- Section 1:  Items to Note and Criteria for Team Award
- Section 2:  List of Team Nominees
- Section 3:  Nomination Submissions

# Section 1: Items to Note and Criteria for Team Award

## Award Amounts

| Individual Awards (per semester) | Team Awards (per semester, per individual) |
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| $500.00 | $50.00 |

## Criteria for I Am COD Team Award

**Nominators choose the criterion that <u>best describes</u> why this team is being nominated:** (*multiple criteria may be selected*)

***Core Values | Service Excellence | Exceptional Performance***

# Section 2: List of Team Nominees

| Team (Nominee) | Team Members | | Nominator(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Facilities Team | • Smokey Jackson<br>• Rick Zawodniak<br>• Brett Finnie<br>• Chris Tatoris | • Deon King<br>• Dirk Heid<br>• Monica Chowaniec<br>• Carldale Melton | Gina Wheatley |
| Conference and Events AV Team | • Joseph Llereza<br>• Josh Kalbow | • Thomas Massarello<br>• Danielle Wiseman | Julie Konczyk |
| Bird Friendly COD | • David Ouellette<br>• David Taylor<br>• John Stoddard<br>• Anna Bakker | • Tony Venezia<br>• Jackie Weaver<br>• Mara Baker<br>• Lisa Saltiel<br>• Marcella Nowak | Anna Bakker |
| Inn at the Waters Edge Hotel Staff | • Dylan Morici<br>• Princess Siafa | • Pam Trost | Marilyn Joyner |
| Student Financial Aid Assistants Team | • Tam Charles<br>• Omar Gordon<br>• Lisa Schmidt | • Mae Atcha<br>• Kayla Moore<br>• Sheetal Patel | Claude Waller<br>Sheetal Patel |
| VITA Tax Preparers | **Site Coordinators**<br>• Mark Yahoudy<br>• Maureen McBeth<br>**Quality Reviewers**<br>• Phil Abraham<br>• Klementina Andonova<br>• Margaret Labno<br>• Sam Wilson<br>• Jiawei "Violet" Yu<br>• Rob Budney | **IT Support (In-House)**<br>• Justin Wagner<br><br>**Site Assistants**<br>• Bev Carlson<br>• Channing Payne | Ana Krstic |
| Financial Aid Operations | • Juanita Gutierrez<br>• Nikki Scalzitti | • Jenna Aldworth | Diana Christopher |
| Managed Print Services (MPS) Team | • Angelo Conti<br>• Colin Haughney<br>• David Bukowski<br>• James Ferro<br>• Joshua DiForti<br>• Karyin Boulom | • Abdulrahman Meah<br>• Brian Smith<br>• Cherise Cox<br>• David Ditchfield<br>• Joe Chowaniec<br>• Nancy Jadzak | Magdalena Ogrodny |

**Fall 2026 – I AM COD Team Nominees**

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| | • Michael Mohring<br>• Miguel Mosqueda<br>• Swarup Gupta<br>• Zachariah Roebuck | • Regina Wisemiller<br>• Rich Cunningham<br>• Samina Khan<br>• Sarah Brase | |

# Section 3: Nomination Submissions

**When was the team formed and/or what was/is the main purpose of this team? Describe the project/process/initiative that this team collaborated on. Describe the impact on students/employees/community.**

| Team | Nomination Submission Text |
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| Facilities Team | The Employee Development Center would like to nominate the Facilities team—including our custodial, carpentry, and painting colleagues—for an I Am COD Team Award. Throughout the past year, our area has experienced an ongoing ceiling issue that has required repeated attention and support. During this time, these teams have consistently demonstrated professionalism, responsiveness, and an unwavering commitment to customer service.<br><br>Whether rearranging office furniture to help protect equipment, responding quickly to maintenance needs, or returning multiple times to clean and restore our workspace, every interaction has been met with kindness, patience, and a genuine desire to help. Their willingness to adapt, collaborate, and provide support whenever needed has made a significant difference in maintaining a safe and functional environment for our staff and learners.<br><br>What stands out most is not simply the work that has been completed, but the positive attitude and care demonstrated throughout the process. The Facilities team has exemplified the spirit of teamwork and service that makes College of DuPage such a special place to work. We are grateful for their continued partnership and dedication, and we are proud to recognize and celebrate their outstanding contributions with this nomination. |

