

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Class of 2019 Student Laureate Legacy Statements

Student Laureates are selected by their respective colleges and universities. They are graduating seniors who exhibit exceptional attributes in leadership with a desire to make a difference in the world through civic engagement. Student Laureates are selected based on overall excellence in curricular and extracurricular activities.

These young leaders represent a magnificent diversity that makes Illinois the ‘jewel of the heartland’.

The Class of 2019 Student Laureates put into their own words the essence of how Lincoln’s Leadership Legacy will be a guide in directing a civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good.

Augustana College – Nadia Ayensah

We ask the Student Laureates to put into their own words the essence of how Lincoln’s Leadership Legacy will be a guide in directing a civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good.

From the little I have heard of Abraham Lincoln, there has been nothing but praise for his selflessness and willingness to go to extreme lengths to ensure that his commitment to service is fulfilled to the T. I believe that Lincoln’s leadership legacy should not only serve as an example of the life leaders need to emulate, but rather, must also be taken as a guide on how each and every one of us should serve the needs of our fellow humans. By virtue of being in the society that we are in, Lincoln’s legacy teaches us how to be one another’s keeper; he teaches us that come what may, serving one another’s needs is that which can keep our society alive. Lincoln taught us about an individual’s power in change—it does not need a multitude to be affected. I have a role to play in keeping our society alive, and so do you. With this reflection then, I leave you with words of my own: I charge you to be one another’s keeper regardless of race, citizenship, socioeconomic standing, gender, and age among others, and do not let anything suppress the passion to do so. I have personally undertaken this charge through my advocacy and my decision to branch into the legal field. It is now your turn: how are you going to undertake your charge?

Aurora University – Khadeil Ergas

Lincoln's leadership legacy provides lessons that can be applied across the leadership spectrum, whether it be in service to a local community or worldwide. Lincoln led a civic-minded life based on the standard that his decisions would not be centered on what he wanted or needed but rather what those around him wanted or needed. Through Lincoln, we've also learned that wanting the best for our communities includes wanting the best for people whose beliefs may differ from our own. With this mindset, Lincoln established himself as a leader who would do for those in need with nothing expected in return.

Not everyone is equipped to be the sort of leader that Lincoln embodied, as it requires a great deal of gratitude and determination, along with a mindset dedicated to the needs of others. I believe that community and service grow from within a person and can depict the type of person they are or are striving to become. Throughout my life, I've always believed in being an activist in the community by doing selfless acts, not only because it helped me grow personally but also because I was able to experience the growth of others around me.

As the 2019 Lincoln Laureate of Aurora University, I will strive to follow Lincoln's example by serving my community by putting their needs before my own. I will value the opinions, beliefs and experiences of others, particularly those that differ from mine, just as I value my own. As a leader, I strive to be a role model that individuals can look up to and follow in my footsteps to improve the community.

Benedictine University – Rebecca Weber

When I began to think about Abraham Lincoln's leadership style, I was immediately reminded of my high school United States history teacher, Mr. Daniel Uniek, who had a knack for presenting the humans of history with utmost passion and fervor. Mr. Uniek described Lincoln as an empathetic man who dedicated his platform as president to communicating the values of unity and activism.

I feel that the leadership roles I fulfill at Benedictine University help to encourage both community and engagement by taking an active role in caring for the planet. At Benedictine, I work to encourage others to be stewards of our campus as the president of the student environmental group, and I work to demonstrate the utility of our campus wildlife as a student researcher studying the population dynamics of the freshwater turtles in our on-campus lake. The issue of environmental degradation impacts the entirety of humankind regardless of who you are or where you come from, and for this reason, I feel that my pursuance of a career in ecology will help me to not only to further scientific knowledge but also to emphasize commonalities amongst people to foster empathy and the greater good as Lincoln did, because, if, for example, we can all appreciate the majesty of a blue jay or the breathtaking wonder of the Grand Canyon, perhaps we are all not that different after all.

Bradley University - Rhome Apton

Abraham Lincoln was somebody who had a vision and even though it was not widely accepted, he still followed his vision because he knew it was the right thing to do. He freed the slaves. This was controversial and an entire nation split in half because of it. That didn't deter him though because he knew what he was doing was right and fair. That tenacity is what makes good leaders great.

In this day and age, we all have our own idea of what a greater good really is. People older and younger than us might not agree with us and that's okay. It takes resilience to be a great leader. As long as you know who you are, how you're bettering the world, and who your people are, you're in a really good spot to change the world. Just know that those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

Bradley University - Rhome Apton, cont.

It's important to not forget the people in our lives who helped build us bridges to get us where we are today. Working to better the community is not about feeling good or warm fuzzies, it's about building someone else a bridge who may not have the means to do so themselves. It's not about thank you's, it's about positive change.

Thank you for your time and for this award, I really do appreciate all of this. I wish you the best!

Chicago State University - Ali Kleiche

For four years, The United States lived under the leadership of President Abraham Lincoln. Even though his term was short, he had enough achievements that will remain attached to his name in the history books.

He was one of the toughest opponents of the US-Mexican war, calling it an "aggression against another country." This stance caused his popularity to decline, especially after America's massive victory over Mexico and its annexation of vast territories. Lincoln was also a staunch opponent of slavery, his fame was made public through the enthusiastic speeches against what he called the "power of slavery", denouncing the power of the country's slave class and threatening national unity.

Inspired by the legacy of Lincoln as a leader and unifier, I decided to get more involved with the Southside community where I reside. I work with many students from poor families and frankly many of them are not motivated about their education because of a lack of role models in their communities. This achievement and satisfaction reminded me of Lincoln as a great leader. I learned that the experiences of those young underprivileged Chicagoan kids aren't that much different from that of those who believed in Lincoln and stood behind him to support his efforts to unify the country and direct a civic-minded life of service and commitment to the greater good.

I believe that Lincoln's legacy played an important role in shaping my personality. Developing leadership skills and dedicating your life for service to others is crucial for anybody who seeks to create change in their communities.

Columbia College Chicago - Kierah King

The essence of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will not only be a guide but also a reminder of why having a commitment not only to service, but to the greater good is so important and valuable in the work that I do, not only to better myself but humanity as well. I think back to a particular quote by Lincoln where he states, "And in the end it is not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years." and I am reminded of the possibilities and opportunities life has to offer when we allow ourselves to live fully.

To remember there is hope and power in the collective communities that we serve and that our diversity and differences make us unique and powerful.

I am proud and honored to be a young leader to guide the next generation on their path to success with the help of the recognition of becoming a Student Laureate.

