DePaul’s LAS is the college that empowers students to be actively engaged intellectuals and intellectually engaged activists who have the courage to embrace a mission, understand the complexity of 21st-century issues and lead in pursuit of a better tomorrow. LAS graduates dare to do what must be done.

Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco, Dean
The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (LAS) has a history of creating programs that meet practical needs, address critical issues and directly respond to student aspirations. Criminology, the college’s newest bachelor’s degree, took just a few months to develop under the innovative multidisciplinary structure implemented by the college over the past year. A distinctive degree in diplomacy, not offered elsewhere in the Midwest, is on a similar fast track and is expected to launch in fall 2018.

“Instead of working in silos, we needed a structure that allowed us to be agile and to collaborate across departments to create programs that are truly multidisciplinary,” Dean Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco told attendees at the LAS Advisory Council retreat in October 2017. A year before, during a visioning retreat, participants recommended restructuring the college to facilitate collaboration. The reorganized college now boasts “sandboxes” and “affinity clusters” for program development. “This strategy already has transformed a time-consuming and sometimes cumbersome process into one that is responsive and collaborative,” he says.

The sandbox approach also encourages faculty to discover shared interests and develop studio-style, project-based learning initiatives that enable students to gain experience while producing tangible results. In conjunction with community partners and the foundations that support them, LAS is advocating for the creation of “collaborative hubs” in which student teams will work on projects closely related to the content of their courses. These locations will offer meeting, office and work spaces and common resources, such as media-production support, geographical information system (GIS) expertise, and capacity-building consulting. Faculty are creating courses that fuse learning objectives with nonprofit needs.

“What is so exciting is that our students will graduate with a portfolio of all the different projects they have done here,” while simultaneously helping fulfill the university’s commitment to social justice and community engagement, says Vásquez de Velasco. “Visitors to our campus will be able to see students, faculty and community partners engaged in actual collaboration for the common good—a tangible manifestation of what a DePaul degree is all about.”

During its retreat, the Advisory Council learned about these and other initiatives. Enthusiastically, the council called for further enhanced communication and engagement channels to make sure that alumni know about the college’s success.

LAS is promoting its graduates as natural collaborators and leaders. Vásquez de Velasco describes them as T-shaped people—people who know something about everything and everything about something. “To succeed in the 21st century, our graduates must be more than contributors. They must be collaborators,” he says. “The strongest collaborators become leaders, the kind of leaders that can drive change and make the world a better place for everyone.”
Quick Starters

LAS alumni are natural leaders, and some find themselves in charge soon after graduation. How do they do it? Five alumni share their stories.

Seize opportunities

When the general counsel for the governor of Illinois recruits you, say yes.

Ryan Dunigan (Public Policy ’08) was an associate in the Chicago law office of Winston & Strawn LLP when he got a call from Jason Barclay, then general counsel, who met Dunigan previously to talk about working in government. Would Dunigan step in as deputy director of the Illinois Department of Human Rights while the director recovered from a sudden illness?

“I’m 30!” says Dunigan, spreading his hands wide in amazement. “I don’t know if I can pass up an opportunity to run a state agency at that age.” Leaders at Winston & Strawn agreed, and Dunigan, with no formal management training, found himself in charge of about 150 people and a $15 million budget.

“Being a lawyer doesn’t teach you how to manage people … but DePaul does a very good job of teaching the practical aspects of policy and problem-solving,” Dunigan says. DePaul also taught him about effective team building and goal setting, skills he used to bolster employees’ morale and focus attention on the most important tasks.

Once the director recovered, Dunigan returned to Winston & Strawn with valuable insights into how best to help underserved communities in Chicago. “I’ve always had a public service bent,” Dunigan says. With government experience under his belt, he says, “Now I’m thinking about new ways to be impactful.”

Reimagine yourself

Halfway through her undergraduate degree, Elizabeth Perera (Sociology ’15) realized she liked hard sciences. She took electives in geography and soil science and participated in the Juneau Ice Field Research Program, which she learned about through the Department of Geography. That gave her the credentials to be hired by Maryland-based Soil and Land Use Technology Inc. as a field inspector supervising drilling crews, a job most often held by engineers. “I definitely had more of an eclectic background,” says Perera, who now is earning a master of science degree in geography at York University. “I went from social science to physical science, but especially in terms of research and statistics, all of that social science knowledge comes in handy.”

