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From the President: Future Forward

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This issue of DePaul Magazine focuses on the future. It examines what’s next for four sectors deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: transportation, hospitality, entertainment and education. In the spirit of looking ahead, I want to share one new way we are preparing DePaul students to be tomorrow’s trailblazers: Future Forward—a new, innovative career exploration program.

Future Forward is unlike anything offered by DePaul’s peer institutions. A co-curricular learning experience, the program brings first-year students with similar passions and career interests together. Students complete self-guided career exploration modules that include such topics as resumes, network building, professionalism and internships. At the end of the yearlong program, students walk away with a polished resume and job search strategies, as well as an understanding of transferable skills, professionalism and networking.

Community building is a core component of Future Forward. One of the program’s unique aspects is FutureFeed, a social-media-based learning platform that engages students in peer-to-peer conversation and discovery. Students post their wins and challenges on the platform, and receive support from the larger Future Forward community. Last academic year, students posted approximately 4,000 times, resulting in nearly 23,000 responses from peers.

We’ve already seen a remarkable shift in how our students approach career planning. The inaugural Future Forward cohort in 2020–21 had 350 students participate, and 88% used the Career Center. The previous year, before the program’s inception, only 16% of first-year students used the Career Center. In addition, 87% of Future Forward students plan to complete an internship.

Future Forward prepares students for life beyond DePaul. Now, in its second year, more than 450 first-year students are participating. I expect we will continue to see positive outcomes.

At DePaul, student success means more than crossing the stage at commencement; it means ensuring our students have the tools and skills needed to excel professionally and personally. That is just one way we prepare DePaul alumni to blaze new trails and make a difference in the world.

A. Gabriel Esteban, PhD
President