Concordia University Chicago – Abigail Deddens

The Lincoln Academy recognizes the service and successes of individuals in Illinois that impact their communities, this state, and reach around the world. Lincoln Laureates are examples of excellence and accomplishment, and more importantly, achievement for the good of others. Reading the legacies of Lincoln Laureates is overwhelming – their accomplishments in areas including civic service, education, athletics, music, medicine, and philanthropic work are simply awe-inspiring. When I

Concordia University Chicago – Abigail Deddens, cont.

was selected as the Student Laureate for Concordia, I was humbled to be chosen for this honor, and after learning more about Lincoln Laureates of the past, I felt even more undeserving of this recognition. I am inspired by how Lincoln Laureate achievements have positively impacted their communities, and how they have used their individual gifts and talents to touch the lives of those around them. They demonstrate how pursuing excellence in the area of one's talents and interests can impact millions. They use their individual gifts to step into leadership. Their examples embolden me to put aside uncertainty and serve wherever my service is needed. The legacy of these leaders and the Lincoln Academy will remind me of how much good one individual can do and always encourage me to consider how my actions will affect my community and how I can therefore strive for excellence to give back to those around me.

DePaul University – Michaela Milligan

I have focused on three key areas of personal development: community service, leadership, and academic excellence.

In the classroom, I have completed several self-directed independent study courses. I further conducted an independent research project while studying at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou. This research, along with an original essay on linguistics, written in Mandarin, will be published in the 2019 issue of *Students Creating Knowledge*.

I've been named to the Dean's list every term at DePaul, and I've received the Dean's Award for Scholastic Excellence the past two years. This year, I'm working with the Smithsonian Institution researching intentional destruction of cultural heritage, for which DePaul has awarded me a Community and Project-Based Learning Internship Scholarship.

I am the Executive Director & co-founder of the Language Access Coalition; Chair for Constitutional Reform, Anthropological Student Organization; Member of the Academic Integrity Board; Volunteer for Translator and Interpreter Corps; Member of Lambda Alpha Honors Society; and active member of the Chinese Studies Association.

I have attended two competitive symposiums on U.S.-China relations: Princeton U.S. China Coalition Global Governance Forum, and the Forum for American/Chinese Exchange at Stanford. I have served for three years as a member of the Alumnae Board for the Columbus School for Girls. I serve as a translator and interpreter for the federal government through the National Language Service Corps. After hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated my partner's home in the US Virgin Islands, I spent two months working on sustainable recovery efforts. In Chinatown, I have worked as a translator and tour guide for the Chicago Chinese Cultural Institute and a docent/collections apprentice at the Chinese American Museum of Chicago.

Dominican University - Maya Banks

Lincoln's ability to motivate others is a part of his leadership legacy that guides me towards a life of service. When I start my non-profit, I want to motivate people to learn more about financial literacy, not just do it because they think they need to. I want to motivate underserved communities to recognize that they have value and with the proper resources and support, they have the ability to be successful in the world around them. Being a leader that motivates others is one of the strongest qualities a leader can have and I want to take this same quality that Lincoln exhibited and use it to make the world around us fairer.

East-West University - Stephany C. Starks

Making the choice to attend East West University was, by far, the best decision I've made. This utopia serves as a safe haven, which allows me to discover and develop my skills and abilities while simultaneously encouraging me to pursue excellence in every aspect of my life.

From being homeless, to witnessing my mother lose everything in a fire, I often found myself overwhelmed by chaos and uncertainty. It was during these unfortunate times that I would turn to East West University as my sanctuary. From professors to counselors, I could always seek wise advice and guidance from anyone at the university. As I reflect on my college experience, I become overwhelmed with a variety of emotions. Although I am slightly embarrassed that it took me five years to get to where I am today, this daunting feeling is immediately overshadowed by the excitement and glee that I incur, while pondering upon the endless opportunities available to me by obtaining a

degree. I've decided to dedicate my life to teaching. I want to teach, motivate and inspire others, the same way I was taught, inspired and motivated to change my life, by the staff at East West University. Receiving this award from the Lincoln Leadership Academy is an honor and I am extremely grateful for this opportunity. Not only has this moment encouraged me even more, to pursue a career as a teacher, it will also serve as a constant reminder that through hard work and dedication, anything is possible. I can finally say that I am optimistic about embarking on the journey that lies ahead of me.

Eastern Illinois University - Lindy Dokken

As I soon venture more deeply into the field of Psychology, specifically Counseling Psychology, my field of interest will be growing much narrower. In this narrow field of interest, I already know that no matter what area of psychology I develop a liking for, my heart will always be connected to the homeless. Since a very young age I have been incredibly passionate about serving the homeless, understanding their lifestyle, and wanting to help them in any way that I can. Although this may not directly correlate with what I will study in Psychology, I believe it teaches me a broader life lesson than a textbook definition of "service" ever could." By devoting my free time to serve at local homeless shelters, continually praying for those in need of food, shelter, and clothing, and being a consistent support system for them, I will be encouraging a civic-minded lifestyle for others and myself. It can seem inconvenient to love those who have less than the average person, but every one of us deserves to have someone cheering us on in the sidelines. I want to be that motivator and support system for a group of people that are often overlooked in our society. As a future Psychologist, my goal is to understand root causes and variances, and go beyond helping people merely get through life, but with intentionality, create pathways in which they too, can live their best life. However, as Lindy Dokken, a 21-year-old at Eastern Illinois University, this is my present purpose in life, too.

Elmhurst College - Emily M. Marquez

From an early age, the legacy of President Abraham Lincoln has steered my educational pursuits. At first admiring his passion for education, I knew that pursuing a degree was important to me in my growth. As time has passed, however, I have begun to understand the impact of learning outside the classroom. My undergraduate experience has sparked my interest in service and civic engagement, and Lincoln's legacy continues to inspire my passion.

Aware of his efforts to understand his role in a greater system, I have sought opportunities to expand my understanding of the injustices in U.S. society and my place in the conversation. Through my roles in multicultural student groups and Alpha Phi Omega, an international service fraternity, I have realized my interest in serving systemically oppressed communities.

Elmhurst College - Emily M. Marquez, cont.

Lincoln demonstrated the importance of perspective in problem solving; he brought what he knew to the table, then sought guidance in areas he was less familiar with. As I prepare for life after undergrad, I plan to pursue a career in student affairs, guided by this principle. As a woman of color, I am aware of my own experience and ways I can utilize my existing knowledge to support underserved communities. However, I also know that my perspective only goes so far. In working with college students, my hope is to provide spaces where students can broaden their perspectives and find ways to use this knowledge to enact social change.

Abraham Lincoln's legacy continues to be a driving force in efforts of social change. My intention is to continue serving and engaging with my community to develop a more equitable society.

Eureka College – Paige Dobbyn

As I prepare to graduate from Eureka College and begin my career, I will look to the leadership legacy of President Abraham Lincoln as a guiding framework to lead a civic-minded life with a commitment to serving a greater good. During his presidency, Lincoln was courageous, thoughtful, and dedicated to preserving the Union; and, thus dedicated to preserving the principals that the United States was founded upon—democracy, liberty, and equality. As I go forward in life, I will strive to be a leader that is courageous when going up against those who dispel hatred, ignorance, and intolerance; thoughtful of the voices I lead when making decisions; and dedicated to fighting for those who face inequality and upholding the values of our great nation.

