6-1-2015

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Alumni University Returns to Inspire and Re-energize Graduates

Unlike most weekends, classrooms in the DePaul and Lewis centers on the Loop Campus filled rapidly on Saturday, April 18. Excited chatter punctuated the air as people took their seats and introduced themselves to those sitting nearby. This familiar scene of students gathering for class had one interesting twist: None of the students were enrolled at DePaul—at least, not anymore. Instead, they were graduates who had returned to campus for Alumni University.

The third annual Alumni University brought together more than 160 graduates and nine professors for a full day of learning and exploration. Hosted by the Office of Alumni Relations, the event has quickly become a beloved tradition. “I like being inspired and re-energized by learning about topics that I don’t usually have exposure to,” one participant said. “It feels good to be among other people who have a joy for learning.”

Alumni University features two sessions in the morning, followed by lunch and a final session in the afternoon; each session has three classes from which to choose. Attendees chose from a slate of diverse options, including hip-hop in the theatre, managing the humanitarian supply chain, and the connection between storytelling and theoretical knowledge.

Roxanne Owens (EDU ’84), associate professor of elementary reading and chair of the Department of Teacher Education, led a fascinating discussion on Dr. Seuss during the first round of sessions. The prolific author is widely known for writing the children’s classics “The Cat in the Hat,” “How the Grinch Stole Christmas!” and “The Lorax,” among other books, but as Owens explained, “Not as many people are aware of his film endeavors, his advertising background or his political cartoons.” Owens used her time to enlighten participants on these subjects and delved into Seuss’ impact on literacy instruction in schools.

In another classroom, the Rev. Guillermo Campuzano, C.M., adjunct professor in the School of Public Service, guided alumni through a reflection on today’s crisis in meeting humanitarian goals. Using St. Vincent de Paul as inspiration, he helped attendees consider new ways to humanize their relationships to family, colleagues and the wider community.

Michael Miller, associate professor of economics and associate dean for academic quality, considered a different global issue that is equally pressing. With recent upticks in the economy providing hope to many, Miller asked a critical series of questions: “Are we in for secular stagnation, more of the same average growth or a bright future of robust economic expansion?”

Alumni who attended the session “Waiting to Inhale: The Bizarre History and Ethics of Medical Marijuana” learned how politics, racial discrimination and subterfuge all played a role in criminalizing marijuana use, possession and distribution. Craig Klugman, professor and chair of the Department of Health Sciences, considered how recent legalization of marijuana for medical and recreational use by several states has again stirred discussion about uses and abuses of the plant.
College of Education Celebrates 40th Anniversary of IDEA

On Feb. 17, Chicago-area teachers joined the College of Education in celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The discussion was led by special-education experts Beverley Johns, president of the Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois and chair of the Illinois Special Education Coalition; Federico Waitoller, assistant professor of special education at the University of Illinois at Chicago; and Kristine Mayle (LAS ’00, MED ’06), Chicago Teachers Union liaison to special education committees and chair of the Illinois Federation of Teachers Special Education Committee. Topics included challenges educators encounter when working with special-needs students, equity issues for children with learning disabilities in minority communities and the future of special education and IDEA.

“Many people say there is no need for laws and regulations such as this because schools will provide the services,” Johns said in her opening remarks. “I don’t ever want to take that chance. There have to be laws and regulations that protect children. We need to work together to make sure IDEA continues for another 40 years. We must know the laws, we must know regulations. We must be advocates so that children who have the need always have the right to go to school, always have the right to an individualized education program and always have the right to individualized instruction.”

After the discussion, Johns, Waitoller, Mayle and College of Education faculty answered questions from the audience about best practices, personal experiences in special education and trends in the field.

Law School’s 2015 Enlund Lecture Focuses on Violence, Race and Law

“Why don’t black men commit more violent crimes?” With this stereotype-defying comment, Paul Butler, professor at Georgetown Law and the 2014–15 Enlund Scholar-in-Residence at the DePaul College of Law, opened the 2015 Enlund Lecture, “Ferguson 2.0: Violence, Race and Law.” Butler’s assertion accomplished the aim of the scholar-in-residence program, funded by a gift from the late E. Stanley Enlund (JD ’42), to offer the DePaul community differing perspectives on law, lawyers and social justice.

Butler stated that the usual predictors of crime in the black community—poverty, unemployment, wealth inequality, substandard education and housing, and family dissolution—are actually better predictors of crime among white men. He said that when surrounded by these same circumstances, white men will actually commit more violent crimes than black men.