| Team | Nomination Submission Text |
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| Conference and Events AV Team | The Conference and Events AV Team consistently exemplifies Service Excellence through their unwavering commitment to supporting students, faculty, staff, and community partners. Whether assisting with internal meetings, a major campus event, or a high-profile community gathering, team members are always courteous, professional, and respectful, even when faced with last-minute changes, technical challenges, or high-pressure situations.<br><br>What sets this team apart is their genuine desire to help the College succeed. They approach every interaction with patience, empathy, and a solutions-oriented mindset, ensuring that event organizers feel supported. The team routinely anticipates potential issues before they arise and proactively develops solutions that enhance the overall experience for attendees, staff and external partners.<br><br>The College hosts hundreds of events each academic year with each year bringing more and more large scale events to campus. Though there are many, many examples of individual service excellence in each event they support, I would like to share a few recent examples of how this team operates to ensure the best possible experience for our students, staff and partners.<br><br>During the Big Idea Pitch Contest hosting in spring 2026, Danielle (Dani) Wiseman worked with the high school contestants to get them ready to take the stage. Presenting can be nerve-racking, and her calm, positive presence and the extra time she took with the students helped put them at ease and made the experience more enjoyable and comfortable for them. |

## Fall 2026 – I AM COD Team Nominees

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| | During the Second Annual Midwest Innovation and Entrepreneurship Summit in spring 2026, Joe Llereza and Josh Kalbow were instrumental in the orchestration of this high profile event that brought together industry thought leaders and entrepreneurs throughout our region. Their ongoing professionalism in a high stress, live event was exceptional. They were able to provide a seamless experience for attendees despite several last minute program changes and a guest presenter who became confrontational and unprofessional in the moments leading up to his session.<br><br>Through their dedication, professionalism, and exceptional customer care, the Conference and Events AV Team enhances the College's reputation and creates positive experiences that reflect the institution's commitment to excellence. Simply put, they make the work seem effortless and ensure the spotlight is always on our programs and<br>students. |

| Team | Nomination Submission Text |
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| Bird Friendly COD | Starting in 2023, Professor David Ouellette noticed the abundance of dead birds under windows around campus on his early morning time on campus. He decided to take action and helped form Bird Friendly COD to monitor bird strikes on campus and promote advocacy efforts to reduce bird deaths caused by window strikes on campus buildings.<br><br>"Bird-Friendly COD" is an interdisciplinary group of volunteer faculty, staff, students, and community members working alongside Chicago Bird Collision Monitors (CBCM) and DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center to protect the lives of migratory birds on the COD campus through research, documentation, education, and policy change.<br>https://library.cod.edu/biology/bird https://library.cod.edu/biology/bird/resources<br><br>Students in the Biology program utilize the statistics to understand real life conservation scenarios. Natural Areas students workers have published reports to help educate the public on conservation efforts and steps people can do to prevent bird window collisions. Students speak at events outside of COD to help educate the public and their research helps better prepare them for research at 4 year and beyond educational institutions.<br><br>The COD Bird Friendly initiative helps identify that we are responsible for the deaths of birds and using our integrity to help course correct negative aspect of building design. The program is working to help fund the cost of $100,000 for window treatments on the worst area on campus the south side of the SRC building near the library. Our program is run as a voluntary program by staff, students, faculty, and community members. Each person gives their time for the betterment of the program and to better represent the College of DuPage. The Bird Friend COD team has identified a problem on campus, had included many stakeholders, and is working towards a a solution to make the College of DuPage campus more bird friendly. This is hugely important as birds play and critical role in our ecosystems and more than 1 billion avian deaths are caused by window collisions annually in the United States.(Audubon 2024)<br><br>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7p44K4_2Aw https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6Y5G6fRXvA<br>https://www.harpercollege.edu/academics/international/summit/abstracts-and-session-details.php |

