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On July 1, DePaul will begin a new chapter in its history when A. Gabriel Esteban, PhD, begins his term as the university’s 12th president—the first lay president in the university’s 119-year history. “I look forward to the opportunity to enhance DePaul’s academic reputation and mission in partnership with everyone here,” Esteban said when he was introduced to the DePaul community on Feb. 16.

Esteban has broken new ground before. He currently serves as the president of Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J., the university’s first nonordained president in more than 25 years. He assumed that role in 2011, after previously serving as interim president and provost.

During his tenure at Seton Hall, Esteban led the university’s strategic planning and academic enhancement initiatives. He also oversaw changes to enrollment management and financial aid strategies, and helped strengthen retention and graduation rates. Through his strategic implementations and leadership, Esteban further diversified the university’s student population and maintained a steady percentage of first-generation freshman enrollment.

In addition, Esteban and Seton Hall established the only private medical school in New Jersey, in partnership with Hackensack Meridian Health, a new College of Communication and the Arts, and a Catholic studies department. He played a critical role in Seton Hall’s physical transformation, as the university invested more than $150 million in major campus improvements over the past five years. Esteban helped raise more than $40 million toward those capital enhancements.

Prior to joining Seton Hall, Esteban held several senior-level leadership positions at the University of Central Arkansas and Arkansas Tech University. He has also taught marketing in higher education institutions in both the United States and the Philippines, where he and his wife, Josephine, were born and raised. Both Esteban and his wife attended the University of the Philippines, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and an MBA, and she received a bachelor’s degree in business economics and a master’s in economics.

The Estebans, however, hoped to further their education abroad. “Growing up in a developing country like the Philippines, one could only dream about going to the U.S. to study or live. We were fortunate that both my wife and I were able to get scholarships in the U.S.,” Esteban said. He earned a doctorate in business administration from the University of California, Irvine, and a master’s in Japanese business from Chaminade University of Honolulu. Mrs. Esteban holds an MBA from the University of California, Riverside.

“DePaul’s mission, which is about [serving] certain groups—the poor, the marginalized, lower income and immigrant populations—is something which is near and dear to not just my heart, but my wife’s as well,” Esteban said. He is a founding board member and vice chairman of the Asian Pacific Islander American Association of Colleges and Universities, a national organization established to advocate on behalf of minority-serving institutions that have significant numbers of Asian-American and Pacific Islander–American students.

The Estebans have one daughter, Ysabella. She is an alumna of Seton Hall University and Creighton University School of Medicine. She is currently a medical resident at the University of Chicago.
School for New Learning (SNL) Dean Marisa Alicea and Ray Whittington, dean of the Driehaus College of Business and Kellstadt Graduate School of Business, will step down from their positions at the end of the 2016-17 academic year. The extraordinary impact the two administrators and educators have had on the university reflects their outstanding dedication to DePaul.

Enriching adult education at DePaul was Alicea’s passion when she became SNL dean in 2008, after serving as interim dean in 2007. Alicea greatly enhanced the writing and online learning programs in the school. Under her leadership, SNL launched new writing support services for students and provided professional development opportunities for faculty on teaching writing across the curriculum. She also introduced an assigned advising model and strengthened the mentoring support network for students.

Throughout her tenure as dean, Alicea helped create a number of partnerships between the college and external organizations, including a collaboration with Fifth Third Bank. Internationally, she was crucial to the formation of the partnership between SNL and Tangaza University College in Kenya. Alicea graduated eight cohorts of adult students who received degrees in leadership and management. She also worked closely with All Hallows College in Dublin, Ireland, to create a degree program for adults.

Alicea will take a sabbatical during the 2017-18 academic year. She will then return to SNL as a faculty member. “I have many research projects that I’ve already started to work on and am excited about deepening that work and returning to teaching,” Alicea said.

During his tenure as dean, Whittington was pivotal in expanding the college and strengthening its reputation as a national leader in business education. Whittington became dean in 2006 after serving as interim dean for one year. Prior to that, he served as the director of the School of Accountancy & Management Information Systems for nine years, a role he will resume in 2017.

