

THE LINCOLN ACADEMY OF ILLINOIS



46th Annual Investiture of Student Laureates

Two thousand twenty

*Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow.
The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.*

Abraham Lincoln

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois



Due to the unprecedented times in which we are living, The Lincoln Academy of Illinois cannot host an in-person convocation this fall to congratulate and celebrate your leadership and academic successes the way we have in the past. You are well aware of the requirements at your university to socially distance and not meet in large groups.

To honor those scientifically-grounded regulations, we will comply, as each of you have to, by not meeting face-to-face. Honoring you in a virtual manner by no means diminishes our pride in your accomplishments nor our excitement in welcoming you into the phenomenal work of our organization.

We proudly give you this coin with the following challenge:



Live your life in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln, providing leadership that inspires and transforms the world. Model courage, empathy, honesty and integrity, and spread hope and joy to a planet that desperately needs your talents and skills.

We look forward to staying connected with you, and following your many successes in the future!

All the Members of The Lincoln Academy of Illinois.

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Invocation

The Honorable Reverend Ron Spears, Vice Chancellor

Opening of the Convocation

Frank Clark, Chancellor
Lincoln Laureate 2017

Lincoln Laureates – Challenge Coin

Courage: Jean Driscoll, (1990 Student Laureate and 2012 Lincoln Laureate)
Empathy: Stephanie Pace Marshall, PhD (2005 Lincoln Laureate and past Chancellor)
Honesty: George Will (2018 Lincoln Laureate)
Integrity: Michael Krzyzewski, Duke University's 'Coach K' (2014 Lincoln Laureate)

Remarks

The Honorable J. B. Pritzker
Governor of the State of Illinois

Closing Remarks

Frank Clark, Chancellor

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Student Laureates

Student Laureate	Institution	Academic Trustee
Alekesander Jacobs	Augustana College	Steven C. Bahls
Basma Outhman	Aurora University	Rebecca Sherrick
Brittany Lynn Chally	Benedictine University	Charles Gregory
Jacob D. McGiles	Bradley University	Stephen Standifird
Jason B. Jones	Chicago State University	Zaldwaynaka 'Z' Scott
Anthony Fuentes	Columbia College Chicago	Kuang-Wu Kim
Gerardo Medina	Concordia University Chicago	Russell Dawn
Gisselle M. Cervantes	DePaul University	A. Gabriel Esteban
Carlos Alberto Benitez Cruz	Dominican University	Donna M. Carroll
Esther Jimenez	East-West University	M. Wasiulla Khan
Cole D. Hoover	Eastern Illinois University	David Glassman
Christopher Michael Binder	Elmhurst University	Troy VanAken
Madison Loger	Eureka College	Jamel Santa Cruze Wright
Jeanine Latrice Koger	Governors State University	Elaine P. Maimon
Sidney Rose Webster	Greenville University	Larry H. Linamen
Olivia R. Jordan	Illinois College	Barbara A. Edwards Farley
Diana Silvas	Illinois Institute of Technology	Alan W. Cramb
Kathryn J. Bruce	Illinois State University	Larry H. Dietz
Meghan Lehmann	Illinois Wesleyan University	Georgia Nugent
Rebecca Marie Johnson	Judson University	Gene Crume
Isaac S. Hughes	Knox College	Teresa L. Amott
Uchechi Okeke	Lake Forest College	Stephen D. Schutt
Grace Ann Crumbaugh	Lewis University	David Livingston
Seth Alan Webster	Lincoln Christian University	Don Green
Melissa Joy Benson	Lincoln College	David H. Gerlach
Camille Jackson	Loyola University Chicago	Jo Ann Rooney
Caleb Reid Shipley	McKendree University	Daniel C. Dobbins
Justin N. Craig	Millikin University	Patrick E. White
Joseph Coan Botte Doner	Monmouth College	Clarence Wyatt

Academic Trustee

Timothy L. Killeen
University of Illinois

J. Kevin Dorsey (Interim)
Southern Illinois University

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Student Laureates

Student Laureate	Institution	Academic Trustee
Vontain Cornelius Wray	National Louis University	Nivine Megahed
Emma L. Nelson	North Central College	Troy D. Hammond
Jessica Torres	North Park University	Mary Surridge
Obsmara Ulloa	Northeastern Illinois University	Gloria J. Gibson
Jill Elizabeth Belluomini	Northern Illinois University	Lisa Freeman
Femke Munting	Northwestern University	Morton O. Schapiro
Lily A. Jarzabkowski	Olivet Nazarene University	John C. Bowling
Tara Marie Adhikari	Principia College	Jolanda Westerhof
Jacob Flynn	Quincy University	Brian McGee
Tanner Elliott	Rockford University	Eric Fulcomer
Kaitlyn N. Greenholt	Roosevelt University	Ali Malekzadeh
Yasmine Zavala	Saint Xavier University	Laurie M. Joyner
Anavi Bhushan Nugyal	School of the Art Institute of Chicago	Elissa Tenny
Maryam Makhdoom	Southern Illinois University Carbondale	Austin A. Lane
Tessa Renee Walker	Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	Randall Pembrook
Firouz Jon Niazi	The University of Chicago	Robert J. Zimmer
Ross Michael Barz	Trinity Christian College	Kurt D. Dykstra
Justin Chu	Trinity International University	Nicholas Perrin
Wasan Mani Kumar	University of Illinois at Chicago	Michael D. Amiridis
Kodi J. Smith	University of Illinois Springfield	Karen Whitney (Interim)
Isabella 'Issy' Rose Marquez	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	Robert J. Jones
Alysa Ann Kline	University of St. Francis	Arvid C. Johnson
Ashley Barajas-Galan	VanderCook College of Music	Roseanne Rosenthal
Paula A. Ramirez	Western Illinois University	Martin Abraham
Matteson 'Tess' Aliece De Pretis	Wheaton College	Philip G. Ryken
Samiha Syed	College of DuPage	Brian Caputo

stees at Large

Brian Durham
Illinois Community College Board

Nyle Robinson (Interim)
Illinois Board of Higher Education

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

History of the Academy

The Lincoln Academy was established by proclamation of the Governor of Illinois in 1964, shortly after the New York World's Fair. During the World's Fair a reception was given for some of our state's most celebrated sons and daughters which impressed Governor Otto Kerner and gave birth to a program to recognize distinguished Illinoisans annually through the establishment of the Order of Lincoln. The medallion design is based on that of the French Legion of Honor. The colors represent the State symbols: red for the cardinal; deep purple for the violet; and green for the leaves of the oak tree. The motto, "Palmas Qui Meruit, Ferat" ("Let him who merits bear the palm") is based on that of Horatio Viscount Nelson.