**Fall 2026 – I AM COD Team Nominees**

**Fall 2026 – I AM COD Team Nominees**

| Team | Nomination Submission Text |
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| Inn at the Waters Edge Hotel Staff | The Inn@ Water Edge hotel staff has been very supportive of my Vocational Skills Hospitality classes (Hotel and Restaurant) on a continuous and steadfast basis. My students have developmental disabilities - mental, physical or both. Most importantly, my students love learning and fully participating at the College of DuPage. Dylan, Princess, and Pam support their goals with respect and patience. The College's goal is to be all inclusive. This team's everyday actions supports that goal.<br><br>For years, they have treated my students with kindness, respect, and patience. They have enhanced their learning experiences by visiting the class and providing a clear explanation in respect to hotel services and customer expectations. In addition, their cooperation has allowed me to expand my number of classes from 1 to 3.. Each class provides a higher learning experience of Hotel Services. Because of the students' growth achieved through the elevated classes, my students and their families have expressed deep appreciation for the teachings and hands-on application. Their confidence has increased ; as well as social skills. Some have found jobs in the Hospitality Industry.<br><br>Last Spring semester, one of my students expressed a strong desire to work in a hotel Housekeeping Dept. I presented a new idea- shallowing, to Dylan. My student was allowed to "shallow" Princess to better understand the job, including the behind the scene responsibilities. Afterwards, he expressed that the shallowing was great and strengthened his desire. His mother's Thank You email was shared with the team.<br><br>My classes are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays afternoon. My students have been supported by the hotel staff in the following ways. This is a short list. It does not represent everything they have done.<br><br>• Demonstrations of the Bed Making process.(i.e. Bed Making) Allowing Observation of Front Desk operations<br>• Updating me on procedural changes Providing needed supplies<br>• Taking time to have conversations (helps students develop social skills) Patience and respect<br>• Allowing them to make mistakes. Respectful corrections. Offers suggestions on ways to enhance their learnings.<br>• Their "inclusivity in action" behavior is an excellent example to other colleagues at the college. This action is displayed during every class, not occasionally, frequently or sometimes. It's All The Time. My students trust and respect them.<br><br>They communicate to their families and communities the support received. The families communicate to me their gratitude. As a result, the communities support the college through increased enrollment in the Vocational Skills classes.<br><br>The college has banners on the campus which states 'We See You'. Dylan, Princess, and Pam "See " my students and me. |

| Team | Nomination Submission Text |
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| Student Financial Aid Assistants Team | Nomination 1:<br>There is not one situation I can speak to because this team goes above and beyond with every single student. They are the backbone of the Financial Aid department. They make sure each student is taken care of, while maintaining privacy. This team's impact on the students is immense. Financial |

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| | aid can be daunting for a student, but I have seen many students walk away from the FA Assistants with a much better understanding and a look of relief that they will be able to pay for their education here at COD. Student frustrations seem to disappear after meeting with the Assistants. I really can't put into words the importance of and the tremendous service this team renders to our student population, every day. |
| | Nomination 2:<br>My team consistently demonstrates why they are the backbone of our department. They manage approximately 90–95% of the student-facing volume within Student Financial Assistance, all while maintaining an exceptional level of professionalism, compassion, and consistency in an environment that is constantly evolving. No matter the challenge, they continue to show up for our students and for each other without missing a beat.<br><br>What makes this team especially deserving of recognition is their unwavering commitment to the student experience. They routinely go beyond the expectations of their job descriptions and pay grades to ensure students feel supported, informed, and cared for during what is often one of the most stressful periods of their educational journey. Their ability to balance efficiency with empathy is something that cannot be taught and should not go unnoticed.<br><br>Despite facing ongoing challenges in areas such as compensation, workspace comfort, safety, privacy, and the increasing demands placed on them, they continue to handle each obstacle with grace, resilience, and professionalism. Time and time again, they put students first, even when doing so requires personal sacrifice and flexibility.<br><br>As their manager, I want to recognize not only the incredible amount of work they accomplish each day, but also the heart behind it. They are an integral part of College of DuPage, and the impact they have on our students and our institution is immeasurable. They deserve to be recognized for their dedication, perseverance, and continuous efforts to<br>support student success. |

| **Team** | **Nomination Submission Text** |
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| VITA Tax Preparers | I would like to enthusiastically nominate the VITA Tax Preparation Program team at College of DuPage for an I Am COD Award in recognition of their exceptional service, professionalism, and meaningful impact on our community. I had the opportunity to utilize the VITA program for free tax preparation services, and the experience far exceeded my expectations. From start to finish, the process was organized, efficient, and highly professional. What stood out most was the remarkable level of preparation and expertise demonstrated by the student tax preparer. It was clear that this was not simply a learning exercise, but a well-executed service built on strong training, attention to detail, and genuine care for clients.<br>Equally impressive was the leadership and mentorship provided by Professor Klementina Andronova. Her guidance was thoughtful, precise, and empowering, ensuring that the student not only provided accurate service but did so with confidence and professionalism. She struck an exceptional |