Governor's State University - Amanda Spayer

Abraham Lincoln, better known by many as Honest Abe, was the sixteenth president of the United States of America.

He entered his presidency at a very tumultuous time. It was the beginning of this country's civil war. He led the north thru this heart wrenching war against slavery. As President he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which in principle abolished slavery. It was signed in January of 1863.

President Abraham Lincoln did so much for our country in a very short time. He fought for the freedom of all mankind. He fought for all to be able to live good lives. He was known for his honesty and dedication to this country and the people who reside in it.

We have so much to learn from what this president taught us. His words were from his heart and his actions showed the strength of a great leader. He showed compassion for those who had suffered at the hands of others. Lincolns leadership legacy will be a guide on what it takes to be a great leader. A great leader will hold themselves accountable for their actions and will not just brush them off on someone else. In addition, a great leader will also inspire others into doing great things. Abraham Lincoln had many attributes that made him a great leader, but I think the biggest feature that will be an excellent guide to other great leaders is the commitment and passion Abraham Lincoln showed our great nation.

If only we could keep in mind his beliefs of equality, compassion, and honesty. Our world would be a much better place to live.

Greenville University - Josiah Mohr

Lincoln's leadership legacy is an amazing representation of having the courage to make difficult choices. Just as in Lincoln's time, leading in today's dichotomizing American society is much more nuanced than many would like to admit. The lessons that the leaders of today can apply from Lincoln's legacy are ones of grace, patience, integrity, perseverance, and an ability to listen in order to better understand, even in the face of great danger. When taken to heart and enacted with our hands, these lessons allow us to respect the humanity and dignity of all people in our world, just as Lincoln so admirably made possible for many enslaved and oppressed people of color.

Illinois College - Charlotte Crofton

Lincoln's leadership legacy was built upon the principle that all people have a voice and that all people matter. Lincoln welcomed all opinions, even those that would contradict his own. This belief creates a vision of who we should all strive to be. All people, no matter their beliefs, orientation, ideology, or values, have a right to be heard. This principle will inspire me to search for those who may be disadvantaged and to look for ways to always provide aid. Through my future work within organizations and communities, Lincoln's legacy will continue to remind me that there will always be someone who will need help. Our lives are never just about ourselves, but about the care we owe to everyone we meet.

Illinois Institute of Technology – Ayesha Anees

The Lincoln Laureate Legacy emphasizes the importance of community service for the betterment of society. As an honored recipient of the Lincoln Laurent Award I will use the values of this award to guide my life. Holding the legacy of this award with me, I hope to inspire others to build strong relationships and get involved in their communities. I also hope to continue to volunteer with my community and give back to organizations that helped me grow. As I continue on my path, I plan to dedicate my time and use my STEM background to inspire young students. As a strong believer for educational equality I want to volunteer with nonprofit organizations that focus on bringing educational programs to underprivileged areas. As a student leader in my university I want to continue to serve my community and the organizations I am committed too. I thank the Lincoln Academy of Illinois and Illinois Institute of Technology for giving me this honor and I hope to continue on this path of community service.

Illinois State University – Radiance Campbell

My favorite thing about Abraham Lincoln is that he was self-taught. He wasn't like other presidents; he wasn't a general or a governor, and therefore he didn't have a clear path to his role. But, still, no one questioned his leadership. I relate to the intrinsic motivation, the incomparable drive and determination, that made him right for the job. It's these same forces that compel me, and I cannot wait to harness them into something productive and world-changing like Lincoln did. Always reading and always pushing himself to grow in breadth and depth of understanding of the world around him, Lincoln believed in the same culture of learning that I have experienced at Illinois State University, the same culture of learning I plan to take with me to graduate school and then on to my career. Like Lincoln, I will be honest about my strengths and weaknesses, surround myself with people who challenge me, and I won't be afraid to get my hands dirty to get the work done and done the right way.

Illinois State University – Radiance Campbell, cont.

The next step for me is law school, where I will be pursuing my J.D. for the exact purpose of a life of service and commitment to a greater good. Like Lincoln walked with a book under his arm, I plan to walk with my degrees in my hands as the tools by which to make a difference. I am beyond grateful for this award as both a moment to pause and reflect on my life and my work and as a chance to renew my commitment to the quality of leadership that Lincoln modeled.

Illinois Wesleyan University - Kayley Rettberg

Abraham Lincoln's leadership was characterized by a dedication to public service and justice. As I prepare to begin my legal education and career, I hope to embody both of those values. Lawyers hold a great responsibility to facilitate justice and fairness in our courts. In my own legal career, I hope to use my position to lift up the voices of individuals who may otherwise be left behind. I hope to shape my career to serve the public good by emphasizing pro bona work and addressing the structural deficits in the US legal system. Namely, the lack of civil representation to low-income individuals. I believe that lawyers, judges, and anyone involved in the justice system have a responsibility to work towards making it more accessible to people that it has traditionally left behind. This will require working towards creative solutions involving expansions of legal aid and incentivizing pro bona work. By shaping my career in this way, I will be able to exemplify Lincoln's bravery in the face of change, dedication to justice, and commitment to the social good.

Judson University - Anali Cisneros

It is with deep gratitude and honor that I thank the Lincoln Academy of Illinois and any individuals whose contributions have made this recognition possible. Receiving this award will reinforce a value that has always been near and dear to my heart. The importance for being a compassionate individual and treating people with the utmost respect and kindness should transcend age, ethnicities and social position, and I will continue to apply this belief to all aspects of my life. Despite being a five-time NAIA National Champion, I realize that at the end of the day, no one will remember the times, nor the titles but they will remember the kind of person you were and how you treated them. Thus, as I go on to the 2020 Olympic trials next year and pursue my Olympic dream, I will continue to treat my competitors fairly and with encouragement because in the end we're all on the same team. My love for forming connections with people extends beyond the track, as I have also been an avid volunteer in my community. Whether it is by helping low-income families find clothes, patients in the ER feel more comfortable, or high school orphan girls find a prom dress, I want to be known as someone who was kind and supportive to people. Within my biochemistry major I have also had the pleasure to collaborate and practice this character through research projects. As I strive to become a Medical doctor, I will continue to hold these high morals, and will be fully committed to taking care of people.

Knox College – Sarah Henderson

On February 27, 1860, Abraham Lincoln ended his address to fellow Republicans at the Cooper Union with the following words: "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it." In 2020, we will be leaving college for a world where it still too often, might makes right. I myself was born with privileges and a certain amount of might, always gained at the expense of others. After studying at Knox and being forced to face my own privileges, it became imperative to me that I use my might to fight for the faith that right makes might. I intend to find a career that works to tip the balance of power towards equality. I intend to always think on how my actions and choices affect others in my community. Regardless of where I may live, where I may work, or what because I might fight for, I intend to follow Lincoln's leadership legacy in all that I do.

