. It's an experience which will help them connect and apply their education and skills learned in DECA to a new perspective. As alumni members we have a great opportunity to show high school students some great ways to prepare for their future careers; let's make the most out of that opportunity!

## 2012 State Career Development Conference

Jason Whiteson, Board Member

The State Career Development Conference (SCDC) is coming up upon us before we know it! On Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, the conference begins and runs through Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup>. This year the conference is back at the Hyatt Regency Dearborn.

The SCDC is the pinnacle of what we do every year as Alumni, and where we need the most help from our members. The activities that we do as alumni are manning the alumni booth to recruit new members and pass our knowledge and experience on to the high school members. We put on the math and economics testing on Saturday during the day and we help organize the chaos at the two opening sessions and three awards sessions (one Saturday, two Sunday). We also organize the awards prior to the sessions.

The SCDC is a great way to network, and more importantly make long-lasting friends. I can personally attest to you that some of the people you meet in DECA are the best people you will ever meet, and could really make friends for life. While we do work a lot, we also have a lot of fun. Typically on Saturday afternoon we all go out to dinner somewhere

in the area. We also enjoy pizza while organizing the awards Saturday night.

Here are a few suggestions to things to bring with you to help you get through the weekend.

- Comfortable dress shoes
- Business professional and business casual clothes (we follow the same dress code as students during the day, and all sessions)
- Casual clothes to wear while networking when we're done Saturday night
- Standard toiletry items (toothbrush, deodorant, etc)
- A great attitude

Most of those items will help you. We do spend a good amount of time on our feet, so pay special attention to the comfortable shoes recommendation.

I encourage everyone to sign up and come out to Dearborn with us! I have been coming to this conference as alumni since 2001, and look forward to it every year. You won't be disappointed. We'll see you in March!

# Are Your Interview Skills Ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

Courtney Clark, Board Member

## Tips for Skype Job Interviews

Skype, a video chat program, has become a favorite of employers looking to cut costs and save time in their hiring processes. Employers no longer have to pay to fly in candidates, which is a particular advantage in an increasingly globalized job market. I recently experienced my first Skype interview, and I can testify that I also benefited from the format. I dressed professionally, but I did not need to burden myself with painful heels. Instead of arriving frazzled and tired from my usual commute on Chicago's public transportation system, I booked a quiet, clean room in my university's library to ensure privacy and avoid the awkwardness of my interviewer seeing my bedroom. I was able to spread notes, my resume, and a cup of coffee around the table, all of which helped me relax and better show my personality. Finally, the company's location in Beijing scored me a 10:00 pm interview time, so I did not have to attempt to squeeze the interview in between my myriad daily classes and meetings. As a soon-to-be college graduate, I spend a lot of time polishing my resume, researching interview questions, practicing responses, and reading tips online. When I received an email inviting me to this Skype interview, I turned to Google to learn from the experiences of those well-versed in video interviews. I've learned quite a bit from these little internet articles, most of which are written by HR executives looking to blog their way into renown. I'd like to share my own tips gleaned from my interview experience along with some advice from internet interview gurus:

**Dress professionally from head to toe.** I briefly considered wearing jeans under my blazer and oxford, but I avoided it after a disturbing daydream wherein my interviewer asked me to stand up to prove my professional dress.

While my scenario is incredibly unlikely, professional clothes have a wonderful way of rubbing off on us and making us act and speak more professionally.

**Please, please test your Skype software and webcam before the interview starts.** My laptop was enjoying some TLC from the Geek Squad, so I borrowed a laptop for my interview. While I figured out how to start Skype and how to start the webcam, I did not realize until the interview started that I did not know how to make the two work in concert. My interviewer could hear but not see me, and it took several embarrassing minutes for me to find a solution.

**Be aware of your setting,** particularly lighting and the wall space behind you. Unless your interviewer can definitely only see blank wall behind you, do not hold your interview in your bedroom, kitchen, or other inappropriate location.