The first Convocation and Investiture of Laureates was held on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1965 at the Chicago Historical Society and convocations have been held in locations across the state every year since then. During the Bicentennial of Lincoln's birth in 2009, a special Bicentennial Edition of the Order of Lincoln was established, and thirty distinguished Lincoln scholars, collectors, artists, and curators from around the world were honored.

In 1992, Governor Jim Edgar, President of the Lincoln Academy, initiated the creation of a Hall of Fame of Historic Illinoisans whose achievements and contributions were made prior to the establishment of the Lincoln Academy in 1964. Fifty Hall of Fame Honorees were selected. In 2018, in recognition of the Bicentennial of Illinois, the Academy re-constituted the Hall of Fame and five new Historic Illinoisans were selected by the Academy Trustees in November 2018.

The mission of the Lincoln Academy was expanded in 1975 by the Student Laureate Program, in which an outstanding senior from each of the four-year degree-granting colleges and universities in Illinois and one student representing our state's community colleges are honored. **Thus, the Lincoln Academy honors the Great Citizens of Today and Celebrates the Great Citizens of Tomorrow -- knowing that now, as always, our state and nation need what Vachel Lindsay called 'Lincoln-hearted' men and women.**

The 21st Century has welcomed a world of change and diversity. The sons and daughters of the Twenty-first State continue to make their imprint on history, and in the main, help to make this a better world for their own and future generations.

We are proud of Illinois and those whose lives and achievements are associated with it. We are privileged to be able to recognize their accomplishments and hope the words of our great namesake expresses their own feelings when they are recognized as Laureates and Student Laureates: "Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say for one that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow-men by rendering myself worthy of their esteem."

So said Abraham Lincoln and so states The Lincoln Academy of Illinois.

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Organization of the Academy

The Lincoln Academy is a nonpartisan organization governed by a Board of Regents and a membership of General Trustees.

Illinois' Governor is the President of the Academy and the Board of Regents elects a Chancellor who serves as Chief Executive Officer.

The General Trustees are appointed by the Governor or elected by the Academy.

Ten Rectors serve as ex officio trustees and assist in identifying potential nominees for the Order of Lincoln.

The Academic Trustees are the chief executive officers of all four-year colleges and universities in Illinois and three members at large.

At the discretion of the Regents, a former Governor may be elected a Regent for Life, and a former Member Regent, General Trustee, or Rector who has served in office for ten years or more may be elected an Emeritus Member, in recognition of distinguished service to the Academy.

Former Chancellors of the Academy

The Hon. Michael Butler, Chicago (1965-1969)

Robert Bone, Bloomington (1969 - 1971)

William K. Alderfor, Chicago (1971 - 1975)

Thomas R. Mulroy, Chicago (1975 - 1979)

Marshall Burman, Chicago, (1979 - 1985)

John Trutter, Chicago (1985 - 2001)

The Hon. John B. Simon, Chicago (2001-2010)

Thomas S. Johnson (2010 – 2015)

William Bennett (2015 – 2016)

Stephanie Pace Marshall, PhD (2016 – 2019)

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

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* *Sustaining Member*

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

The Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award

The monetary awards presented to the Student Laureates are made possible through the generous support of *Lincoln Academy Members and friends who sponsor this ceremony, the Elizabeth Hubert Malott Educational Endowment Fund**, the *Spirit of Lincoln Endowment Fund*, and *contributions to the Order of Lincoln ceremony* held in the spring.

*Support from the Elizabeth Hubert Malott Educational Endowment Fund is in memory of Elizabeth Hubert Malott. 'Ibby' Malott was an extraordinary woman who combined keen insight, limitless energy and elegance. Her leadership as a Regent of the Academy greatly influenced and furthered its mission.

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The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Thank you to these donors whose financial support helped make today's ceremonies possible.

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Abraham Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address

President Abraham Lincoln gave his historical Gettysburg address on November 19, 1863, to dedicate a national cemetery on the battlefield in Pennsylvania. The Battle of Gettysburg, fought over three days, saw a total of over 51,000 Confederate and Union troops killed, captured, wounded, or missing in action.

In a four-year span of time (1861-1865), the American Civil War left a mind-numbing 700,000 plus dead soldiers. In comparison, WWII lost 420,000 American soldiers.

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Class of 2020 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 2020 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 – Aleksander Jacobs

President Abraham Lincoln is best known for his role in uniting the nation and essentially ending slavery. This journey was no easy feat, and it took a true leader to bring opposing forces together. Lincoln had faith in the American spirit and value of freedom. He was tough and he was ferocious. The coward fears everything. Lincoln was wise to nurture and cultivate a political environment that encourages opponents to work together as a team. He did not fear his rivals; he saw the value in them and dared them to get along. Lincoln stood for something. He knew that if he didn't hold firmly to his belief in freedom, it would wear away.

History is filled with surprises. Now, perhaps more than ever, we see our country divided. Political polarization creates a rift in the country, and it is up to all of us to come together and push each other to create the best America. We need to include, rather than exclude. In my personal life, I strive to uphold the leadership legacy that President Lincoln embodied. I am committed to valuing the opinions and perspectives of my rivals. I am dedicated to using this commitment as a gateway to lead our community and country in a just and equitable direction. Instead of letting differences divide us, we must value these differences to unite and press forward for the greater good of all humanity.

Aurora University – Basma Outhman

Inside of every human heart is a desire for fulfillment. Abraham Lincoln embodied leadership and service to emphasize how it can be so rewarding to be part of something bigger than ourselves. Using his life as a model, we are all capable of taking bold steps to rise and become a leader to serve and give back to the community. As a student at Aurora University, I am very grateful for all the opportunities I have been given to pursue different leadership positions, such as being a Spartan Ambassador and to be part of something that truly has fulfilled me and given me purpose. I will continue to carry these values moving forward in my career as an aspiring social worker and attorney and be committed to serving for the greater good.

Benedictine University – Brittany Lynn Chally

Abraham Lincoln's leadership style is best described as servant leadership. As President of the United States, Lincoln's commitment to serving the greater good through the promotion of equality, justice, and liberty for all demonstrates his desire to serve and empower others. Similarly, a Benedictine education teaches students how to love one another, commit to listening, practice humility, exhibit stewardship of self, others, and the environment, welcome the stranger through hospitality, and serve the common good through community building. As a leader, I have been greatly influenced by both the values of Lincoln and my Benedictine education to serve and advocate for others.