Published by Via Sapientiae, 2016
It wasn’t coursework, but rather her approach to problems that landed Kasia Szymanska (History ’13) a job as operations manager for All Star Code in New York City. She manages everything from logistics to human resources for the nonprofit, which works to diversify the technology industry by teaching high school teens of color how to code.

“People here liked my sense of curiosity and that I was comfortable having to absorb a lot of information and work with it,” she says. “The operations role really appealed to me because it requires a lot of problem-solving. The best thing about it is that I get to have my hands in everything that goes on. I’m not boxed in.”

Mine your internships

“I think I completed the junior year experiential learning credit three or four times,” chuckles Amy Schwartz (Art, Media and Design ’12), who recently transitioned from design director for Cards Against Humanity to creative director at Bright Bright Great, a web design and branding firm.

“DePaul does a really great job of not just being located in a great place by chance, but actively engaging that community in different ways,” she continues, listing all the opportunities she had to gain hands-on experience. “It’s great to have real clients as a student.”

Schwartz reels off a series of stepping-stone jobs: an internship with Bright Bright Great, a job with a studio in Detroit, Mich., while she earned a master’s degree, and a design role with an innovation consulting firm back in Chicago. Then she reconnected with two friends from her days as an intern who just happened to be founders of Cards Against Humanity. She was hired to serve as the company’s design director “for all the stunts and pranks and new products that came out.”

She also married Jason Schwartz, the founder of Bright Bright Great, and became his informal consultant. Last year, the growing firm needed to hire a creative director, and the couple brainstormed the qualifications of the ideal candidate. “I looked at the list and said, ‘Dang, that’s me’,” Amy says.

Adam Lomansey (Master of Public Administration ’14) describes a different set of dominos that led him to become the senior project manager for the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

As part of DePaul’s graduate program, Lomansey interned with the Chicago Plan Commission, getting experience with major urban developments such as the Wrigley Field redesign. That led to a mayoral fellowship, where he worked on economic and manufacturing policy. After graduation, his experience quickly landed him a job with the Supply Chain Innovation Network of Chicago, a branch of World Business Chicago. From there it was a natural step to become a transportation expert for the nation’s largest city.

“I’ve really found my niche,” Lomansey says. “I’m working with the airlines, the railroads, logistics professionals, truckers and the Port Authority.” He credits staying in touch with professors and classmates at DePaul with helping him connect the dots.

“I wouldn’t have gotten this job in New York had I not done the things I’ve done in Chicago. That’s a fact.”
ACTIVELY ENGAGED INTELLECTUALS

LAS faculty and students have a long history of active intellectual inquiry into the social, ethical and political issues facing their communities and the world. The college establishes new programs of study in a variety of disciplines to address contemporary problems, encourages students to research issues related to DePaul’s Catholic, urban and Vincentian mission, and connects the classroom to the larger community through experiential learning.

CONNECTING THEORY TO PRACTICE

Students taking the honors course “Political Action and Social Justice” not only read about global fair trade practices, but also inventory local grocery stores’ fair trade offerings, assist with fair trade coffee sales at farmers’ markets and collaborate with the Chicago City Council to promote fair trade initiatives and fairs, says Rose Spaulding, a professor in the Department of Political Science. Such experiences help students “think about how to make theoretically informed and reasoned choices … and how to build creatively on what they’ve learned to design new solutions to persistent problems.”

LITERATURE AS A LENS ON JUSTICE

Rebecca Cameron, an associate professor and associate chair of the Department of English, structures her Introduction to Literature course around the theme of justice. “For centuries, great literature has concerned itself with the subject of justice,” she explains. “Sophocles’ play ‘Antigone’ centers on a woman who defies the king’s royal decree in order to give her brother an honorable burial, while Richard Wright’s novel ‘Native Son’ focuses on a murder that highlights racial injustice.” Activities such as mock trials and debates “allow students not only to sympathize with the problem but also to envision a possible solution,” Cameron says.