Two strands of protest in the black community seem to be at cross purposes, Butler said. Black Lives Matter is concerned with underenforcement of the law in cases of police shootings, and New Jim Crow is taking on overenforcement that has made the U.S. prison population of 2.3 million the largest in the world. Butler said that Stand Your Ground laws actually help black men stay out of prison by providing them with an effective defense.

Another surprising finding Butler reported is that black-male-focused intervention programs can be bad for black men. He said that such achievement programs risk reinforcing stereotypes that African-American males are dangerous. He showed a video clip of President Barack Obama launching the My Brother’s Keeper program and saying that boys do better when they have a father who is present and involved. Butler said that President Obama’s remarks reflect his belief in the politics of respectability that seeks equality by demonstrating marginalized groups hold mainstream values and are capable of developing and policing their own communities to conform. The irony of the occasion was, he said, that the father of 17-year-old shooting victim Trayvon Martin was sitting in the front row.
Once a Blue Demon, always a Blue Demon. The tagline from DePaul’s Blue Demon Week, which ran Feb. 23 through March 1, showcases how this new tradition brings together students, faculty, staff and alumni to celebrate what it means to be part of the DePaul family.

“While some other schools may have homecoming traditions rallying around a football game, DePaul is different. We have a dedication to service, a dedication to Chicago as our classroom and a love for our community. Our traditions revolve around those commitments, and so does Blue Demon Week,” Student Government Association President Matthew C. von Nida (LAS ’15) explained.

For students, the week offered a chance to enjoy events hosted by organizations from across the university. Among the choices were a trivia contest, bumper car rides and the Blue Demon Dance at the Hard Rock Hotel. Faculty and staff who are also alumni were recognized through special Blue Demon Week lunches on the Loop and Lincoln Park campuses, as well as raffles and giveaways.

Blue Demons everywhere joined forces online on Feb. 26 for the one-day Blue Demon Challenge. In 24 hours, more than 350 members of the DePaul community made a gift. Because that number exceeded the 300-donor goal, one generous alumnus agreed to donate $10,000, noting, “I give back to DePaul because I want to make a difference in the lives of current students.”

On Feb. 28—Blue Demon Day—local DePaul fans traveled to Allstate Arena to support the men’s basketball team against Butler. Fifteen regional game watches allowed alumni across the country to cheer on the men’s team and socialize. The next day, a crowd gathered on campus to watch the women’s basketball team beat Marquette 99–82, wrapping up the spirited week.

For three decades, DePaul students have enjoyed gathering for a spring celebration that combines music and community. While it began as a blues-focused concert in the late 1980s, the event—now known as FEST—has gone through different iterations. Student groups were once involved through an activities fair, and in 1992, there was an arts and crafts section. Other years included a midday component, called FESTival, and even a beer garden.

As the event became more established and more successful, student planners on the DePaul Activities Board (DAB) saw how students began to look forward to the big day. In a May 2000 article in the DePaulia student newspaper, then-director of DAB David Harpest (MUS ’00) explained, “I think it’s become almost a traditional thing at DePaul where students talk about it right off the bat at the very beginning of the year.”

Today’s FEST is a result of extensive planning and coordination, from surveying students about potential artists to identifying the lineup, finding local opening acts and DJs, and running a student Battle of the Bands. The evening of genre-spanning music includes a main concert on the quad and Afterhours, a late-night DJ dance party in McGrath-Phillips Arena. Through the years, headliners have included Blessid Union of Souls, Ben Folds, Naughty by Nature, The Roots, Ludacris and many more. This May, the 30th year of FEST treated students to the sounds of pop band Milo Greene, rock band American Authors and rapper Big Sean, plus DJ duo Milo & Otis. Additionally, past FEST coordinators were invited back to see how the event has changed.

“FEST is one of the biggest events on campus, and it’s planned for students, by students,” says Tanya Vandermoon, DAB advisor and program coordinator for campus activities. “Every aspect you see and hear about FEST, students have had their hands in it.”
Colleges Unveil New Degrees and One New School

To provide the best experience to students and stay relevant in a changing educational marketplace, a number of DePaul colleges have recently introduced new degrees.

The Kellstadt Graduate School of Business unveiled three master's degrees and its first doctoral program. The evening cohort MBA combines features of full-time and part-time MBA programs in an accelerated, after-work schedule. A new master's in management targets entry-level professionals seeking career advancement, while a master's in hospitality and operational performance integrates business and hospitality leadership knowledge to focus on innovation. The Executive Doctorate in Business Administration is a three-year, part-time program that offers seasoned professionals an opportunity to gain a mastery of applied business research.

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, in conjunction with the College of Communication, rolled out combined bachelor's and master's degrees in history and journalism, as well as political science and journalism. LAS also began two new master's programs—one in critical ethnic studies and the other in refugee and forced migration studies. In addition, the college is offering certificates in digital humanities and qualitative research methods.