As a servant leader, my tool of choice is music. My passion for music can build a community both in-person and virtually. As a music education major, I have helped make music more accessible by organizing performances at local nursing homes and senior centers, bringing music to residents with dementia through the Alive Inside Program, and creating a virtual music video to share with community members during the COVID-19 pandemic. My musical experiences have shown me the inherent and important role that music plays in our society. The act of listening to music is a universal activity that crosses social and cultural boundaries. As a future educator, I hope to foster meaningful musical experiences that connect my students to their community and influence them to listen and serve others. Music is more than notes on a page; it has the power to unite, inspire, and heal. Music reminds us that our melody is a part of the larger score and as a leader I encourage others to find their voice.

Bradley University – Jacob D. McGiles

Growing up close to Springfield, Lincoln has always been a role model we learned of as kids. His leadership and service to many Americans he had no personal connection with should be something we all strive for. Helping your neighbor whether you know them or not will be embodying how Lincoln was a leader.

Chicago State University – Jason B. Jones

Ever since I was a child, I was told stories of Abraham Lincoln and how he was one of the greatest presidents the United States has ever had. I also learned about many of his accomplishments and how he was one of the most influential Americans in U.S. history. Like Lincoln, I too enjoy reading and writing and seek to create positive change in the world. During the time when Lincoln was president, there were many social issues such as slavery and corruption in politics that were dividing people in the country. In today's time, once again we find ourselves as a country divided by left and right wing politics along with similar social issues such as mass incarceration, institutional racism, and corruption in politics. There's much work that still needs to be done when it comes to addressing certain problems like inequality, injustice, and basic human rights. As a future leader, I plan to be a voice for the people and work towards making this world more equal and just for all. My plan is to create various community outreach programs that focus on teaching the youth about sustainable development and self-sufficiency. With this model, we can ensure that our children will not only become better friends to each other but also to their environment. Abraham Lincoln stood up for all people regardless of race, color, or Creed and gave his life in doing so. I am willing to make the same sacrifice in order for our children of today to see it better tomorrow. May peace and love cover you in all the days to come.

Columbia College Chicago - Anthony Fuentes

Seven score and Seventeen years ago, President Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg address after the bloodiest and most decisive battles of the Civil War. He stated in his speech, "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced." Lincoln explicitly implies that the war of injustice and inequality is yet to be over and I for one am ready to be in the front lines.

As a creative, who happens to be a person of color, I will do everything I can to ensure representation, diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of my works. Whether it is film, TV, or media, children deserve to look up at that screen and see someone who embodies and relates to them.

We are a country that is supposed to be founded on freedom and liberty and it is time we actually own up to that. Abraham Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation in 1863, but that was only the tip of the iceberg. Look at our country right now, more politically divided than we have been in a long time. Instead of continuing to increase disputes between the right and the left, it is time for us to all come together and think about the greater good. We cannot control who someone is or how someone chooses to represent themselves, we can only control our own actions.

It is time for our generation to bring forward a new age of acceptance and peace, where we voice the unheard, stand up for our rights, and create a country we can all be proud of.

Concordia University - Gerardo Medina

Abraham Lincoln's life is the essence of what it means to live a life of service and commitment to the greater good. I wish to become an attorney that helps marginalized communities. Lincoln's legacy will serve as a source of inspiration to me as I progress through my educational journey and life. Like Lincoln I will always strive to be honest, courageous, and humble. Whatever I accomplish, I will always remember where I came from and do my best to help people that need help. This is what Lincoln has taught me.

DePaul University – Gisselle M. Cervantes

The essence of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide in living a life of civic service and commitment to the greater good because of the way the Lincoln Academy carries on Lincoln's legacy by leading by example. Everyday, people are living their lives in commitment to the people around them and leading a life of justice. Through efforts such as those carried out by the Lincoln Academy, an example is being set for everyone else on how to live a life of service. I have been inspired by the many people around me who live a life of civic service and commitment to others, which has inspired me to do the same.

Dominican University – Carlos Alberto Benitez Cruz

Abraham Lincoln's leadership and legacy reminds us of the importance of a united nation under the promise of equity and freedom for all people. Through his spirit, we must continue to advocate and advance to create a more just and humane world where no person is targeted or ostracized for the color of their skin, the religion they practice, who they love, or who they are. As we strive for a more equitable and just nation, we must remind ourselves that there is no such thing as a small role. Whether we challenge racism at home through conversation or draft policies to ensure equitable access to education, we all do our part to make our nation better. Lincoln's legacy is a call to action for all people in America to challenge and correct injustice at home, at school, at work, and in our government.

East-West University – Esther Jimenez

When people try to spell my name, they usually spell it incorrectly, just like when my own race tells me that going to school is an incorrect action and that I should focus on being a housewife. However, I do believe that I need to move on from the negativity and use it as a way to exceed in life. I am the first person to ever graduate from college to get my bachelors degree; however, I don't stop there. My main goal is to make sure that I am making a difference in our nation's economy. My goal is to make sure that I am changing my future students' mind towards the nation, making sure that I am becoming a leader and a role model to a great group of people. How will I accomplish this? By becoming the change.

I am currently enrolled in East West University and I am a senior and I am really glad I picked this school to attend. When I first came here, I wasn't sure if it was the right choice; however, I met a very wonderful teacher who showed me how much I am capable of doing with my life. Since that day I gave a good impression of myself, because I knew what I wanted and I became a teacher assistant. I've been making sure that my students are understanding and I am giving them my time to succeed. I see myself leading my students into success and leading myself into an amazing career path that no one thought I was going to succeed in.

Eastern Illinois University – Cole D. Hoover

How you do anything is how you do everything. Leave something better than you found it. You can word it however you want, but it can be simplified to just serve. Serve others and be fulfilled. Everyone has the capacity to help. Something that may seem insignificant to you may mean the world to someone else. As I look to begin my career as a special educator, I advocate for the families and the children I serve to better their lives and implore others to do the same. I go back to a lesson I learned from President Lincoln, that what is popular may not always be right. The right thing to do may anger people. Just because everyone else is doing it, doesn't mean you have to. As a parent would put it, if your friends jumped off a cliff would you? Do the right thing no matter what people may say or think, and the right people will follow you. When you surround yourself with people who aim to serve and change others, your capacity for change grows. Give everyone a voice and a seat at the table. When you are at the table, it is your responsibility to see who is not.

Elmhurst University - Christopher Binder

At the very center of our human want and desire is to belong and be a part of a community. It is leaders who recognize that desire and strive to cultivate that community so that others' needs can be met. Abraham Lincoln stated, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." With that being said those leaders have an obligation to see what others do not in dark times, walk through life with a growth mindset, and not simply talk about leading, but be about leading. I have recognized my ability to lead at a very young age and I have had relationships and role models to learn from. We all have the ability to lead, and at the core of what I want to do is empower people to do just that. By no means am I perfect, however, with my faith and the recognition of my God given gifts I commit to a life of service. I commit to demonstrating kindness, love and servant leadership to all whom I engage with in each moment of my life. The world entices us to blend in, but we are called to stand out.