THE ARTS IN ACTION

Jessica Larva helps students “amplify their own voices or the voices of others about political, social, cultural, ecological and spiritual issues” through her course Screen Printing: The Voice of the Activist. Students fulfill their “desire to share their messages visually in their own communities,” explains Larva, an associate professor in the Department of Art, Media and Design. In addition to learning how to make screen prints, students study the history of screen printing and visit the John T. Richardson Library’s Special Collections and Archives to examine original protest art.

UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLITICAL CHANGE

Molly Andolina, an associate professor in the Department of Political Science, guides students through the history and practice of activism in the course Youth Political Engagement. Students research a current movement and evaluate its efficacy using course readings as a benchmark. For Andolina, an additional goal “is to have young people experience the political world,” so scholarly engagement is informed by quarter-long stints working with youth-oriented political groups around Chicago. “At the end of the course, most students see that politics matters, and they gain a lot of faith in the power and promise of youth.”

Students compare the streets and structures near the Lincoln Park Campus with those present in the 1960s.
INTELLECTUALLY ENGAGED ACTIVISTS

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH IN COLLECTIONS RELATED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Special Collections and Archives in the John T. Richardson Library offers students a hands-on laboratory for exploring social justice in the Catholic tradition.

Susana Martínez, an associate professor in the Department of Modern Languages, says, “The history we’ve discussed in class—like the civil war in El Salvador or the Young Lords Organization in Lincoln Park in the late 1960s—suddenly comes alive for them.” The materials forge a link between past movements and students’ current social justice interests, concurs Morgen MacIntosh Hodgetts, archivist and instructional librarian.

For instance, after students in Martínez’s course Chicago Latino/a Writers examined maps and materials from Chicago in the late 1960s, they drew parallels between the anti-gentrification efforts led by the Young Lords in Lincoln Park 50 years ago and protests going on today, explained MacIntosh-Hodgetts. “They were able to say, ‘This is happening in Pilsen, this is happening in Humboldt Park, this is happening now.’” Archives Processing Assistant Derek Potts led students on a guided walking tour of the neighborhood, tracing the differences between the historical landscape and their own.

“There are so many different things that we can take from the Young Lords today,” says Melissa Calvo, a freshman in Martínez’s class. “Pilsen, for example, is slowly being renewed and forcing some people out. … Many of the low-income families living in the neighborhood can no longer keep up nor afford the taxes. Just like the Young Lords did, people need to stand up for themselves and fight for their homes and communities.”

Students connect past and present social justice movements using materials from DePaul’s Special Collections and Archives.

FALL SYMPOSIUM FOCUSES ON CHICAGO ACTIVISM IN 1968

Fifty years after activists and protesters put Chicago in the national spotlight, LAS’s fall symposium on Sept. 21–23 will explore an unprecedented interracial coalition of poor and working-class people. “50 Years of Young Lords” examines the transformation of the Young Lords, a street gang in Chicago’s Lincoln Park neighborhood, into an influential civil rights organization that challenged gentrification and the poor living, health and working conditions of Puerto Ricans and other Latino communities in the city. The Young Lords Organization, along with the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, the Young Patriots Organization and the Native American Housing Committee, formed the original Rainbow Coalition to agitate for change.

The symposium at the Lincoln Park Campus, which coincides with the conversion of the Young Lords into a political organization, caps a yearlong commemoration of the events of 1968. Sponsors include the Center for Latino Research, Studio Ⅱ, the Center for Black Diaspora and the library’s Special Collections and Archives.

For more information, contact the Center for Latino Research at clr@depaul.edu.
LAS INTERNS EXCEED EXPECTATIONS AT MUSEUMS

Student Kirin O’Brien was hired by the Art Institute of Chicago after her museum studies internship.

Hannah Radeke is using her experiences as an intern at the Chicago History Museum to guide her graduate studies.
When Cheryl Bachand first approached her contacts at Chicago museums about hosting interns for the summer, several of them were wary about working with undergraduate students. “They were a little concerned that undergraduate students wouldn’t have the kinds of skills to contribute real value,” says Bachand, a professional lecturer in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture.

