



## We GRADUATE from College

As a rising seventh grader, Dahla Bruce sat in the audience at the 2008 Sinclair Community College Graduation ceremony to cheer on her mother, who was receiving her associates degree. As Dahla watched student after student approach the stage to accept their diplomas, she noticed something—some of them were still in high school.

That very night Dahla began to research where those high school students were from, and how she could become one of them.

She quickly learned they were part of a new early college high school called DECA and, as timing would have it, DECA had just announced they would be opening their doors to seventh graders.

Being the go-getter she is, Dahla immediately applied to DECA and started her journey as part of the school's first seventh grade class that Fall; a decision, she says, that was the single best she has made in her lifetime. As she reflects back on her time at DECA, Dahla says it was the required internships and job shadows that had the biggest impact on her, as well as a course she was required to take called Corporate Etiquette.

"At the time I'm not sure I appreciated it, but looking back in hindsight, the course I took in corporate etiquette gave me the tools I needed to get where I am today. I learned how to behave in a corporate setting; how to brand myself. At one point we even had a woman come in and show us how to eat properly at corporate lunches. Most importantly, I learned the value of networking. Networking has been everything for me."

Dahla attended Bowling Green University where she was the only female to graduate with a degree in Construction Management. During the latter part of her studies she was

hired as a paid intern at Shook Construction, a job she earned because of her uncanny ability to network.

After she graduated from college, Shook did not have an open position in their Dayton office, so Dahla did what she does best—she made her own way. She asked the owner of Bilbrey Construction, Rob Lemaster, out to lunch, and she told him why he needed her on his team.

Rob hired her as a Project Engineer nearly on the spot.



A few months ago Dahla learned that Bilbrey Construction had been invited to bid a large renovation project in the very building that taught her so much, DECA High.

"I went to Rob and told him how passionate I am about DECA, and he guaranteed me we would put our best foot forward to win the work."

Bilbrey Construction did, in fact, win the renovation job at DECA High based on their bid, a bid hand-delivered by none other than Dahla.



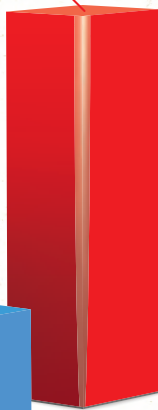


Shortly thereafter, Rob handed her the DECA High Renovation binder, and named her project manager on the job.

"It has been amazing being back and in the building," said Dahla. "When I started in 7th grade we barely had a cafeteria—there were a couple of tables in each classroom, and we had low-wall partitions, so you could literally look over the wall into the classroom next door. Now I'm back in the space helping to transform it into something beautiful and functional."

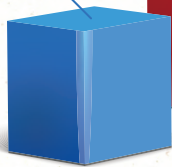
**54%**

DECA Alumni



**10%**

National Average



Percentage of students graduating from College within 6 years.

"To be able to give back to a place that has given so much to me is truly an honor."

—Dahla Bruce

## DECA High Renovation

We are excited to announce we have completed Phase 1 and started work on Phase 2 of our four Phase high school renovation. The primary goal of our campaign is to increase enrollment at the High School level, allowing us to serve students already in the DECA pipeline.

Phase 1 began in January of this year and was completed this Summer with the support of a Ohio Facilities Construction Commission Grant. Ruetschle Architects and Billbrey Construction have led renovation efforts. Keep an eye out in the coming month about how you can join in our campaign to transform DECA High!