Eureka College – Madison Loger

As I am about to graduate from Eureka College, in hopes to pursue a master's degree in Social Work, I will look towards Lincoln's legacy to gain the confidence to pursue my hopes and dreams of becoming a successful professional. My hope is to one day be able to help hundreds of individuals recover from their hardships. I will look towards some of Lincoln's most notable traits of being selfless, determined, and committed to making sure my goals become a reality. As Lincoln fought to abolish slavery and did so unequivocally, even though he knew that millions of people were against him, he kept his chin up during the tumultuous era he inherited during his presidency. I will also follow in Lincoln's footsteps by leading by example in hopes that others will also strive to reach their goals and help those who are most in need. As the 2020 Lincoln Laureate of Eureka College, I will not let my alma mater down and I will remain open-minded, considerate, and determined to make a difference within my community, so that others may also follow in my footsteps to aim to not only to make our community, but also our society a better place for all.

Governors State University – Jeanine Latrice Koger

As an Army Veteran, I respect and endorse Lincoln's words, "a nation that does honor its heroes will not long endure." He was a veteran too. During his Gettysburg address, Lincoln asserted we needed to win the war so that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." This quote inspires my political, social, and community activism. I aspire to reside in a country where every person's voice matters. I am a deputy registrar, so I travel from county to county in this great Land of Lincoln registering people to vote, to ensure everyone's voice is heard on election day.

When I consider the life of the 16th President of the United States, I am grateful that he left a legacy of not only leadership but and compassion and equity as well. He was concerned about and advocated for the least of us. In Lincoln's last address, just three days before his assassination, he again showed us why he is the most revered President. The Civil War had just ended, and rather than delivering a celebratory speech, Honest Abe spoke of equity, unity, and inclusion.

Lincoln's example inspires my volunteerism as a Sexual Assault Advocate, a prison ministry member at my church, the treasurer of Governors State University's Black Student Union, and the Board of Trustees Representative for the Student Senate. My goal upon acquiring my doctorate in counseling is to cultivate positive change in the lives of military veterans and underserved populations through Mindfulness meditation and activism. With my civic-minded endeavors, I strive to leave a legacy of hope, justice, and involvement.

Greenville University – Sidney Rose Webster

During my time at Greenville University, the traits of character and service have been embedded into the way I think, behave, and live. The development of the two traits led me to care for those around me. I can't change the whole world. However, I can spread love in my little corner of the world. If we each focus on that, suddenly the atmosphere shifts, and together, we can in fact change the world. As a Lincoln Leadership Legacy award winner, I commit to the continuous effort to serve my family, community, nation, and, in turn, the world. I will do this by using my voice to advocate for the marginalized, giving of my time and treasure for those in need, and giving back to the people and places that have served me.

Illinois College - Olivia Jordan

Leadership is a word that is thrown around a lot. From the time we are old enough to talk, we are encouraged to “be good leaders.” But leadership, despite the number of times I have heard it discussed in my life, is a difficult concept to define. Leadership is far from a single definition. In fact, what leadership looks like would probably be different for every person who reads this. Leadership is challenging and terrifying and heavy. But it is also enjoyable and exciting and rewarding. While leadership looks different to everyone, one thing is for sure, great leaders inspire others. Now, more than ever before, I see a real need for great leaders in our country. Leaders who can inspire others to act: to vote, to speak up, to listen, to change. Lincoln once said, “Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm.” My goal has been and always will be to inspire change in those around me. Change in how we treat others; change in how we allow others to treat us. As a student right now, that is in the form of being engaged politically and encouraging others to follow suit. As a teacher, it will be inspiring my students to stand up for what they believe and challenging them to grow in their beliefs. Today, and every day, leaders should use their voices for those who are not being heard and challenge injustices around them. Leaders should “put their feet in the right place, then stand firm.” I strive to stand firm in my beliefs and lead others to do the same.

Illinois Institute of Technology - Diana Silvas

The legacy of Abraham Lincoln is known throughout history, from being a humble man to helping abolish slavery with the Emancipation Proclamation.

“I am a leader” is not what I would have described myself as when I was a young girl. I was not born a leader. However, throughout my life I learned about leaders like Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi, MLK, and many more. Learning from them, I grew my leadership skills. I wanted to be part of the change I wanted to see in life. In high school, I started to join student organizations such as Student Council, NHS, Recycling Club and more.

Illinois Tech helped me expand on these skills by providing me opportunities to be a leader for my student body community. One of the organizations I committed myself to was Union Board where I became President last year and helped plan student events. The goals of these events were to build the student body community and give students a break from their academics.

Moving forward with my future, I have many goals that I hope to accomplish. One of those goals is inspiring young girls to get involve in the STEM field; focusing more on the technology and breaking the gender gap we currently have.

I aspire to be a great leader just like Lincoln.

Illinois State University – Kathryn J. Bruce

Lincoln's leadership legacy will inspire me for years to come as a reminder of what it means to be a civically engaged and aware individual. I want to work towards living a life in service to my community, wherever it may be, and plan to fully devote myself to fighting for the greater good in this world.

Illinois Wesleyan University – Meghan Lehmann

In his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln reminds the nation to not only respect those who lost their lives, but he also tells the nation not to forget why they died and what they fought for. Our country is as divided then as it is now. Though we can hide behind the fact that the law says everyone is equal, we know in actuality that is not the case. The words of Lincoln fought to pull together a country that was divided, and these are words our country needs to hear again. Lincoln states in his Second Inaugural Address, "...with malice toward none, with charity for all...". These are words that we as leaders must live by. We cannot wait for a single entity to mend our country. It takes all of us. It takes leaders from all communities, big and small, to stand and fight for those that cannot. Lincoln's legacy serves as a reminder for us all to elevate the voices of the oppressed and ignored. It's a reminder to advocate for those that cannot do so for themselves. It is a reminder to stand firm against injustice, bigotry, and hate. As for me specifically, Lincoln's words are a reminder to do best by my patients, even when everything stands in my way. It's a reminder to speak up when they cannot. It's a reminder to be heard when they are not. It's a reminder to advocate for their betterment. In the end, Lincoln reminds me to act "...with malice toward none, with charity for all...".