By the end of the summer, the DePaul students had dispelled all doubt. One was hired as a part-time researcher, and the nine others were invited to continue volunteering in the same or a related position at the institutions where they worked.

“The interns’ supervisors said they were just overwhelmed by the level of maturity, commitment and skills that the students were bringing from our undergraduate liberal arts environment,” says Bachand.

The summer museum internship is a new addition to LAS’s minor in Museum Studies, itself founded just two years ago. The interdisciplinary program features faculty from the Department of Anthropology, the Department of the History of Art and Architecture and the public history concentration within the Department of History. Bachand, with an extensive background as a curator and museum consultant in Chicago, drew on her network to identify opportunities that would give students a real taste of museum careers.

“We museum professionals talk about how some of our most valuable experience came from internships,” Bachand says. DePaul’s course “gives undergraduates an opportunity to explore for themselves whether they’re interested in working in a museum.”

The internship was “an incredible opportunity to get my foot in the door into institutions where most of their interns are graduate students,” says Kirin O’Brien, now a junior majoring in the History of Art and Architecture. O’Brien worked with the Japanese curator at the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC), verifying facts and helping prepare labels for an exhibit on Ukiyo-e prints.

“I really love Japanese and Chinese art, so it was in line with my own artistic inspirations and research interests,” she says. “I found a lot of satisfaction doing this work. It took a lot of time, and you had to be very focused and detail-oriented, but it was very rewarding once you knew that you were contributing to the institution as a whole.”

Museums always have more work than the paid staff can accomplish, so internships are mutually beneficial, according to John Russick, vice president for interpretation and education at the Chicago History Museum (CHM), which hosted two DePaul Museum Studies interns.

“Interns are a critical part of finding the right mix of people to advance all the collections work, all the interpretive work, all the day-to-day functions of the museum,” Russick says. “The vast majority of material that comes into the museum is disorganized to some degree, even if it’s organized for the person who owned it. … Our goal is to make sense of it for ourselves so that we are able to share it with researchers.”

Student Hannah Radeke spent part of her summer prowling the basement shelves at CHM, reorganizing the records for the now-closed South Shore Country Club and updating the finding aid, a guide that tells researchers about a collection and where to locate specific items.

“The internship made me realize how much I like organizing things and that I like having a creative element in my work,” says Radeke, now a senior double-majoring in the History of Art and Architecture and Creative Writing. Her experiences, plus what she learned in weekly class discussions with other DePaul interns, are helping her decide what type of graduate degree to pursue.

There are a lot of options, so such insights help recent graduates choose wisely. Bachand says, “There’s a difference between the kind of graduate education you should get if your desire is to be a curator versus a collections manager or a registrar or a conservation specialist.”

The interns also are now part of the museum network, with mentors and connections to entry-level positions. O’Brien already works two days a week as a paid research assistant for Susan Lerner, a collections manager at the AIC. “She is doing very thorough research into a potential gift to the institute, making lists of objects and their provenance, doing paperwork and serving as a liaison,” Lerner says, freeing the curators for other tasks while still enabling them to make informed decisions.

Bachand expects the museum internship program to grow. “All of the institutions that participated last year want to continue, and some of them are looking to expand their participation to more departments or to host more interns. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

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“I found a lot of satisfaction doing this work. … It was very rewarding once you knew that you were contributing to the institution as a whole.”
In brief | INSIGHTS

IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW NAMED

Jalylah Burrell was named DePaul's Ida B. Wells-Barnett Postdoctoral Fellow for the 2017-18 academic year. As a faculty member in the African and Black Diaspora Studies program, she will lecture and teach throughout the year while continuing her current research on female humorists, especially black women, in comedy, satire, music and other creative genres. Burrell earned her doctoral degree in American Studies and African-American Studies at Yale University.