**Smile!** It's the only positive body language signal you get. Crucial for any interview, smiles are particularly important for creating a connection with someone a computer screen away.

**Focus, focus, focus.** I mentioned earlier that I placed notes and a resume on the table next to me. I used these solely as security blankets. If you look away from the screen too often to reference your resume or read a pre-typed answer to a question, your interviewer might feel disrespected and question your commitment to the interview. Practice your answers for a Skype interview as you would for a face-to-face interview.

I hope these tips help you in the future. Good luck in all your career endeavors! For questions or comments, please email me at [courtneyclark8@gmail.com](mailto:courtneyclark8@gmail.com).



# Spotlight on Sam Rojas

Sarah LaBean, Board Member



I had the pleasure of meeting Sam Rojas at the 2011 State Career Development Conference in Grand Rapids. I wanted to interview him to give everyone the same opportunity. Here's what I learned about Sam!

## **What is your DECA background?**

I competed three years in high school and have been in Michigan Alumni DECA for almost two years.

## **What is your favorite thing about Alumni DECA?**

I really love being at the booth and helping students out. I enjoy answering questions and traveling to the different conferences.

## **What was your favorite city to visit when traveling with Michigan DECA?**

I really enjoyed Louisville Kentucky. I went there for Internationals and I thought it was a lot of fun, minus all of the rain.

## **Do you have any hobbies?**

I enjoy being out on Walloon Lake in Petoskey Michigan a lot. I also fly planes out of Charlevoix Airport for fun. I should have my private flying license in the next year or so.

## **What advice do you have for new alumni members?**

My advice is to just be yourself and enjoy the new experiences. I was nervous at first, but once I got comfortable, I started having a lot of fun.

## **Where would you like to see yourself go in DECA?**

I would like to become a life member of Michigan Alumni DECA in the near future.

## **What is your favorite part about SCDC?**

As a student, I enjoyed the free time in between competing. I really enjoyed the fact we were right across from a mall in Dearborn.

## **What is your favorite animal?**

I really like French Bulldogs. My girlfriend and I plan on buying one soon.

## **What school are you attending, what's your major, and are you in any activities?**

I currently attend the local community college here in Petoskey, Michigan. I plan on going into logistics, and business. I am also getting my real estate license here in December.

## **If you could be any object in a grocery store what would you be and why?**

Wow this is a hard question... I would be the fruit so I could provide someone with a healthy snack.

## **What do you plan on doing with your major?**

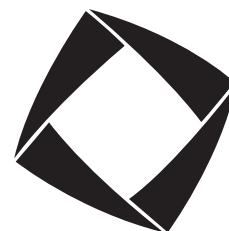
I'm not exactly sure. I would like to work for a corporation and handle all of the buying and selling of the company.

## **What do you look forward to the most with DECA Alumni this year?**

I look forward to the SCDC. I would like to go to the ICDC in Salt Lake City, but we'll see if my schedule allows me to.

## **What are your plans as an Alumni DECA member?**

I plan on being a supportive, reliable alumnus for as long as I can, attending as many conferences as possible. I plan on providing as much help as I possibly can. I also plan on recruiting as many students as I can to Michigan Alumni DECA!



# Action Page

## Membership Form

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Former Chapter: \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduation Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
Current Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Information

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Complete this section if you are sending in your membership fees.

State and National Fees: \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Life Membership - Optional: \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Life Membership Installment: \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_

(Four additional installments of \$25.00 are due for a total of \$125.00)

Credit cards are now accepted for Life Memberships! To pay for your Life Membership via credit card, complete this section. (Please note, we can only accept credit cards for Life Memberships. Yearly memberships must be paid by check or money order.)

#### Payment Options:

- Check enclosed - Make checks payable to "Michigan Alumni DECA"
- Please bill my Visa/MasterCard/Discover/American Express - **please note that this option is for Life Memberships, Installments & Scholarship Donations only.**

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Card Verification Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(three digit code from back of card)

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**Questions?** Call 734.487.DECA