Judson University – Rebecca Marie Johnson

Americans are taught from an early age who Abraham Lincoln was and why he was important. He was not just a tall man with a top hat. He was an honorable, excellent leader who exemplified courage, empathy, honesty, and integrity on every given occasion, no matter the cost. He lived his life committed to serving others, and devoted so much of his time and energy towards seeking the common good. Abraham Lincoln was a man who lived to serve others, rather than himself. He set an example of selflessness and humility; an example that every person would benefit from following. I believe if we, like Abraham Lincoln, removed our selfish motives and lived our lives focused on serving others, all of humanity would flourish.

Knox College - Isaac Hughes

At Knox College (where I go to college), it can be said that everyone has a healthy obsession with the history of Abraham Lincoln. On our campus is the last standing sight of any of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and students and faculty alike feel an affinity to the former president for his effect not just on our campus but on our nation. Of course, behind this fanaticism for all things Lincoln is some serious respect for his life. The work that Lincoln accomplished during his time as before and during his presidency was not easy, nor did it give instant tangible rewards. Rather, what motivated Lincoln was a desire to have a lasting legacy on the people around him, and those who will come after him. I believe that this tenet is something that all Americans (and citizens of the world) should hold with them. As long as we strive to leave the world better than how we found it, we are fulfilling the legacy of Lincoln.

Lake Forest College – Uchechi Okeke

Abraham Lincoln's legacy is inspiring to me because of how people-minded he was. In his famous Gettysburg Address, he said: "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."

I often think about how much better life would be if we paid more attention to history and the bloodshed, movements, and rallies that occurred all in the name of bettering our world. It is through service that we are able to understand the plight of our ancestors and empathize with one another. Through service we are able to work collectively for a better future, one in which everyone feels cared for, seen, and understood. President Lincoln led by tapping into his humanity and acknowledging the needs of the people he was serving. His life is an example of how leading with love, and little empathy, can manifest a more equitable and just world. I serve because I am human, and in my humanity is a duty to advocate and take care of my community and the world around me, just as my ancestors so bravely did.

Lewis University – Grace Ann Crumbaugh

What I have witnessed in today's society is hearts broken with grief and pain, and such deep divisiveness. But amidst so much hopelessness and despair, I also see the provision of growth and support coursing through the intertwining of people in community. Communities that celebrate together and sometimes mourn together, who share their resources and their experiences to benefit those around them. It is that same selflessness and love that inspires me to work for social change and for justice. To not back down from my morals and values when life gets tough and to shine a spotlight on those voices that usually cannot be heard.

My passion and goal is to one day achieve educational reform. Education is the foundational push for future generations to evolve and advance this society, all while realizing self-discoveries and learning to critically think about the world around them...at least that is what I envision education should be. Imagine a classroom in which students are encouraged to learn about themselves and their own passions, while also exploring class content in a valuable and engaging way. This can happen if and when resources are allocated equitably amongst schools, enabling administrators, teachers, counselors, social workers, coaches, artistic mentors, parents, students and so many others to work together in creating a well-rounded education.

Like President Lincoln did many years ago for his country, it is my hope to be just as dedicated in sparking monumental change for the better. He knew that justice doesn't come from merely changing the laws, but also through unwavering unity found in communities that care for one another as American citizens.

Lincoln Christian University – Seth Alan Webster

During my time of furthering my education at Lincoln Christian University, I have come to appreciate Lincoln's example of leadership. And I am honored to have been recognized as a Student Laureate based upon my efforts in leading those around me while also pushing myself in the classroom. As Lincoln valued service, I too will value the importance of serving others. Instead of seeing what others can do for me, I will honor them by serving them first. I will also remain civic-minded by staying hungry for learning and never being content with my understanding of the world around us. And my hope is to pass this mindset on to those I have the privilege of leading.

Lincoln College - Melissa Joy Benson

Abe Lincoln left one of the greatest leadership legacies in the United States history. His personal toolbox of Integrity, Empathy, Honesty, and Courage helped him unite a separated country full of hate.

Everyone has their toolbox in life, full of the values needed for success. It is important that each leader familiarizes themselves with their toolbox. Integrity is the toolbox itself, encompassing who you are and the morals you hold. Empathy is the tape measurer, how large is your project? Your empathy must be able to extend to those you lead, caring for and respecting everyone from all walks of life. Honesty is the hammer. What a toolbox without a hammer? Your Honesty hammer knows when to hit the nail and hold your ground but can take the nail out when mistakes have been made. Courage is your flashlight; without it you cannot see your true potential. You must have the courage to take the steps to achieve your goals. Have courage to be the best that you can be when others do not believe.

No one opens a toolbox, seeing the tools for the first time and knows how to use them. As we gain experience working with others, these tools we use become second nature. We become master craftsmen of life, but the first step is opening the toolbox. Imagine the teams built, the businesses built, and your dreams built with the use of Lincoln's toolbox.

Loyola University Chicago – Camille Jackson

Lincoln's legacy of leadership serves as a reminder in uniting people together in order to make our world stronger. I want to extend his legacy within my life to make sure that my commitment to a greater good centers and uplifts BIPOC, LGBT+, and other systematically marginalized voices that are often overlooked. I want to make sure that the communities that I'm serving are with the people who are affected the most. You can't create change for people, it must be done with people to create a socially just and equitable future.

McKendree University - Caleb Reid Shipley

Leadership is developed over time through the discipleship of those that have come before and set the standard for what it means to be a leader. Leaders do not consider themselves above anyone but rather bear the cross of those following behind them. When you take a walk, people will only start to follow when they have seen your character, judged your morals, and decided that you are a reflection of what they would like to see in themselves.

Millikin University – Justin N. Craig

As a lifelong resident of Illinois, President Lincoln has been one of the most revered figures in the classroom. Stories about "Honest Abe" and his tall stove-pipe hat portrayed President Lincoln as an unrefined man who held true to his virtues. However, this outdated perspective of President Lincoln is too simplistic for the man history remembers. In the face of civil war, President Lincoln had a vision and a dream of what the United States can become united as one for a greater good. Yet, we have never lived up to the Lincoln's vision nor have we even come close to its potential.

The pursuit of greater good is rooted in community involvement and living a civic-minded life. Involvement means to engage people as human beings and to listen. The intentional act of listening is crucial to prevent blind charity which can often hurt communities it intends to help. A civic-minded life is also a life of action. Listening alone does not change communities for the better. So, both the act of listening and action are crucial for each other to make a difference as one alone cannot sustain community engagement and change. However, with both, we can start to live towards Lincoln's vision.

