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From the President: The Elements of Academic Success

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The Elements of Academic Success

Peter Stang (CSH '63, DHL '15) first discovered his passion for chemistry in high school. He built his own home laboratory and acquired chemicals for experiments from the corner drug store. It was the 1950s in Hungary, and basic acids and salts were easy for a teenager to acquire.

But in 1956, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary, and his family fled. They arrived in the United States and established a new home in Chicago. At the age of 15, having survived political turmoil, he was no longer an ordinary teenager. Science became his solace, and he was determined to prove he had a promising future.

When it came time for college, he chose to study chemistry at DePaul. He graduated in 1963 and completed his doctorate in chemistry at the University of California-Berkeley in 1966. Now, more than five decades later, Professor Stang is one of the world's leading scientists, a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Today, Professor Stang is a distinguished professor of chemistry at the University of Utah, where he drives advances in organic chemistry.

A pioneer in the field of supramolecular chemistry, he has led a team of molecular architects to rearrange chemical building blocks and develop advanced products for the fields of medicine, information storage and energy. Someday his research will help deliver chemotherapy more effectively and efficiently.

In 2011, President Barack Obama awarded Professor Stang the National Medal of Science, the highest honor bestowed by the president upon a scientist, engineer or inventor. The following year, the American Chemical Society presented him with the Priestley Medal for lifetime achievement.

Professor Stang credits his DePaul chemistry professor and mentor, Robert C. Miller, with setting him on the path to success. Professor Miller gave him the opportunity to do two years of undergraduate research in phosphorus chemistry. He inspired many first-generation college graduates, including Professor Stang, to attend the best graduate schools. He even convinced Professor Stang's parents to allow him to go to Berkeley.

A few years ago, Professor Stang returned to DePaul to receive an honorary degree. (He

also has honorary degrees from Texas A&M, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology and Moscow State University.) When he spoke at DePaul's commencement ceremony, he described how the university taught him the value of honesty, integrity and compassion. He encouraged DePaul's graduating students to uphold the Vincentian mission: seek honesty, not deceit; seek truth, not recognition; seek virtue, not evil.

Professor Stang is one of many DePaul alumni who make us proud.

This edition of DePaul Magazine highlights the university's recent contributions to science. Every day, DePaul faculty inspire students to acquire hands-on learning experience through research and internships. They do what Professor Miller did for student Stang many years ago.

We can't wait to see what the next generation of DePaul alumni will discover.

Gabriel Esteban

*A. Gabriel Esteban, PhD
President*