PHILOSOPHY ALUMNA, PHD CANDIDATE WIN NATIONAL AWARDS

Ashley Bohrer (Philosophy MA '12, PhD '16) received the 2017 Junior Scholar Award from the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy for her paper “Colorblind Racism in Early Modernity: Race, Colonization and Capitalism in the Work of Francisco de Vitoria.” She is a visiting assistant professor at Hamilton College in New York. Doctoral candidate Güçsal Pusar received the 2017 Conference Paper Award for “Heidegger on Kant, Finitude, and the Correlativity of Thinking and Being.”

FOUR GEOGRAPHY MAJORS WIN REGIONAL AWARDS

Senior Brian Li won first place in the undergraduate poster competition at the Midwest regional competition held by the American Association of Geographers in October 2017. Last August, he won third place in the Illinois GIS Association’s annual “Most Interesting Map” competition. Erin Slater won second place in the poster competition. Robin Gallagher and Alex Temes won second and third place, respectively, in the undergraduate oral presentation competition.

CHINESE STUDIES CELEBRATES FIRST DECADE

Morgan Gallup Zhu (Chinese Studies ’07) received the Outstanding Alumni Award at the 10-year anniversary celebration of the founding of the Chinese Studies program, housed in the Department of Modern Languages. Zhu is director of Asia operations at Moravia IT, which provides translation services for information technology. She accepted the award via video from her home in Nanjing, China. Franklin Perkins, a former professor in the Department of Philosophy, returned from his new post at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa to give the keynote speech. Mark Johnston (above center), a former chair of and currently a professor in the Department of Modern Languages, was recognized for helping establish the program, which is growing steadily. Recent accomplishments include expanded study abroad opportunities and extracurricular activities.
THREE RECENT GRADUATES INVITED TO EXCLUSIVE ARTS RESIDENCY

Charlotte Mukahirn, Jireh Drake and Maya Soto (above, from left), who all earned degrees in Art, Media and Design in 2017, were among just 24 students to jump-start their careers through LAUNCH, an invitation-only residency hosted by the Chicago Artists Coalition. The workshop enabled the graduates to network with members of the arts community, learn about topics such as financial planning and artists’ rights, and create a plan for career development. They also have a free one-year membership to the coalition.

TWO HONORED WITH SUCHAR AWARD

Matthew Girson, a professor in the Department of Art, Media and Design, and H. Peter Steeves, a professor in the Department of Philosophy and the director of the DePaul Humanities Center, received the Charles Suchar Faculty and Staff Innovation Award for 2017. They were honored for their honors capstone seminar, Phenomenology and Painting, which explores how paintings gain meaning when seen through the lens of history, philosophy and critical theory. The Suchar Award supports faculty and staff projects that foster innovation and development.

PHILOSOPHY PROFESSOR EARNES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Daryl Koehn, a professor in the Department of Philosophy, received the Master Ethics Teacher Award at the 2017 Teaching Ethics at Universities Conference. The award recognizes faculty who have made outstanding contributions to the teaching of business ethics.

2017 DAMMRICH AWARD WINNER

Roshanna Sylvester, an associate professor in the Department of History and director of Studio X, is the recipient of the Thomas and Carol Dammrich Faculty Innovation Award for her course on creating digital history projects. The scholar behind the digital history project “A Sky Full of Stars: Girls and Space-Age Cultures in Cold War America and the Soviet Union,” Sylvester teaches students how to create online history projects for both researchers and the public using the latest digital tools. The award was established in 2013 by Thomas J. Dammrich (BUS ’74, MBA ’78, MSA ’85) and Carol M. Dammrich (CSH ’76) to support LAS faculty who demonstrate innovation in the classroom.