Monmouth College – Joseph Coan Botte Doner

The story of Abraham Lincoln is that of a man who was made the leader of an inherently imperfect nation built on both the great aspirations and great failings of mortal men. Lincoln, despite never truly expecting to attain the power he would, became wholly dedicated to improving our systems and our society. He was well-documented as being a humble, hardworking, and honest man throughout both his personal life and public career. When he did attain the highest office in the nation, he did not allow it to change his authenticity, modesty, or work ethic despite his continual struggle against family tragedies, depression, and doubt. Lincoln was also well known for talking with nearly anyone having a petition, grievance, criticism, or piece of advice. It is this openness that grounded him and was a major factor in both his ability and the ability of his administration to preserve the Republic. There is no getting around the fact that Abraham Lincoln was as flawed a human being as any; but until the day he died, he never ceased working at it, never stopped trying to make himself and the country he lived in a better place than when he was born into it. In this way Lincoln is my example; this is the path that I have followed and that I will continue to follow as a citizen and now, as a Lincoln Laureate. Merely one person working to make both myself, the land, and the world I live in better than they have been so that we may someday overtake the great strides of the giants that came before us.

National Louis University – Vontain Cornelius Wray

When looking at the title of Lincoln Laureate I feel as if I have upheld the very same fundamental principles that encompass the position. For me, my words and actions have always had to correspond with one another because there is a special symbiotic relationship between the two. This very same thought process has been an essential element of my personality that I have managed to implement on and off-campus. While on campus I have managed to help transcend the Student Engagement Office from being a fairly modest department to one of the premier departments of the school. By providing additional insight from the lens of a student were we able to incorporate the right ideas to stimulate student activity. That same logic applied to academics and the overall student experience while being at the school. By using my voice in a proficient manner while on the student advisory board was I able to enhance certain aspects of each department. While doing so I incorporated that into the political field by interning at an unpaid internship for the State Representative's Office for nearly a year. During my tenure there we did voter registration seminars, ceasefire exhibitions, and school supply charity events. This emphasized my understanding of creating something eternal that was larger than myself.

While doing all this I managed to maintain a 3.7 GPA over the span of four years, while being invited to NSLS and making the dean's list a multitude of times. A brewing question one may have after acknowledging all of this positivity would be, what drives me? Simply put, it would be not sufficing with convenient circumstances. Therefore, I would be raising the bar for myself not necessarily letting someone raise it for me. Also, my vision of making it past those hardships not only set a precedent for myself but set one for aspiring generations as well.

North Central College – Emma L. Nelson

Abraham Lincoln was known to lead through his vision, empathy, and perseverance; each are traits that I strive for. My desire to be a leader naturally flows out of my passionate heart. For as long as I can remember, I have had a passion for learning and for helping those around me. During my undergraduate years, I have been able to lead by demonstrating empathy for those around me, persevering through challenges, and developing a shared vision with others. I've combined my passion for my area of study; athletic training, with leadership opportunities. These opportunities have allowed me to develop and practice empathy while I pursue my passion for helping others. I find so much joy in working alongside my peers, seeing them meet their goals, and helping them realize their potential and their worth along the way. When I think about being a leader, I think about all the things I have learned from those around me. My future leadership opportunities will be impacted by the experiences I've had at North Central College and from receiving this award and will inspire even more reflection on my own leadership throughout my life.

North Park University – Jessica Torres

As a future educator, I plan to prepare students for a world where they can become productive members of society. Educators hold a responsibility of teaching future generations about civic engagement and their ability to have their voice heard in a constantly changing world. President Lincoln was an honest, empathetic, and admirable leader. Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will serve as an encouragement as I grow throughout my experiences of a civic-minded life and commitment for the greater good. As I complete my undergraduate studies and begin my next chapter in life, I'll continuously strive toward being the best leader, educator, and civically engaged individual in and outside of a classroom.

Northeastern Illinois University - Obsmara Ulloa

Abraham Lincoln's moral rhetoric, manifested in his fight for a disenfranchised people and in preserving the union, rippled throughout a young nation over a hundred and fifty years ago. Today, our many celebrations of his actions demonstrate that his legacy continues to spread through our society and touch the lives of those around us. Leaders before us, like Lincoln, have made their contributions to the prosperity of humanity and left us their legacies as guides. As humanity is in the midst of major global challenges this year, I believe that the best way to honor these leaders is to model their vision for the greater good through our actions.

In the sciences, innovation benefits from people with different life experiences across distinct disciplines coming together to put forward solutions to complex problems. Like Lincoln, my own education has been untraditional, we both come from a family of farmers, and we both found a new home in the state of Illinois. However, it is also through commitment to educational excellence that I have been able to improve, as well become a leader in my university community at Northeastern Illinois University. This is why as my undergraduate studies conclude and I move forward with my academic career, my hope is that I, too, can use my education in computer science to work alongside my peers and mentors to build on Lincoln's leadership legacy. Our words and actions, big or small, can have far-reaching effects long after we make them.

Northern Illinois University – Jill Elizabeth Belluomini

Although Abraham Lincoln's portrait is forever engraved onto the penny, his true legacy is coined through his leadership and drive in the pursuit of the betterment of humanity. Saying, "you have to do your own growing no matter how tall your grandfather was," Lincoln valued not only improving himself but also those around him. Even though I may not have grown as tall as Lincoln, him having been six feet and four inches tall and me rising only to five feet and one inch, his drive for growth has inspired me to reach his height in other ways by continuously enriching myself and my community. As a chemistry major pursuing a research career, Lincoln's leadership characteristics of courage, empathy, honesty, and integrity serve as a guide for me to better myself and those around me. Through his courage, I am inspired to pursue a career in chemistry as a woman and also support other women in STEM fields. His empathy encourages me to be a mentor. Since I aspire to earn my Ph.D. in physical and computational chemistry and become a professor at a research institution, I will use this empathy to guide my students and researchers to be future leaders. Similarly, I will conduct credible research that helps to improve society, which is motivated by Lincoln's honesty and integrity. Therefore, Lincoln's leadership legacy guides me to be a courageous, empathetic, and honest researcher who continuously strives to better myself and humanity.

Northwestern University - Femke Munting

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy is precisely that: a legacy. The work he completed during his life was impactful, but the opportunities he created for future leaders have created changes beyond anything he could have achieved on his own. Serving others is not about empowering them from a position of superiority; a life of service is a life of learning. Learning from the future Lincolns around you and supporting them in any way you can. My time with LEND has allowed me to support the community around me, but it has also allowed me to work with the people I know are already on their way to leading their communities to new heights. To me, Lincoln's legacy is not about working to fill his shoes with my own leadership work and service. It's about finding the people who are already walking in those shoes and following them.