Lake Forest College - Kotch Mmopi

“Lincoln’s leadership legacy resonates with me due to its emphasis on the betterment of humanity. I was exposed to community service from an early age in the form of after school programs and other service-based initiatives. However, it was not until my latter stages of high school that I truly understood the value of community service. It was through this perspective and exposure that I concluded that the only way forward is for people from different backgrounds to come together and learn from one another. Only then, can we truly work collaboratively and build our future together.

It is popular knowledge that education is a tool for success. However, what people often forget is that this education is not solely that which is taught in the classroom, but also the education that occurs in everyday life outside the traditional school system. My commitment is to nurture interactions between one another that we wouldn’t have otherwise had, thus, allowing us to achieve a better understanding and acceptance of one another.”

Lewis University - Kacrzyna Majchrowicz-Wolny

True leadership evolves from a conviction that there is a need in one's community that one is able to address. Leadership opportunities await us every day but it would be a mistake to take them solely for the glimmer of the titles or honors that inflate a false sense of prestige. At least this is not how I understand the leadership that I would engage in. To respond to the needs of the community in a way that unites and empowers people is to me the essence of good leadership and Abraham Lincoln stands as an exemplary leader in this respect. In my community service, I will be guided by leaders like him, who see their role as stewards of the community, collaborators, and enthusiasts. Like Lincoln, I believe that an idea or an initiative that benefits the community must be backed up by both passion and teamwork. A great vision is a response to a great need-Lincoln saw the plight of the people and persisted despite opposition. In my attempt, I hope I can follow his approach of pursuing clear goals that promote unity and equality. To nurture, to gather, and to create positive change in the community is a responsibility of every citizen and I hope to live up to it.

Lincoln Christian University - Jonah Steele

Abraham Lincoln's 1861 inaugural address reflects a national situation not wholly unlike our own: one of a rapidly changing population of anxious, busy, and tired citizens in search of a way forward from widespread disunity. The new President's cautious encouragement that "nothing valuable can be lost by taking time" serves as a poignant and convicting reminder that the pace of the social change we seek (at any level) is not directly contingent on the pace of our work-rather, there is immense value in waiting, listening, and thinking. As we strive to realize stability; as we endeavor to educate and inform; as we seek to serve and assist, we must always be conscious that "no good object can be frustrated by [taking time]." Indeed, there are moments where a quick response is necessary and good, but in the grand sweep of the social progress that we seek-through all the paths that we seek it-we should remind ourselves that we are all finite, limited, and bound by our own horizons of understanding. President Lincoln's admonishment for and continual practice of taking pause to reflect can only help us as we work to transform our communities for the better.

Lincoln College - Alex Beck

During my time with Lincoln College, I have learned a great deal both inside and outside of the classroom. The perseverance and responsibility that have brought me this far will serve me for the rest of my life. I have learned how to work alongside others, lead group projects, and achieve the goals I have set for myself. The continual development that the staff and faculty have facilitated have helped me to grow beyond what I could have asked for. Lincoln College is an institute that I have been happy to call a second home for the past two years. The learning never stops, and I am happy to have come away with such a strong base to plant myself while continuing my growth.

Loyola University Chicago - Adrian De La Cruz

“The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just. It shall not deter *me*.” Abraham Lincoln, March 6, 1840 (Selby, 1900)

Lincoln, in his speech at the Second Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Illinois, hit upon the one great scourge of our modern times; defeatism. How often do we hear the statement of the citizen, ‘my single vote will not count so I will not vote?’ Or, ‘I will not speak out so I won’t be shouted down.’ Or, ‘I cannot make a difference for I am only one person.’

In a single sentence, Lincoln obliterates these doubts and says, others may think this way and will be swayed to inactivity, but *he* will not. From our standpoint in history, we see in his public career that he rose to the rallying cry of his own words. He faced each monumental injustice with a determination that, to this day, inspires us to admiration and astonishment even when it seemed that defeat was only a moment away.

As my future unfolds post-graduation I also aspire to this level of determination. My passion has been to serve the homeless community of Illinois and to inspire other men to action for their causes. These passions are ones that I know could be lifelong commitments and the full success in either will likely never be realized. Yet, I see them as just and worthwhile causes. Lincoln bolsters my commitment to his call to *all* of us. Full success may elude my efforts, but it shall not deter *me*.

Sources: Works Cited Selby, P. (1900). *Anecdotal Lincoln*. Chicago: Thompson & Tomas. Pg 278

MacMurray College - Georgia Suau

I have always loved serving my community. I remember helping my mother in the classroom and in church at the age of five. Today, I am as active as I can be on MacMurray College’s campus and Jacksonville, IL. The community I serve, Lincoln’s leadership legacy, and God have all taught me to show kindness. A simple act of kindness can remind someone how much they are valued. This feeling of value feeds back into the community and creates a cycle. If you show love and kindness to others, you will receive so much more in return. In the future, I hope to take this simple idea with me to every community I encounter.

McKendree University - Emily Murray Berry

No matter the challenge, doing my best and learning from that experience is my definition of success. Living almost my entire life in Illinois and attending McKendree University has allowed me to cultivate big dreams. College challenged me and encouraged me to travel to Guatemala, Cuba, and Japan and complete a semester study abroad in Spain. These opportunities allowed me to learn more about the world and myself. Exploring unfamiliar places increased my drive to continue my education and give back to the world. I plan to continue learning after graduation and am currently applying for a Fulbright to be an English teaching assistant in Mexico. The Fulbright is my dream, but I am also considering the Peace Corps or an education program in Spain.

McKendree University - Emily Murray Berry, cont.

In the future, I want to utilize my experiences and education to help children. Studying Spanish and psychology has given me the valuable skills to enhance the lives of those around me and to spread the importance of understanding each other. My goal is to create a chain reaction of positivity and kindness and to forge stronger connections that can spread this outlook to social and personal change to other parts of the globe. Wherever my path takes me, I will continue to keep doing my best.

Millikin University – Mikayla Krieger

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy is not only about the words he spoke, but about how he took those words and put them into action. His actions are what showed others that he was committed to a life of service and the overall greater good of humanity. The ability to lead by example and put words into actions- that is what leadership means to me. Throughout my life, I have had several leadership experiences, especially during my time at Millikin. I have come to find that others are much more likely to see you as a leader if you lead alongside them, not in front of them, and if you support the ideas you are conveying through actions. Knowing this and seeing how Lincoln encouraged his supporters through words and actions combined, I now have a better understanding of how to live a life of service and commitment. Millikin's emphasis on Performance Learning has certainly prepared me for a life of civic-minded leadership. From our very first year on campus, we are given the opportunity to take what we are learning in our classes and give back to the community through our passions. No matter what you are leading, you have to find your passion and be able to answer two questions. Why are you doing this? Who are you helping? If either of those answers are for personal gain only, you are leading for the wrong reasons. Purpose and passion fuels action. The combination of my experiences at Millikin, along with being awarded this honor, will always remind me to lead by example and with the purpose of bringing good to others.