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GENDER AND GENTRIFICATION
Winifred Curran, an associate professor in the Department of Geography, investigates how gentrification influences traditional gender roles in relation to housing, employment and policy. Both women and members of marginalized groups are affected by the limited housing choices common in gentrifying neighborhoods. (Routledge)

CATECHISMS AND WOMEN’S WRITING IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND
Paula McQuade, an associate professor in the Department of English, details how women of the early modern period (circa 1500–1800) used catechisms to demonstrate their literary skills and discuss religious and political matters. Catechisms played a critical role in developing women’s literary skills during the 17th century. (Cambridge University Press)

NEW WORLD POPE: POPE FRANCIS AND THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH
The experiences that the Rev. Jorge Mario Bergoglio had as a priest in Argentina strongly affect his vision as Pope Francis. Ten international experts explore these ideas and influences in this book edited by Michael Budde, professor in the Department of Catholic Studies. (Wipf and Stock Publishers)

JAMES R. HOPKINS: FACES OF THE HEARTLAND
One of Ohio’s most noted artists, James R. Hopkins is best known for his paintings of the hill people of rural Kentucky. Mark Pohlad, an associate professor in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture, explores the contributions of this American master. (Ohio State University Press/Trillium)

BEAUTIFUL, BRIGHT, AND BLINDING: PHENOMENOLOGICAL AESTHETICS AND THE LIFE OF ART
Beginning with the act of seeing, author H. Peter Steeves considers how the human mind processes sensory input and how sensory disruptions affect how people perceive art and aesthetic objects. Steeves, director of the DePaul Humanities Center and a professor in the Department of Philosophy, uses examples ranging from paintings to “The Simpsons” to posit that art is lived and living is an art. (SUNY Press)

PLANET OF MICROBES: THE PERILS AND POTENTIAL OF EARTH’S ESSENTIAL LIFE FORMS
Microbes are more than the source of disease. They may provide the key to reversing climate change, clean up pollution and help the body repel invaders. Ted Anton, a professor in the Department of English, explains the science while he reveals the lives and determination of the scientists who seek to harness microbes in environments ranging from breweries to Mars. (University of Chicago Press)
Dean Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco enjoys stumping deans at other universities by showing them copies of Creating Knowledge. No, he tells them, it’s not a journal of faculty research. No, it’s not a compilation of graduate scholarship. It’s a rigorously judged, beautifully printed journal of undergraduate scholarship.

“Thatir surprise is priceless,” he says in the foreword to the 2017 volume. “Creating Knowledge makes tangible our extraordinary commitment, not only to the dissemination of knowledge, but also its creation across all ranks in our academic community.”

That was the goal 10 years ago when the college established the journal, says Warren Schultz, associate dean and a professor in the Department of History, who has edited the journal for the past five years. “It’s an opportunity to celebrate our students’ achievements, to recognize that undergraduates can contribute to the expansion of knowledge, and to showcase the breadth of knowledge in our college,” he says.

Each program or department in LAS may nominate a single entry culled from the hundreds of assignments completed by their students each year. Submissions include research, translations, papers based on study abroad experiences, paintings, sculpture and photography. Nominees work with faculty mentors to revise their work to meet submission requirements. The process is modeled on the one followed by faculty members when writing articles for professional journals.

“It really drives home that fundamental truth that writing means rewriting,” Schultz says. “It gives students the chance to reshape and refine their work and respond to the suggestions of faculty.”

Although submissions often come from upper-level courses, any assignment is eligible. Just ask Sydney Goggins, who wrote her contribution, “Unpaid Labor Across Two Cultures,” for her freshman focal point seminar, taught by Nila Ginger Hofman, a professor in the Department of Anthropology.

“My paper was good enough for an A in class. For the journal, we did a whole quarter’s work on it. I definitely write papers differently now,” says Goggins, today a junior majoring in Sociology. The process means she feels close enough to Hofman to ask her for a letter of recommendation when Goggins applies to law school.

“Law school is very focused on research and writing ability. I’m hoping that being published will demonstrate my ability to write well,” Goggins says.

To see this year’s journal, visit bit.ly/CreatingKnowledge2017.
When Rami Nashashibi (International Studies ’97) transferred to DePaul as a sophomore, he was simply looking for a more inclusive atmosphere to earn his degree. What he found were academic, spiritual and social mentors who stoked his nascent passion for social justice. His experiences inspired him to establish an activist organization and put him on the path to receiving a 2017 MacArthur Fellowship, also known as a “genius grant.”

Nashashibi is executive director of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN), headquartered in Chicago’s Marquette Park neighborhood. The nonprofit organization unites people across socioeconomic, racial and religious divides to address structural and systemic injustices that prevent people in marginalized communities from having a dignified quality of life.