The College of Science and Health launched its RN to MS in nursing program. This program offers a path for registered nurses to earn a bachelor's and a master's degree in nursing from DePaul, as well as a graduate certificate from Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science in health administration or health professions education.

The College of Law debuted a master’s of jurisprudence designed for health care administrators, tax specialists, lobbyists, journalists, social workers and other professionals who do not seek to practice law but who regularly encounter legal issues in their work. The program is intended to help them develop a sophisticated understanding of legal doctrine.

Finally, the College of Computing and Digital Media debuted a new School of Design for students who want to design games, graphics, new technologies and social media platforms. Accordingly, the School of Cinema and Interactive Media's more cohesive focus on animation and cinema prompted it to change its name to the School of Cinematic Arts.

Learn more about these new programs and degrees at depaul.edu/academics.

春节快乐! DePaul Celebrates Chinese New Year

On Feb. 19, DePaul ushered in the Year of the Goat with its 6th annual Chinese New Year Gala. Sponsored by a number of DePaul organizations and programs, including the Center for Intercultural Programs, the Department of Modern Languages, the DePaul Chinese Studies Association and the Driehaus Center for International Business, an overflow crowd of students, faculty, staff and community members packed the Student Center on the Lincoln Park Campus to enjoy an extensive and sumptuous Chinese buffet dinner and live performances of music, dance and martial arts.

Li Jin, associate professor of Chinese, offered a bilingual welcome to the assembled crowd and hoped that the celebration would help the university's Chinese community feel less homesick and more connected with each other and the rest of the DePaul family. In keeping with the traditions of Chinese New Year, the entertainment kicked off with a lion dance performed by four students in costume.

Business student Candice Wu performed a traditional dance from her native region of Xinjiang, located in northwestern China. Students from Chicago Shaolin Temple put on an exciting display of shaolin kung fu, featuring swordplay and acrobatics that had the crowd cheering. Professor Patrick Murphy, who teaches at the Driehaus College of Business and leads the university's internationalization strategy in China, showed off his impressive Chinese language and guitar skills with a bilingual rendition of the classic John Denver song “Take Me Home, Country Roads.” Student emcees Mingxia Bao, Alexander Shaindlin and Sarah Swetz kept the evening moving and Chinese speakers laughing with their witty repartee in Chinese.
There was no mistaking the message the new men's basketball coach Dave Leitao delivered to a media throng and several hundred members of the DePaul community at an introductory press conference in late March: The time to win is right now—not next week, next month or next year.

The winning began the moment Leitao agreed to finish the job he had started back in 2002. That year, he took a 9-19 Blue Demons team and orchestrated one of the nation's biggest turnarounds, going 16-13 his first year in Lincoln Park and earning a berth in the National Invitation Tournament (NIT).

After leading DePaul to the NCAA Tournament in 2004 and another NIT the following season, Leitao took over the program at the University of Virginia and led the Cavaliers to the NIT during his time there, including one NCAA and one NIT appearance. Last season at Tulsa, Leitao helped lead the Golden Hurricane to 23 wins and an NIT berth.

Leitao's recruiting prowess included prevailing over Michigan State, Indiana and Ohio State to land future pro Wilson Chandler. Along with Chandler, Leitao also signed eventual NBA draft picks Sammy Mejia and Dorell Wright. At Virginia, Leitao helped develop NBA draft pick Sean Singletary.

“Winning is part of my DNA. To our players, this is a new day. What I heard about you and what you heard about me—we’re all starting with a clean slate. I challenge players to go out and realize your dreams and let us dream together. To everyone else and some of you with doubts out there, I dare you to give us a try. We are absolutely going to make you proud.”

Jean Lenti Ponsetto (EDU ’78). “We wanted a proven winner who could recruit all over the country. We don’t see this as a rebuilding project. Our expectation is to win now, and it was clear to our search committee that Dave Leitao was our No. 1 choice.”

Leitao said he is grateful to the Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., president of DePaul, for giving him the opportunity to finish what he started. “I absolutely love this school and everything that it stands for,” Leitao said. “There isn’t anybody more special in college athletics than Jean, and I am honored to help raise the basketball program to the level that she deserves.”

Most recently, Leitao was an assistant coach at the University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of Tulsa under Frank Haith. Missouri posted back-to-back 20-win seasons during his time there, including one NCAA and one NIT appearance. Last season at Tulsa, Leitao helped lead the Golden Hurricane to 23 wins and an NIT berth.