Monmouth College - Hadley Smithhisler

As a student intending to study law after graduation, I view Abraham Lincoln as an inspiring example of how lawyers and politicians can use their influence to make positive—if difficult and complicated—change. Lincoln was intensely curious and approached complex issues with a scholarly, collaborative perspective. His decisions took time and required careful consideration of all perspectives. He no doubt knew his strength in persuasion and storytelling, but he was open to being led by those who knew better and openly admitted when he was wrong. He was uniquely accessible to his constituents, his partners, his staff, and his troops. He largely derived his success from listening to others. He allowed space for learning, discussion, and slowness in a time of violent conflict. This genuine intellectual curiosity, patience, and humility are qualities we seem to see less frequently in public figures today, yet these rare qualities were some of Lincoln's most effective traits. Lincoln's decisions were controversial, imperfect, and messy, especially when it comes to slavery. Though his career was spotted by failure, it ultimately characterized by resilience. His legacy of resilience in the face of division and relentless pursuit of unity is particularly crucial in our current divisive political culture. As I pursue my law degree after graduation from Monmouth College and eventually a career in public service, I will use Lincoln's openness, humility, patience, and curiosity as a guide for understanding those I serve and the complex, multifaceted social issues I tackle. His leadership legacy will function a reminder for me to remain humble especially when I enter elite spaces and rigorously seek out opportunities for learning and understanding.

National Louis University - Nathan Kenyon

I find incredible inspiration in Lincoln's legacy of leadership in three principle areas: unity, moral integrity, and determined grit. It is a great distinction that our Student Laureates will be recognized in the very same room where in 1858 Abraham Lincoln gave one of his finest speeches, highlighting these key values. "A house divided against itself cannot stand...it will become all one thing, or all the other." Throughout the speech he pleaded for unity in the face of the immorality that was slavery, and although such unity and purpose would require courage, it would also produce strength, and with the moral purpose of abolishing the institution of slavery being beyond the shadow of doubt Lincoln could not be discouraged from his path, for the alternative was unacceptable. He ends the speech by saying "The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail; if we stand firm, we shall not fail. Wise councils may accelerate or mistakes delay it, but, sooner or later the victory is sure to come."

Lincoln would ultimately be defeated in his Senate bid, but would be elected to the Presidency only two years later, and through the Emancipation Proclamation and ensuring the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, would see his mission through. This to me is the inspiration to continue to stand for what is good and right, even in the face of opposition or failure, to work with others, to bring people together "with malice toward none, with charity for all", and to serve the community with dignity and honest purpose.

North Central College - Noah Cordoba

One hundred and fifty-four years after his death, Lincoln's legacy lives on. Being the 16th in his position, Lincoln was the first of his kind. His dedication to the greatness and equality of all positioned him as a timeless leader in the eyes of Americans and his tireless work as a civil servant cementing his place in history as a leadership inspiration to all. Through conscious thought, compassion for others, and a will for change, Lincoln's legacy holds true to Americans just like me.

Though modern in practice, my guidance from Lincoln's path takes shape in my intent to stand firm as an advocate for our environment and those whose livelihood depends on it. Our moment in history is like none other. Our future as a people is threatened by our own mistakes, requiring the most compassionate and intentional actions to provide a remedy. Like many of the issues Lincoln pioneered change to resolve, our current climate crisis requires a dedication to the unique needs and circumstances of people from all walks of life. It requires a commitment to the greater good of all things, an ideal held close to Lincoln's heart and exemplified in his work time and time again.

Whether it be his pragmatic vision, genuine and authentic connection towards his contemporaries, or his devotion towards his role in American history, Lincoln's many qualities model a leadership style I hope to take into my life. In doing so, I hope to act not in order to make a name for myself but make a difference for others.

North Park University - Lydia Vander Stelt

I would argue that part of using someone's legacy as a guide to one's own life means sitting in the tension of both the good and the bad dimensions of that legacy. Lincoln is praised for signing the Emancipation Proclamation, but many turn a blind eye to the damaging policies and ideologies that Lincoln implemented that gravely affected indigenous people. In regards to Lincoln's leadership legacy it is essential to understand that while he did truly transformational work in some aspects, we ought to approach a civic-minded life by breaking down systems of oppression and violence that affect all people.

In his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln talked about the call for "us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us." Today, the task before us seems insurmountable. Misunderstanding and

North Park University - Lydia Vander Stelt, cont.

disagreement rooted in white supremacy has and continues to manifest into disproportionate and violent engagement with people of color, including black and indigenous people.

As an individual who benefits from many of the systems and structures that this country was founded on, it is easy for me to choose how or to what capacity I engage. That itself is a tension that I have run away from, but I am continually realizing how turning a blind eye from other realities becomes more damaging than beneficial. A civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good is a life dedicated sitting in the tension between lived experiences, systemic injustice, and accountability to the voices of communities who are oppressed or discounted; for it is in that tension that we truly listen and learn, and together undertake the great task before us.

Northeastern Illinois University - Miriam Varela

President Abraham's Lincoln's Leadership Legacy was one in which all people were treated equally, no matter their sociocultural background, economic status, formal education level, or religious preference. He was committed to using his influence to help others in need. To quote Lincoln, "I am not concerned that you have fallen -- I am concerned that you arise." Lincoln's empathy and emotional intelligence towards his fellow man, woman, and child will continue to be a guiding light for all in directing a civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good for years to come. Through my experiences at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) my leadership skills have grown and I have become a positive role model to my classmates. My work at NEIU has taught me that communication is essential in order to lend an empathetic ear to meet the needs of my peers and community. I feel that my civic-minded contributions at NEIU follow in the footsteps of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy and will continue to be a positive motivation throughout my career in education.

Northern Illinois University - Ian Pearson

"I am a slow walker, but I never walk backwards," this quote attributed to Abraham Lincoln encapsulates the President's legacy of inexorably marching toward progress in the face of the most daunting challenges. As I approach a life of public service, it is that same sense of moral determination that I hope to embody. During his tenure, Lincoln built well-reasoned coalitions, grounded in our country's founding principles, to maintain the integrity of a union beset on itself.

Coalition-building has defined much of my involvement at Northern Illinois University. Whether serving in student government or as student trustee on a nonprofit board, I have sought to build consensus and move forward on behalf of the stakeholders I represent. In our current political climate, I believe that the only way to affect positive change is to strive for consensus with those we may share the most irreconcilable differences. In this vein, Lincoln's commitment to inviting his former adversaries back to foster equality and social progress in the union that they deserted, is the most aspirational form of reaching consensus. This is not to say that the journey is easy, but that by seeking mutual understanding, granting forgiveness, and building new relationships, progress is attainable. Moving into working on public policy, I will enact the lessons learned at Northern and the legacy of Lincoln's stalwart leadership to foster equality in access to education for my peers and those that follow me.