Olivet University - Lily Jarzabkowski

Abraham Lincoln's leadership has left a lasting ripple effect for generations. When considering the impact he left behind, I am reminded of the words within his second inaugural address. In his closing remarks Lincoln stated, "With malice toward none; with charity for all." He then encouraged the nation to create a lasting peace. That iconic phrase highlighting Lincoln's desire to serve the public with no intention toward ill will towards anyone, is one to remember and consider when leading. President Lincoln lived a life of constant empathy and compassion for others. He understood the importance of looking at each situation through the eyes of someone else. This was demonstrated through his unique pick of a cabinet full of individuals with opposing views. Lincoln wanted to hear every opinion available because effective empathy stems from genuine listening. President Lincoln led a life of compassion for others, but this did not mean he wouldn't stand up for what was right and stand against what was wrong. He was a benevolent leader who was firm in his convictions. Whether he was speaking out against slavery, navigating difficult situations within foreign policy, or serving as commander in chief during the Civil War, Lincoln was a just and firm leader. As I study to become an attorney like Abraham Lincoln, I look toward his example of the dichotomy of leadership. In order to be a true leader, one must practice empathy consistently and also have unwavering moral compass.

Principia College - Tara Adhikari

Abraham Lincoln is often remembered for the policies enacted toward the end of his presidential term—for the Emancipation Proclamation, for his support of the 13th amendment—with little attention given to his early political career. Yet, the views he expressed in the Lincoln-Douglas debates serve as a crucial benchmark against which to judge his later policies that transformed our nation. Lincoln did not originally believe in social and political equality for Blacks. Indeed, he publicly admitted his opposition. However, what distinguishes Lincoln as a leader is that he did not remain confined to his early views, but rather listened, learned, and changed. It was this receptivity and moral courage that allowed Lincoln to become the champion of equality that we know and celebrate today. This is the example of leadership and service I aspire to. Concepts of equality and equity will continue to evolve in this country and throughout the world for generations to come. As this evolution takes place, I hope to have Lincoln's humility to correct my own false assumptions, his ability to listen to those whom society would neglect, and his courage to become the ultimate champion for a more equitable future.

In the Gettysburg Address Lincoln urged us to continue the unfinished work of fighting for freedom and democratic government. This involves seeking out and lifting up all the Lincolns of this world—not necessarily the ones born with talent and access but rather the self-taught strivers, which Lincoln exemplified. I owe my success to those who saw the Lincoln in me. As I continue on, I hope to always look for and uplift the Lincoln in others.

Quincy University – Jacob Flynn

When I decided to go to college, I made a decision, not only to better my life, but hopefully, to have a positive impact on someone else in the future. Going to college is particularly challenging for me due to my physical disabilities, and since beginning my college career, I have set out to do the best that I can. When I discovered that I had been nominated and then named as Student Laurette, I felt extremely honored and somewhat surprised. To have Quincy University recognize me as a leader to represent their university, means that I have made an impact on someone during my college career. I am humbled by the fact that the QU members think that I am worthy of this award and I will be eternally grateful for the help and guidance that I have received. I owe my success in part to my professors and others who have helped me to get this far. In the future I hope to succeed in my chosen career and exemplify the values that I have learned.

Rockford University - Tanner Elliott

I have always lived by the leadership example of Servant Leadership, leading others by walking alongside them. To be honored with such recognition in the legacy of Abraham Lincoln is very humbling. As a Student Lincoln Laurette, I will pledge to continue to live by the 16th president's characteristics that I admire so deeply. I will continue to lead by example and lead with honesty and integrity.

I am inspired by Lincoln's quote in a letter to Isham Reavis in November of 1855, "Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing." I do my best to hold true to this principle, and it drives me to take advantage for leadership positions and opportunities presented to me. I am grateful for the growth it provides me, and I also hope to serve as an inspiration to my peers. My resolution to continue to grow as a servant leader will always be fueled by the legacy President Lincoln has left on me and this great nation.

I am deeply honored to receive this recognition, and with this honor, I will continue to strive to be a leader in my community, state, and personal life.

Roosevelt University - Kaitlyn Greenholt

Abraham Lincoln was widely known for his emotional intelligence – his empathy was never hidden away for fear of being seen as weak. Rather, by bringing his empathy to the forefront and engaging in ongoing dialogues with his constituents, he was able to evolve into a better leader through constant civic engagement. He was self-taught, generally regarded as unpolished and audacious, and yet his dedication to justice and truth endeared him to the public. His honesty inspired trust, his passion for story-telling inspired sentimentality, and his actions inspired leadership.

Becoming a leader was not a role thrust upon me, nor did it happen overnight. Like Abraham Lincoln, I came into my own through constant dialogue with the world around me. As I've grown older, I have accepted the fact that I will only be truly fulfilled with my life if it is one dedicated to serving those whose voices have not been heard. Through my research on fair housing policy, I have come to learn that the only way to actively make a difference in the world is to elevate those who have been disenfranchised by giving them a platform. Equity is something that can be achieved only through advocating for those most in need of it. In my pursuit of equity, I vow to be a leader who is honest, empathetic, and audacious; I will continue to learn from my environment and those around me, and I will prioritize the needs of the community above all else.

Saint Xavier University – Yasmine Zavala

Abraham Lincoln made a statement in which he defined his vision of the United States as "...a struggle for maintaining in the world, that form, and substance of government, whose leading object is, to elevate the condition of men---to lift artificial weights from all shoulders---to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all---to afford all, an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life". Lincoln's leadership legacy serves as a guide in living a civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good in which individuals should do anything within their means to help their fellow human beings.

I have personally taken on initiatives that have focused on promoting and supporting the Latinx community, raising domestic violence awareness, and improving racial and economic equity in higher education graduation rates. In the past four years as an undergraduate student, I have sought small ways in which I could contribute to my community and the betterment of society, so that others may also have better opportunities in life, and I feel fortunate in having been able to find the opportunities to do so. Moving forward, I hope that my fellow Lincoln Academy Student Laureates and I can continue exemplifying Abraham Lincoln's leadership characteristics of courage, empathy, honesty, and integrity to improve our society and the quality of life for our fellow citizens.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago – Anavi Bhushan Nugyal

Growing up, history was one of my least favorite subjects, as I never understood why studying and celebrating the past mattered when the present was in a constant state of chaos. I was a child who had to memorize dates, names, and achievements of individuals so far from me that I couldn't see the point. Today as a young adult, in a space where my immediate surroundings reflect genuine chaos, I am beginning to understand the value of knowing the past. I always believed that we only needed the present, to change and grow to be better. However today, I realize that what is considered better is not the same for everyone. Not all people want the same kind of change, and not everyone has the same history that influences their present. Today I can see that our society is constantly influenced by our past. No matter how much I will it away, I will have to accept and reconcile the past to wish for a better future. Today, I can appreciate Lincoln's Leadership Legacy and learn from his efforts to build a united and equal community. Abraham Lincoln was a good leader because he listened to, accepted and fought to change the community for the better. He wanted to build a better society for everyone around him. His legacy has never been more important than it is given the current state of the world, where all communities are disjointed and in a state of chaos.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale - Maryam Makhdoom

