EDUCATION AT WORK

IPFW’s Doermer School of Business brings industry into the classroom.

article by Kimberly Truesdell • photography by Jim Whitcraft

It’s where the region’s industry and education converge, offering an opportunity to bring the workplace to the classroom.

Led by Dean Melissa Gruys, the Richard T. Doermer School of Business at IPFW is in the unique position of being a regional campus in Indiana’s second largest city. The school can tailor classes, programs and certificates to the needs of area industries while being able to draw on the home campus’ leadership and expertise.

“We’re better equipped to do the experiential learning, internships, co-ops. We have the employer interactions. We have MBA programs where CEOs come in and talk to the class. We can do that because we have a lot of CEOs right here,” Gruys says. “So that’s a real benefit to our students.”

At the undergraduate level, it means that students are able to work with area organizations such as Fort Wayne Sister Cities International, Inc. and companies such as DeBrand Fine Chocolates and Hoosier Hill Farms, which were part of an international marketing project that literally took a taste of northeast Indiana to Morocco.

The trip was one of many international learning experiences that the school has hosted over the years. Thanks to generous sponsors such as Franklin Electric and the PNC Bank Foundation, the students do not incur any expenses for the valuable hands-on experience they gain by learning about business in places like India, China, Ireland, Cuba and Mexico. For graduate students, the strong relationship that the Doermer School of Business has with the business community has led to region-tailored programs. The MBA+ program – which offers a flexible schedule and hybrid and online classes – offers three tracks. The general business track allows the greatest flexibility while the business analytics and finance tracks offer focused study in specialties of significant importance to northeast Indiana’s largest industries.

“We added those concentrations because Greater Fort Wayne, Inc. predicts that those skills will be in high demand in the future for northeast Indiana’s business executives,” Gruys says.

The school also offers the Professional MBA which takes about a year to complete. Classes are offered on Saturday mornings and online for that program.

The real benefit for students is not just being able to learn from the region’s business leaders, but in being able to apply their education to their work lives and see career gains. Graduates of the MBA program, for example, see a 20 percent salary increase, on average.

Gruys says the school is always looking to expand those business relationships and integrate them into the programs.

As IPFW becomes Purdue Fort Wayne in July 2018, things at the Doermer School of Business are business as usual.

Staff and faculty are hard at work as they prepare to renew accreditation with AACSB International (the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business). Less than five percent of the 16,000 business schools worldwide earn this gold standard of accreditation, and the school is the only one in the region with the distinction.

“We take great pride in being AACSB accredited. We devote considerable resources to meeting the 15 required AACSB standards, all of which relate to having high quality faculty, staff, and programs and doing so with innovation, engagement, and impact,” Gruys says. “The spirit of continuous improvement that is necessary for accreditation aligns very well with the mission of the Doermer School of Business to provide relevant education, and to be connected with and make an impact in our community.”

Dr. Melissa Gruys, dean of the IPFW Doermer School of Business

RICHARD T. DOERMER SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
Student Success Center, Neff Hall 366
2101 Coliseum Blvd. E.
Fort Wayne Indiana 46805
(260) 481-6472
ipfw.edu/business
busadvisor@ipfw.edu
Dean: Melissa L. Gruys, Ph.D., SPHR, SHRM-SCP
Years in business: IPFW has offered business degrees for nearly 50 years
Number of employees: 40; 33 faculty and 7 staff