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From the President: It Takes a Community

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It Takes a Community

A new academic year is always an exciting time at a university, and so far, DePaul's fall quarter has been off to an especially exciting start.

On Sept. 10, my morning started with DePaul's very first student convocation. The Blue Demon Welcome served as the first formal gathering for our new freshman and transfer students, marking the beginning of their academic careers at DePaul. The ceremony, which is an outcome of our strategic plan, is intended to engage new students and deepen their sense of belonging at DePaul. I look forward to continuing this new tradition in future years.

Later that same day, I had the honor of announcing the establishment of DePaul's Grace

School of Applied Diplomacy. Housed within the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (LAS), the new school is the result of a \$20 million gift from anonymous donors. It's the second-largest gift in our university's history, and I am deeply grateful to the benefactors.

As highlighted in this issue of DePaul Magazine, The Grace School will be the first of its kind in the world. The school will implement a transprofessional model that prepares students from all backgrounds and many disciplines to work in a wide range of professions where mediation, conflict resolution or bridge-building is critical. These professions may include the foreign service, public health, religious and nongovernmental organizations, the arts and business.

The Grace School started with a seed of an idea. It grew as a result of innovative thinking and a vision for a school that could respond to the pressing needs of our world.

During my first summer at DePaul, I had a conversation with then Provost Marten den-Boer about possible new programs. Diplomacy was one of them, and he started exploring the possibility with LAS Dean Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco. These discussions continued, and then the dean and provost's office started to think bigger.

First, they discovered that no other university in Chicago or the Midwest has a program in diplomacy. They spoke with ambassadors, activists and religious leaders who confirmed there is a real need for a school that would offer a multidisciplinary approach to training the next generation of diplomatic leaders. Chicago, which is host to 54 consulates, is the perfect location to establish it.

What started as an inkling of an idea quickly grew into a tangible vision. Faculty and department chairs started discussing courses and degree programs. David Wellman, associate professor in religious studies and the inaugural director of The Grace School, introduced the concept of transprofessional diplomacy—the idea of applying diplomacy to every profession.

Before we knew it, we had faculty from 21 units collaborating to create The Grace School. That's a new university record and indicative of the multidisciplinary programs the school is offering.

From inaugurating student traditions to creating a new school, these are how ideas evolve at DePaul University. On that one single day in September, I witnessed how the DePaul community turns ideas into actions. Driven by our Catholic, Vincentian and urban mission to serve the public good, DePaul has many days like this. Experts and innovators—the people who make DePaul distinct—are at the center of it all. It's a blessing to be part of the DePaul community.

Gabriel Esteban

A. Gabriel Esteban, PhD