Northwestern University - Lillian Guo

Abraham Lincoln's issuing of the famed Emancipation Proclamation is remembered as one of the most important moments in US history, as it freed slaves all over the country. We look back on this time in history as a moment of justice for the generations of people who had long suffered from chattel slavery. Though Lincoln's proclamation certainly is an event from US history that inspires me deeply, I also remain critical, and I recognize that injustice still exists everywhere today. In the particular moment of history that we are in right now, the Supreme Court is deciding whether it is legal to fire someone for their sexual orientation or gender identity; teachers in Chicago are on strike because of unfair conditions in underfunded neighborhood schools; immigrants are still being held in detention centers all over the country. Every one of these issues are complex and there are no simple solutions to any of them. But to me, I think back to the legacy of Lincoln's work, and remember that through his actions, he took the necessary first few steps of righting some of the wrongs from history, setting in motion the beginning of a much longer and ongoing journey to build justice and equity in our country. I feel more urgently now than ever the need to maintain a commitment to civic engagement, as that is one of the realms of civil society through which my communities and I hold power to make change. I can only hope that the work I do builds upon the pathway to justice that Lincoln began to set forth.

Olivet Nazarene University - Jonathan Gonzalez

As the 16th President of our Nation, Abraham Lincoln confronted a lot of challenge. Most notably, he was President at a time at which our nation still practiced slavery. While the Abolitionist movement was building, slavery was thought to be sanctioned by the laws of our nation. As the leader of our nation, Lincoln was in an incredibly challenging position in regard to speaking out against slavery. And yet, he did it. Lincoln recognized the cost of speaking against what was widely accepted but was morally incorrect. His commitment to listening to those who did not have the loudest voices and to stand up for what is right is incredibly admirable and a great example for us to follow. We now know that Lincoln's efforts were in the name of the greater good of humanity although it may not have seemed so at the time. This challenges us as leaders to lead and do what is right no matter the opposition that may stand against us. If we take the time to consider the smallest voices and to continue amidst opposition and challenge when fighting for what is right, just as Lincoln did, it will be to the benefit of the greater good.

Principia College – Sophia Hathaway

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy propelled Lincoln to being one of our nation's greatest leaders due to his character, integrity, and crisis management skills. Lincoln was able to reunite a nation torn apart by different views on slavery and ideology, while maintaining his integrity and resolve that a free nation can only exist, if all its people are free. What I most admire about Lincoln's Presidency was his selflessness and steadfastness of conviction. His integrity and selflessness are two characteristics I will use to guide me in a civil-minded life of service. He sought to unite individuals rather than divide them; he found common ground and consensus to resolve an issue that had led the country into a civil war. I wish to hone my diplomatic skills as a unifying force. Lincoln's patience while leading was key in keeping the union together and, through his example, I commit to serving the greater good. I will continue my studies of climate change in graduate school and learn how to address and mitigate the impacts on a global level. For me, climate change is one of the major issues dividing our country and the world. Lincoln set an example of how to overcome divisions and work towards a common goal.

Principia College – Sophia Hathaway, cont.

Lincoln's legacy inspires me to further pursue this path and as a woman in science, stand up for women's rights, particularly in a field in which women are underrepresented. Through working with scientists on an issue that affects all people, I hope to enact change and show that we are all global citizens, more similar than we are different.

Quincy University – Mary Teresa Argana

President Lincoln surrounded himself with his adversaries. He intentionally selected each cabinet member for their contrasting perspective and willingness to argue. Lincoln not only accepted, but embraced the opportunity for others to change his mind. He had the humility to accept criticism, and gave respect to all who challenged his decisions. During his two terms as President, the United States was in a vulnerable state. Lincoln recognized the gravity of every decision he would make during the Civil War. He understood surrounding himself with advisors who merely reflected his own opinions would not save his country.

Through this example, Lincoln demonstrated the essential value of civil discourse. There is an inherent value in allowing one's ideas to be challenged. As John Stewart Mill said in his composition *On Liberty*: "The steady habit of correcting and completing his own opinion by collating it with those of others, so far from causing doubt and hesitation in carrying it into practice, is the only stable foundation for a just reliance on it". President Lincoln exemplified this notion by inviting challenge, rather than rejecting it. He prevented a polarized nation from disintegration. His success was derived from his ability to collaborate with those who opposed his views.

President Lincoln's legacy is an example to all those who serve in the public sector. Regardless of political affiliation, religion, race, gender; there is value to allowing one's ideas to be challenged. In a polarized society, it is crucial that the United States' civic leaders embody President Lincoln's humility and embrace the opportunity to seek truth through another's eyes.

Robert Morris University - Jessica Gonzalez

It is an honor to be the Student Laureate of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois representing Robert Morris University Illinois. I know for a fact Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide in my commitment to the greater good. My motivation to eventually become an emergency medicine doctor comes from the drive to help others and serve a purpose in my communities. The essence of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide in directing a civic-minded life of service and commitment to the greater good. It has been instilled in me to always help those who cannot help themselves or that need a helping hand. As humans we should care for one another, the environment, animals, and the world we live in. The essence of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy in itself is an encouragement to continue to live up to this honor. Knowing that many great leaders and philanthropists have been given this honor is an inspiration and I hope to have a positive impact on those around me and the communities I serve.

Rockford University - Nathan Alldritt

Leadership traits do not always come easy, but I feel as if I have always been a natural leader. Although I have not always actively sought to lead others, I have found that in such roles I have positively impacted numerous individuals. One such skill that has helped me to enhance others' greatness is my ability to lead by example. I enjoy problem solving, such as coming up with the best solution that fits the problem at hand. I have learned that successful leading is not sheer dictating of others' actions but rather working cohesively with a team to create an environment propitious for

Rockford University - Nathan Alldritt, cont.

everyone's success, ultimately ensuring the team's ability to tackle any problems that arise. I plan to continue to learn and adapt my leadership skills throughout life, because I plan to be a lifelong leader which requires consistent and constant individual introspection paired with professional development. The nomination alone for the Lincoln Leadership Legacy award has inspired me to continue honing my dedication to quality leadership, which I will utilize in every opportunity in my medical career going forward. Such skills are vital in a field where teamwork is incredibly important to provide the best care and experience for all patients, and to constantly strive towards my best self. I will continue to build upon my leadership skills in order to be the best asset to any team I am a part of in the future.

During my time at Rockford University, I have been privileged to receive the following awards, scholarships, and leadership opportunities: Four-year Presidential Scholarship recipient, Freshmen Chemistry Student of the Year Award, Freshmen Athlete of the Year, Hutchcroft Organic Chemistry Award, Distinguished Scholar Award (every semester), Resident Assistant (3 years).

Roosevelt University - Janessa Garcia

Abraham Lincoln once said, "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." This quote has been stuck in the back of my mind ever since I was fortunate enough to complete an extra-curricular research project on Abraham Lincoln in my fourth-grade year. Although it may be easy to glorify the man behind the quote, more important is his legacy of being a creative thinker, resilient change agent, and an effective leader. These qualities guide many others, myself included, to create a life that not only is fairer and just for ourselves, but for those around us.