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| | balance between oversight and trust, allowing the student to lead while offering expert support when needed. This created a seamless and highly effective experience for those of us receiving services.<br><br>As someone who has worked with the same CPA for many years, I was genuinely surprised by the outcome. Not only<br>was the service comparable, but it resulted in a more favorable tax return than I had received previously. This level of competency, delivered through a free community service, speaks volumes about the quality of the program, the strength of its training, and the dedication of everyone involved.<br><br>Beyond my individual experience, the VITA program represents something even greater, it is a powerful example of how College of DuPage fosters real-world learning while directly serving the community. Programs like this create meaningful access to essential services, particularly for individuals and families who may otherwise face financial or logistical barriers. At the same time, they provide students with invaluable hands-on experience that builds confidence, skill, and professionalism.<br><br>The entire operation reflects excellence: strong leadership, well-prepared students, seamless coordination, and a true commitment to community impact. It is evident that significant effort, planning, and care go into making this program successful, and it absolutely deserves recognition.<br>I am deeply grateful for the experience and proud to be part of a community where such impactful work is taking place.<br>The VITA team exemplifies the spirit of I Am COD through their dedication, innovation, and service to others. |

| **Team** | **Nomination Submission Text** |
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| Financial Aid Operations | Financial aid is a department that is not mentioned much, due to the fact that not everyone needs financial aid to attend college. However, for the ones that do, we are here to fulfill their dreams in one way or another. Financial Aid consists of different pieces. This nomination will look at the Financial Aid Operations Team. The team demonstrates unity in performance, keeping on daily and weekly tasks and providing technical support to the internal customers, IE the rest of the financial aid staff. The team holds each other accountable all the while teaching and learning from each other. |

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| | It has not been easy recently due to Financial Aid Operations turning into a lone wolf since October 2025. The team supervisor retired and since then been on the hunt for a pack leader. All the while the maintaining exceptional performance, providing excellent service and keeping to the core values. What makes this team I am COD? The team went through a new financial aid year setup without any training or knowledge. This task of setup is left to the manager of the team. Since operations does not have a manager, the team had to figure this task out on their own. The Financial Aid Director was available as much as they could, but they also had their own tasks such as running the Financial Aid office.<br><br>Despite the challenges, the team was able to come on top! It was not easy to say the least, but the team was able to setup, test and process the new academic year in record time. That is why this team deserves recognition! I am so proud to be part of this team that holds each other up when things get challenging and learns to celebrate each other<br>when things are learned. A great team working together to make every financial aid student first! |

| Team | Nomination Submission Text |
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| Managed Print Services (MPS) Team | The Managed Print Services new device installation project was a large, campus-wide effort that required precise coordination, teamwork, and hands-on execution. The project involved replacing printers and multifunction devices across the College of DuPage, as well as the removal and installation of specialized large-format equipment within the PrintServices Center. This included complex, multi-day work related to a Colex cutter and flatbed printer, requiring equipment disassembly, rigging, delivery, assembly, installation, and staff training.<br>This project's success was driven by the collective efforts of staff from IT, Print Services, Support Services, and Warehouse Services. While the IT department worked behind the scenes to ensure system functionality, connectivity, and configuration, other team members were highly visible on |

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| | the floor throughout the installation process. Staff escorted GFC vendor partners to correct locations across campus, coordinated access to buildings and rooms, moved and staged equipment using carts, and closely oversaw the safe and efficient deinstallation and installation of devices. Warehouse and Support Services staff ensured timely equipment movement and space readiness, while Print Services staff supported the complex transition within the Print Services Center to maintain continuity of service. Team members worked side by side with vendor partners, adapting in real time to challenges and ensuring work progressed smoothly and safely.<br><br>The combined efforts of this cross-departmental team resulted in a seamless transition that caused little to no disruption to classes, campus operations, or customer service. Many members of the campus community were unaware that devices had been replaced at all—an extraordinary achievement given the scope of the project. Print Services operations resumed smoothly following the installation of new production equipment, allowing continued support for academic programs and college operations.<br><br>The professionalism, cooperation, and commitment demonstrated by this group reflected positively on the College of DuPage and strengthened partnerships with external vendors. GFC partners specifically noted the responsiveness, patience, and collaborative spirit of the COD team, emphasizing how enjoyable and effective the partnership was throughout the project.<br><br>This team exemplified COD's core values through exceptional collaboration, service excellence, and shared responsibility, transforming a complex, labor-intensive project into a smooth, successful experience that supported students, employees, and the broader college community while showcasing the power of teamwork across departments. |