Coming to DePaul was “a very important, life-transforming decision for me,” Nashashibi says. “I’ll be forever grateful for my English professors, who put me in touch with the larger human spirit and the concept of the other, and the professors in International Studies, who fed my social, political and cultural instincts around questions of social justice.”

At DePaul, he explored his budding spirituality and joined United Muslims Moving Ahead, a student group that partnered with black and Latino student groups in pressing the university for changes to academic offerings and student services.

“Young people,” Nashashibi says, “I’m hoping and praying that this gives me space to refresh, to renew my creative energy and to think about what the next level is.”

Those early successes empowered him, while still a student, to co-found IMAN to unite disconnected communities living throughout Chicago. The organization quickly evolved to help Muslim, Latino, African-American, Arab and working-class white families living on the South Side look past their differences and focus on their common needs.

Under his leadership, IMAN established a broad array of social services, including a no-cost primary health care clinic. Nashashibi and organizers at IMAN persuaded the owners of corner stores to stock their shelves with fresh produce and established a farmers market. They created a green-construction job-training program for residents released from prison. The organization’s annual multicultural arts and social justice festival, “Takin’ It to the Streets,” draws thousands.

Nashashibi says the MacArthur award validates the legacy of American Muslim transformation and activism in urban neighborhoods. Additionally, it recognizes IMAN’s holistic model, painstakingly built over two decades to address some of society’s most pressing challenges.

The $625,000 grant incentivizes creative risk-taking for the chosen “geniuses” at work. Nashashibi will use his prize for a range of projects, but first he plans to make hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims seek to do at least once in their lives. “I’m hoping and praying that this gives me space to refresh, to renew my creative energy and to think about what the next level is.”
Preventing violence may be the focus, but Take Back the Halls’ greatest impact may be empowering high school and college students to change their communities.

“The students begin to see themselves as leaders. They begin to ask, ‘How do I translate my awareness into my own leadership in the world?’” says Beth Catlett, program co-founder and an associate professor and chair of the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies.

Take Back the Halls: Ending Violence, Creating Change (TBTH) is a relationship-violence prevention program that teaches teens how to be community activists in their high schools and neighborhoods. Founded in 2004, TBTH has grown to include programs at three or four high schools each year, research and activist projects and a two-credit course for DePaul students.

“Originally we saw it as a violence-prevention program. We’ve come to see it as a youth leadership program that pairs college and high school students as they learn to be activists and advocates, to leave their footprint on the world,” Catlett says.

Each fall, Catlett recruits and trains more than a dozen DePaul undergraduate interns to work with the high school students. One of those interns was Nico Coronado (Women’s and Gender Studies, Political Science ’15). A graduate of Curie High School on Chicago’s South Side, Coronado says the students at Chicago’s Kennedy High School connected with him because he shared their experience: “I am Latino. I graduated from the Chicago Public Schools. I had a similar socioeconomic background.”

DePaul interns facilitate discussions at the voluntary after-school programs, which meet weekly. In the fall, participants share their own experiences with violence, explore how to build healthy relationships and learn how to take action as an “up-stander.” In the spring, students apply what they’ve learned to create and implement an advocacy program. Past projects include performances, presentations to high school teachers and a community festival that included workshops on relationship violence.

In addition to gaining skills in critical thinking, teamwork and making presentations, students at both the high school and college levels become advocates for violence prevention. Coronado, who plans to practice labor law after he graduates from law school this spring, says he continues to press for change in communities where he has influence.

“It’s more effective when a person from your own community calls out unhealthy masculine behavior,” he says. “Things aren’t going to change unless men start changing.”

Take Back the Halls is supported by grants and donations, including a generous contribution from Irene Beck (LAS ‘97) and Bill Beck. Additional funding is needed to expand the program to more high schools.
Vincentian Service Day is an annual event celebrating the spirit of service upon which DePaul was founded. About 1,600 members of the university community join together on this special day to volunteer at sites around the country.

Find out about service sites near you and register at alumni.depaul.edu/events, or call (800) 437-1898.