Whittington played an integral part in securing a $30 million gift to the college from Richard H. Driehaus (BUS ‘65, MBA ’70, DHL ’02)—the largest gift DePaul has ever received. The college was renamed after Driehaus in 2012. Under Whittington, the college launched the School of Hospitality Leadership in 2010. He also helped create several new Master of Science programs and launched the college’s first doctoral program.

“I am honored to have served as dean during such a pivotal time of growth for DePaul,” Whittington said. “I do miss my days as a faculty member and now seems like the opportune time to make a transition back to teaching and research.”
Embracing Spirits
Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology Hosts Major Conference

It began with a prayer. Sister Eva Solomon, C.S.J., a Catholic nun of Anishinaabe heritage, led attendees in a call and response invoking her indigenous tradition. The sold-out “The Church & Indigenous Peoples in the Americas Conference,” held Nov. 4-5, 2016, explored the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and native peoples throughout the Americas. The event was co-sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences’ Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology (CWCIT) and the Catholic Theological Union (CTU).

William Cavanaugh, professor of Catholic studies and CWCIT director, welcomed attendees with a statement of purpose: “We talk about North/South dialogue, but both exist in each other’s zones. We’re here to talk about newer initiatives where robust Catholicism comes out of indigenous expressions.”

Michel Andraos, associate professor of intercultural theology and ministry at CTU, added that these are “challenging times for the church in relationship with indigenous peoples. New movements are emerging centered on historic responsibility and being part of a solution.”

Sister Solomon spoke movingly about the racism she faced growing up near Winnipeg, Manitoba. “What racism does to us as people is very violent. It puts us down and demands of us to conform to the colonial way of life.”

Yet, as the director of the Building Bridges Project for Canada’s Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of the Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops, she has been able to work toward a truly indigenous Catholic church. The U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples informs her work on Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Pedro Gutiérrez Jiménez, coordinator of indigenous theology for the Institute for Intercultural Studies and Research in Chiapas, Mexico, says he came to understand his Christian faith in the context of his Mayan-Tzeltal heritage and developed an “Indian theology.”

“For the good of humanity and Mother Earth, we want to be Christians without giving up our indigenous identity,” he said. “Indian theology is present in the practices and thinking of Christian churches, and we can develop a synthesis between the two spiritualities.”

Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, O.M.I., a missionary oblate to the indigenous peoples of north and central Saskatchewan, recounted the tragic history of native children who were taken from their families to be educated in missionary schools. “Education got us into this mess, and it will get us out of it,” Lavoie concluded. “We must choose to enter into cross-cultural experiences, get out of a colonial mindset and complete the apology by listening with the heart, asking for forgiveness, declaring never to do harm again and making amends.”

A Place of Refuge
Law Panel Discusses Work Defending Refugee Claims in Greece

Armed conflict and climate crises have led to the largest forced migration since World War II, with more than 65 million people fleeing their homelands. Syrian, Iraqi and Afghani refugees are pressing against European borders, but the ability and will of European Union countries to absorb them has left many stranded in refugee camps in legal limbo. On Oct. 27, 2016, the Society for Asylum and Immigration Law, a student organization at DePaul’s College of Law, fielded a panel of attorneys and law professors to discuss ongoing legal work on behalf of refugees detained in Greece.

Lisa Koop, associate director of legal services for the National Immigrant Justice Center, Duane Sigelko, partner at Reed Smith LLP, and DePaul Instructor and University Ombudsperson Craig Mousin spoke about their experiences on the Greek island of Lesbos providing pro bono legal assistance to refugees, monitoring conditions in the refugee camps and assessing the viability of a long-term pro bono project in the area. Greece, they learned, has neither the financial resources nor a functioning refugee system to address the crisis.

The panel talked about their initial difficulties in convincing officials they had the right under Greek law to represent refugees, but also about some developments that have made their work easier.

Bottom line, the panelists said, the refugee crisis needs to be tackled as an international phenomenon. Law students, they said, can provide research and translation skills to help attorneys on the ground working on behalf of these vulnerable individuals.