Being a creative thinker allows for solutions to problems that were not visible before, clearing the view to a just future; resilient change agents take actions to create this fair space; and effective leaders act as examples and set standards so that they are no longer the minority making change, but inspire others to take up a civic-minded life of service and commit to a greater good. Lincoln's legacy guides us to embrace the responsibility of tomorrow today, and I know and continue to hope that I am not alone in this mission.

Saint Xavier University - Nancy Lesnicki

The legacy of Lincoln calls for peoples' continuous pursuit of contributing to the betterment of society. This aspiration is what drives my efforts to diminish the stigma against individuals with developmental disabilities, to provide an inclusive university community that is conducive to connection-making and education-attainment for members of all groups, and to educate about signs of domestic violence and its commonality.

In order to progress towards improvement in the life quality of our fellow society members, we must dedicate ourselves to individual and collaborative efforts to change their circumstances and to change society's perception of those disadvantaged relative to the whole. Whether this involvement centers around one's campus, one's local community, or expands further, one must continually advocate for initiatives that positively impact our society. To follow the guidance of Lincoln's leadership legacy means to create the impetus for and foster positive societal change.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago – Haylie Jimenez

My original guide to viewing life and making decisions through a civic minded lens would without a doubt have to be my mother. As a single mother raising three children, I grew up seeing her be as selfless as possible, always reaching out to my friends and peers, besides her own children, when she noticed something seemed off. She has taught me and my siblings through example to be constantly interested in and caring about what is going on in our immediate community of family and friends. Abraham Lincoln's commitment to a greater good has always reminded me of this same sort of essence; genuine selflessness. Since coming to this realization from very early on in my childhood, I have and will continue to strive to navigate my experiences with the same unselfish ethos. Lincoln's leadership legacy, rooted in altruism, has helped reinforce what I do to this day - continue to observe about my mother - and what I try to, in turn, embody in every aspect of my day to day experience.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville – Jessica Hammel

Abraham Lincoln once said, "the best way to predict your future is to create it." When I began my time at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, I was focused on creating my own individual future by achieving academic success. Later, I realized that I had the potential to help shape the future of others through my contributions to the school of nursing and the community. I believe that one of the greatest privileges I have is to serve others. I am grateful to have been given opportunities to be a voice for my peers, while also encouraging them to take control of their own futures. I believe that we need strong leaders in today's world that are able to motivate others so that they too can become creators of their own future. It is through vitality and compassion that people are able to transform their own lives and achieve their goals.

It is well known that Abraham Lincoln was an outstanding leader, but he was also a great listener, communicator, and friend. These are qualities that encompass the profession of nursing. Nurses are educators, advocates, counselors, and confidants. They are compassionate, trustworthy, and leaders of the healthcare world. There are many qualities that President Lincoln and nurses share, and I am hopeful that I will one day be able to impact the future of others as they have. From receiving this award, and learning more about the contributions Abraham Lincoln made to better this country, I am confident that I will be able to further my leadership and service activities even after my college career.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale - Allison McMinn

For me, a reasoned approach to following in the legacy of Lincoln's life of public service and commitment must begin by listening to Lincoln in his own words. Quotes attributed to him such as "Whatever you are, be a good one" and "I never had a policy; I have just tried to do my very best each and every day" speak to me in that I strive to be the best person, scholar, student, friend, and citizen that I can be every day. Lincoln also expressed the need for people to realize that their actions today would not only influence their current lives but impact the future as well. The quote, "The past is the cause of the present, and the present will be the cause of the future. All these are links in the endless chain stretching from the finite to the infinite" illustrates his vision for the future. I believe that investing in the advancement of scientific research is absolutely crucial for our future. Lincoln believed that this world was created on the premise of equality for all. In today's society, this includes expanding opportunities to minority groups, including women in S.T.E.M fields. As I continue my studies and career, I hope to follow in Lincoln's footsteps by creating a world that inspires equality for all, in every situation. Though his words are over 150 years old, Lincoln's legacy of doing the right thing instead of the easy thing inspires all who are committed to civic service and the greater good for all.

The University of Chicago – Shriram Chennakesavalu

Abraham Lincoln demonstrated both selflessness and resolve as a leader, through his endeavor to unite the nation during the turmoil of the Civil War. Through my civic-minded work, I have striven to be both selfless and determined. For example, as an instructor at CoderSpace—a nonprofit organization that teaches Computer Science to high school students on the South Side of Chicago—I have designed and taught new curricula to prioritize my students' interest in Computer Science to help reduce disparities in Computer Science education.

I am interested in developing computational technologies that can accelerate and cheapen the drug development process and reduce the crippling cost of prescription drugs. Abraham Lincoln's legacy of leadership, notably his selflessness and determination will guide me in my mission to combat high drug prices. I intend to act selflessly to ensure that potential computational technologies are being used to actually reduce drug pricing instead of increasing profits. Furthermore, it is necessary that I remain resolute in combating the inefficiencies of the pharmaceutical industry, such as by eliminating market exclusivity, in order help ensure that access to healthcare becomes a human right, available to all.

Trinity Christian College - Indira Escalante

Abraham Lincoln remains held in high esteem 154 years after his passing. After all, Lincoln's legacy includes the social and political feats of abolishing slavery and preserving the Union. Lincoln's beliefs in democracy, liberty, righteousness, social justice, and his impeccable character made him "Honest Abe" and the "most activist President in history." His leadership skills and character propelled him to become one of the greatest presidents in the history of the United States of America. In comparison with Lincoln, I hold the same values dear to my heart. This is evidenced in my past and current involvement in activities and groups that aim to break down racial walls, aim to increase cultural intelligence and tolerance, aim to establish sense of belonging for those who might be labeled as "other," and aim to empower those who have been disempowered. Once exposed to the gratifying and challenging work of community development and leadership and service, there is no turning back. Lincoln's battleground was in the political arena. My battleground will be the business world due to my future career in accounting. I commit myself to applying civic-mindedness and the leadership skills I have acquired over the years into the field of professional services. As a future certified public accountant, I will be held to high standards of honesty and integrity. The greater good that I can do in my respective field is to share the knowledge that I have acquired for the betterment of others. One of my life goals relates to the financial betterment of others by increasing financial literacy of groups that, historically, have lacked access to education in personal finance management.

Trinity International University - Kristina Olsen

Abraham Lincoln certainly left a legacy that can be admired, from the way he received the nickname "Honest Abe" to his intentional plans for Reconstruction after the abolition of slavery. The model he gives us all as someone who always sought the best for those around him, both when he was still living within modest means and after he became the nation's most powerful man, has shown us all a consistency in character that is hard to find today. President Lincoln was a man of his word, and oftentimes I take that for granted. I will never forget learning as a young girl the consistency and the loyalty he had in his leadership. As I finish out my final year of my undergraduate studies and continue on into my next steps, my hope is that I, too, can grow even more in my values and stand firm by them just as he did, whether it is in any future leadership roles, friendships, studies, or careers.