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“I believe in myself and have always been around programs that have been winners,” Leitao said. “Winning is part of my DNA. To our players, this is a new day. What I heard about you and what you heard about me—we’re all starting with a clean slate. I challenge players to go out and realize your dreams and let us dream together. To everyone else and some of you with doubts out there, I dare you to give us a try. We are absolutely going to make you proud.”
Women’s Basketball Are 2015 BIG EAST Champions

Repeating last year’s run as BIG EAST champions seemed unlikely after losing twice to Seton Hall University in the conference season, but the Blue Demons seem to thrive on difficult challenges. Coach Doug Bruno’s (LAS ’73, MA ’88) team rallied to win seven in a row to share the regular-season BIG EAST title with Seton Hall and then toppled the Pirates 78-68 in the BIG EAST tournament to claim the conference title and an automatic NCAA berth for the 13th year in a row. The Blue Demons were 14-1 in BIG EAST regular-season and tournament play.

Megan Podkowa led the late-season surge, averaging 16 points a game over the final 12 games. Her 23 points in the second half were key to DePaul’s 79-72 comeback in the NCAA Tournament victory over the University of Minnesota. Podkowa had 19 points and 11 rebounds in the NCAA second-round loss at the University of Notre Dame.

Brittany Hrynko (LAS ’15) was voted BIG EAST Player of the Year—the first Blue Demon to earn that honor. Podkowa and Chanise Jenkins were named All-BIG EAST Second Team. Jenkins was selected to play for USA Basketball at the World University Games in South Korea and Mart’e Grays was selected for the league’s All-Freshman Team. Jessica January gained an All-BIG EAST honorable mention.

Hrynko was named BIG EAST Women’s Basketball Scholar-Athlete of the Year. In addition, the senior point guard was a finalist for the John R. Wooden Award, Naismith Trophy and Dawn Staley Award. She was selected in the second round of the WNBA Draft by the Connecticut Sun and traded to the Atlanta Dream. DePaul repeated as Inside Higher Ed’s academic national champion, having the best classroom progress report and graduation rate among the 64 teams in the NCAA Tournament field.

Babicz, Dobson Stand Out in Track and Field Showings

DePaul senior thrower Matt Babicz (BUS ’14) was among 16 student-athletes who competed in the shot put at the NCAA National Indoor Championships on March 14 in Fayetteville, Ark. Babicz was DePaul’s lone representative at the meet and his seventh-place finish earned him All-American status.

At the March BIG EAST Indoor Championships in New York, Trevor Kintyhtt won the men’s weight throw, and MaShayla Kirksey became the first DePaul athlete to win a BIG EAST long jump event. Jazmyne Durrah captured the women’s BIG EAST shot put crown, while Babicz completed the Blue Demon shot put sweep by winning the men’s side, with his younger brother Anthony Babicz second and Kintyhtt third. Ivy Dobson was first across the finish line in the 60-meter dash and Sebastian Feyersinger won the 200-meter dash. In the outdoor season, freshman Dobson was chosen Men’s Most Outstanding Track Performer as the Blue Demons took home 10 titles at the BIG EAST Outdoor Championships in May.

Ben Invited to USA Women’s Soccer U-20 National Camp

After a sensational 2014 season, DePaul freshman Alexa Ben was invited to the Under-20 Women’s National Team Camp. The camp is part of the process to identify candidates for the U.S. Women’s National Team who will try to qualify for the 2016 FIFA U-20 Women’s World Cup in Papua New Guinea. The BIG EAST Conference Rookie of the Year was the first DePaul player to be invited since Julianne Sitch (EDU ’07), who played on the 2004 Under-21 Women’s National Team.

Ben helped lead the Blue Demons to the greatest season in program history with a 16-1-4 record, BIG EAST regular-season and tournament titles, and an appearance in the NCAA Tournament. Ben set a school record with 11 assists.

Blue Demon Golfers Card Highest BIG EAST Finish

Led by freshman standout and All-BIG EAST team member Freddy Thomas, DePaul’s second-place finish at the BIG EAST Championship in April was the best in program history. Thomas also set a new program best with a third-place finish.

Women’s Tennis BIG EAST Champions, Enjoy NCAA Success

DePaul (22-5) swept to its second consecutive BIG EAST title with a 4-0 victory over St. John’s. Rebeca Mitrea was named the tournament’s Most Outstanding Player. Yuliya Shupenia was chosen BIG EAST Player of the Year, Patricia Lanceranjian earned Freshman of the Year and Mark Ardizzone repeated as BIG EAST Coach of the Year. The 37th-ranked Blue Demons advanced to their second straight NCAA Tournament, where they defeated No. 24 Kentucky 4-1, making it the first NCAA win in program history.

For full schedules, results and other news about DePaul Athletics, visit depaulbluedemons.com.