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Photo by the University of West Florida

UPHOLDING VALUES

The American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship is a professional development program designed for emerging leaders in education. ACE Fellow William Crawley explains how DePaul shaped him as a leader.

BY JACOB SABOLO (LAS '12)

When William Crawley was accepted into the ACE Fellowship program in 2010, he knew who he wanted as his mentor. “There were just a few [university] presidents that I wanted to work with—the number one being Father Holtschneider,” Crawley reflects. He had met the Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., two years prior at Harvard University, where Fr. Holtschneider was his instructor in the Graduate School of Education’s management development summer program. “I felt a sense of affinity

with his leadership style and wanted to learn from him,” Crawley says.

During his time at DePaul, Crawley, who currently serves as dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies at the University of West Florida, closely shadowed Fr. Holtschneider, which allowed him to interact with several divisions and senior staff members throughout the university. “Anything that the president’s involved in gives you exposure to other parts of the university and an opportunity to look at the leadership style of [your

mentor] and how they strategically integrate the mission of different parts of the university into a concerted whole,” Crawley explains. He also collaborated with then-provost Helmut Epp to establish DePaul’s College of Science and Health and directed the selection process for the founding dean.

Although he spent much of his time with senior leadership, Crawley enjoyed working with students. He attended meetings with Fr. Holtschneider and student organizations, sharing ideas and discussing campus initiatives. “It’s an environment where students actually infuse the expectations of the next generation. I felt like DePaul was very responsive to its student body,” he says. “I remember all of these students from all walks of life would gravitate toward DePaul’s mission, and they would find a place where their values were reinforced and supported.”

But, according to Crawley, DePaul would not be the institution it is without Fr. Holtschneider. “[He’s] dealing with a very, very complex organization [with] lots of layers of accountability and bureaucracy . . . and in his case, well beyond,” he says. “You don’t have too many presidents that report to a cardinal.” Despite the several responsibilities that Fr. Holtschneider juggled and issues he faced, Crawley says that the president never lost sight of the individual. “When [you] work with Father Holtschneider, it’s hard not to feel like he sees you. And that makes him a great leader, a leader people want to follow. He inspires a lot of trust, because he tells the truth even when it’s sometimes painful or not to his advantage.”

Crawley recalls that Fr. Holtschneider was constantly focused on students’ academic and experiential life during their time at DePaul. “He’s an authentic leader,” Crawley states. “He’s a very strategic and a very systematic thinker, and that’s what I hope to have internalized the most, that and his humanity—he really just loves DePaul; he loves the mission of DePaul.”