University of Illinois Chicago – Leigha Sommer

Lincoln's legacy is yet another reminder today to continue the fight for justice in our communities and beyond, and surely everyone in this room is doing just that. I feel incredibly privileged to stand in this room to receive this exceptional award in the name of Lincoln but ever humbled to be standing next to some of my peers who are among the many change-makers of our generation.

As I reflect on my work in the community, it is undoubtedly so that Lincoln's legacy of leadership is prominent in my efforts and serves as a constant reminder that my work is not even close to finished. I am proud of the work that my peers and I have accomplished to get to this point. Still, I am eager to see the impact that each of us has on our communities as many of us dedicate ourselves to building an equitable and fair society through public service. To lead with honesty and integrity, and to inspire, empower, and fuel passion in others is only a few qualities that capture what it means to be a leader like Lincoln. I can honestly say with confidence that those standing in this room today have those very merits.

University of Illinois Springfield – Melissa Van

People do not realize the true importance of becoming active in their community. Leaders are not born overnight. Putting your fears aside and jumping into the unknown is how true leaders are created. Who would have guessed that Abraham Lincoln from Kentucky would become the 16th president of the United States, putting an end to the Civil War. Even though he died in 1865, his legacy lives on through his leadership actions. He was a leader to be remembered. Lincoln was known for his emotional intelligence, communication skills, social skills, motivation, inspiring trust, and his ability to accept criticism and advice. I can only dream to become a leader like Honest Abe. I'm literally from a town called Lincoln, Illinois and he used to live in Springfield, IL where I currently go to school. His legacy that has been surrounding me since I was a child has been guiding me towards becoming a leader myself. My school, the University of Illinois Springfield, has given me many opportunities to show what I am made of. I want to take my leadership skills and apply them in my community after I graduate. I understand that my leadership skills will continue to develop and that I am nowhere near Abraham Lincoln right now. I know it will not be an easy journey, but there is so much I want to accomplish not just for myself, but for my community.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – Elena M. Wilson

Growing up in Illinois, Abraham Lincoln was everywhere—on license plates, in our schools, and on monuments around the state—a mascot of sorts. Reading through some of his addresses, the emphasis on progress stood out to me. Lincoln was not a man satisfied with stagnation, asking for a continual “striving to finish the work we are in” [Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address].

Lincoln's understanding that there is a greater good worth working toward extends far beyond his years. His legacy embodies the idea that there are some principles so important it is worth giving one's life in their service. Civic service is one of those things. When we privilege the stories and lives of others, we gain empathy, broader perspectives, and fuel for solving complex problems. The ability to listen to those around us and hear them speak, instead of exalting our own ideas is ideal, for only when we begin to see each other as similar rather than different can the greater good be achieved.

In whatever path my life takes, I hope to constantly strive toward the greater good, dedicating my time and abilities in the service of others. Whether enabling communities to advocate for themselves, mentoring those around me, or serving my community I hope to embrace the idea that I am continually a work in progress, pushing myself toward the goal of making the world better, stronger, more accepting, and more unified.

University of St. Francis - Morayma Barron

“Everyone wants to be a leader but few are committed to building up not only themselves but those around them. Abraham Lincoln understood the importance of serving those around him. Through respect, integrity, compassion and service, I will continuously strive to be a servant leader and work toward the greater good.”

VanderCook College of Music - Rachel Nesti

Lincoln’s Leadership Legacy lays the groundwork to encourage civic engagement and change for years to come. As a future educator who is passionate about the field I am heading into, I realize that setting the foundation for a future of civic engagement and community involvement is crucial at an early age. Lincoln himself stated that “The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next”. The goal of the educational system should not only be to create productive members of society, but also to teach children that they can be the change they want to see in the world. The leadership experience I have accumulated throughout college has not only been for my benefit, but more importantly for the benefit of every life that I come in contact with throughout my career as an educator. This Leadership Legacy helps promote the idea that the greater good is a concept to constantly work towards. Another important aspect of education is exposing students to new circumstances and ideas. Bringing cultural awareness and experiences to students can make each and every child more empathetic and better suited to face the challenges that are set forth in today’s society. Preparing future generations at a young age for civic involvement will set the tone for how society will work as a whole in the future. Legacies such as this remind us that involving ourselves in our communities and focusing on the greater good are valuable qualities associated with leading a fulfilled life.

Western Illinois University - Mariah Dickson

As the 2019 Student Laureate, I hope to exemplify the qualities that are characteristic of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy. Abraham Lincoln was a man known for his strong leadership, unwavering integrity, and commitment to the common good. Lincoln had a vision to create a country of equality, and I have a vision to create a disease-free world. Lincoln worked hard for his goals: he was self-educated and honest. He was not afraid of challenges and would lay out plans to surmount these obstacles. When faced with the issue of slavery, he wrote the Emancipation Proclamation and kept the Union together to end the Civil War. I have a clear path towards my goal and no challenges will stop me. While I may not have a war in front of me, I have the emergence of mutating viruses, epidemics, and outbreaks. To combat this, I will obtain a Doctorate in Microbiology and enter a career of disease and immunology research. Through my commitment to research, our society will better understand viruses. The expansion of knowledge will lead to more innovative strategies for disease eradication. I know that a disease-free world may not happen in my lifetime, but I can certainly contribute to its eventual occurrence. Just as the Lincoln Academy values the “Great Citizens of Tomorrow,” I value the next generation of researchers. With this in mind, I intend to enter the field of academics. I feel that my life of public service will best be served conducting research and acting as a mentor for the next generation of bright minds.

Wheaton College - Michael Kitchen

As our national leader during one of the most tenuous and fractional times in U.S. history, President Lincoln demonstrated a commitment to not only the Union but also all peoples of the United States. With the restoration of unity as his hallmark, Lincoln was a representative for all Americans. Despite vehement opposition to his leadership, Lincoln presented a temperament that was fitting for the office of the President as he sought the best for all Americans regardless of race, creed, religion, or politics. Lincoln's desire for the wellbeing of the entire populace is an inspiration to all aspiring leaders who should seek to embody the guiding principle of love for all human beings and love for these United States of America.

College of DuPage – Amna Razi

Representing the Illinois Community Colleges

Immigrants come to the United States for a better quality of life, and often to be free. When one thinks of freedom, Abraham Lincoln and his legacy easily come to mind. Lincoln was a great president who fought for humanity. My parents taught me to be kind and compassionate and not discriminate, qualities that Lincoln embodied. He was elected President of the United States to enact change for the country and I was elected Vice President of Student Leadership Council to make a difference for our student body. Abraham Lincoln once said: "Those who look for the bad in people will surely find it". I believe in looking for the strengths in people and allowing individual differences to be utilized in a way that can empower, both the people and the cause. Every individual brings a unique perspective and a special set of skills to the table and collectively we can use our differences to make a difference. Lincoln also felt that a good leader does not issue orders but makes requests or suggestions.

My work ethic includes forming strong bonds with my team and becoming the pedestal that lifts them up.