Abraham Lincoln exemplified servant leadership as president during one of the most pivotal times in American history. His dedication to his principles allowed him to preserve the Union and uplift entire populations. While medicine will allow me to treat individuals, public health teaches me how to care for communities. I am committed to dismantling barriers that prevent people from achieving optimal wellbeing. The COVID pandemic and ensuing social justice movements have unveiled a sense of urgency in me that remind me how addressing health disparities in the world is more relevant now than ever. I am sure that Lincoln felt an even greater sense of urgency and responsibility in his fight for equality and justice. He exhibited a strong sense of duty, trustworthiness, and selflessness that reflect the ethos of many public health and medical professionals today. I believe healthcare is a human right, and Lincoln's legacy of protecting human dignity will help guide and inspire me as a future physician to make healthcare equitable for all.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville – Tessa Renee Walker

The threads that tie society together are rooted in communal dedication to equality and liberty. Devotion to these principles didn't escape President Lincoln; he knew the value in building up a nation that would be prepared to sacrifice time and effort for the purpose of unity. Alongside Lincoln's legacy, I too see the potentialities in a world in which people would sacrifice for one another in order to foster communities that promote equality and liberty. Ultimately, I am eager to take part in preparing young adults with the tools necessary to engage in civil discourse, to communicate through bridges of *humility*, and to engage in communal hospitality. Through conducting ethnographic research and teaching in a higher educational institution, I hope to give students the space to recognize cultural dissimilarities as *opportunities to learn*, and diversity as a valuable catalyst for growth. As Lincoln said, "The best way to predict your future is to create it." As long as our leaders and communities are continually equipped with the proper tools to truly promote equality, liberty, and freedom, then I believe our future is bright.

The University of Chicago – Firouz Jon Niazi

People often say that Illinois is microcosm of the United States. Illinois has big cities, wide-open cornfields and a slice of a great lake. We have long, hot summers but also cold, teeth-chattering winters. Since its acceptance into the Union, Illinois has helped feed, power, and supply the rest of the country with not only goods, but also ideas and innovations. Looking to the future, I know Illinois will continue to model the rest of the country by proactively embracing renewable energy and definitively ensuring equal justice for all. Beyond the geographical features of our state, I have learned how Illinois reflects the country in other ways, too. Illinoisans have played roles in some of the most challenging moments in the country's history, and Illinoisans have helped achieve the successes that have propelled us forward into a more prosperous future. I think perhaps above all else, Illinois represents the country in another important way: in Illinois we bridge our divides. No matter where we live, who we are, and what sports team we support, I believe Illinoisans recognize our shared commitment to improving our community for the next generation. I know that the responsibility now rests on the shoulders of my generation to improve not only the lives of all our fellow Illinoisans, but to also demonstrate to the rest of the country and the world how we can achieve the future we dream of when we work together. In the spirit of the Lincoln's legacy, I will commit myself to life in pursuit of this responsibility.

Trinity Christian College – Ross Michael Barz

In all of Abraham Lincoln's legacy, his revolution and redesign of leadership becomes most prominent. The role of Commander in Chief was transformed from what seemed a military position to a representative of the American people. And in this transformation, Lincoln began preserving the integrity of the nation and its citizens in the fight for a better future, holding fast to honesty, grace, humility, and justice.

Lincoln teaches that true leadership is dangerous. His life and death both exemplify the vulnerability it takes to step towards the greater good. However, with true leadership, there is a motivation and dedication to engage with and learn from communities. And the danger is that it holds our nation accountable to wrongdoings and refocuses our journey towards the good life.

As my story moves forward, achievements as large as Commander in Chief are unknown. However, I am continually fueled by the hope that, in any capacity, I have the aptitude of becoming a true leader. I'm strengthened not by success, but by joining other leaders in the task of listening to our communities and making change happen. And with that, I want to be ready to acknowledge when I fall short and encouraged to learn. I am ready to be vulnerable. I am ready to be dangerous.

Trinity International University - Justin Chu

In leading this nation through some of its darkest moments, Abraham Lincoln demonstrated a remarkable breadth of leadership capabilities. However, I believe that a value underpinning them all was a commitment to public service, to a good greater than himself. As contemporary culture increasingly turns toward seeking one's own comfort as the highest good, we ought to be inspired by Lincoln's pursuit of justice, excellence, and service for and to all people. Although this may come at the expense of success, popularity, or, in Lincoln's case, one's own life, we should enthusiastically pursue causes greater than ourselves. In the spirit of Lincoln's life and vision, I hope that my fellow laureates and I can excel in our respective fields for the betterment of our communities. Against a society that tells us to seek only our own interests, may we all foster a culture of humble service to others. We owe it to those who have gone before us and those who come after us to work for the good of humanity, understanding that the most fulfilling life comes from a life of service.

University of Illinois Chicago - Wasan Mani Kumar

Abraham Lincoln's commitment to the greater good will always remain a guiding inspiration for my life. As a kid, I read a story about Lincoln walking miles to return change to a customer – a story that taught me about showing integrity in all my interactions. Lincoln was born into poverty, and pushed himself to get an education and became a lawyer. He led this nation through a civil war, all while remaining steadfast in his mission to end the horrors of slavery. After the war ended, he did not retire, but rather kept working to reconcile differences in the fractured, post-war America. Lincoln dedicated himself to equal rights and liberty, and through his legacy he shows us how to always keep fighting for justice, no matter the cost.

University of Illinois Springfield – Kodi J. Smith

As a child living only 40 minutes away from the state capital of Illinois my whole life, Abraham Lincoln was one of the first leaders in history I learned about. Ranging from field trips in elementary school visiting Lincoln's home and tomb, to traveling to Washington D.C. in high school and viewing the Lincoln Memorial there, Lincoln has been a constant role model throughout my childhood. Lincoln truly exemplifies what it means to be a compassionate, intelligent, humanistic leader. There is a reason children learn about Lincoln starting at a young age; he will forever be known in history as a hero because he fought against injustice and stood up for people who did not have a voice.

In my future as a surgeon, I hope to encompass the same leadership qualities he showed the United States and manifest them to my patients and their families in dire times. Being a doctor means dedicating your life to seeing a greater good in the world by directly serving and helping the people who live in it. I believe that by following Abraham Lincoln's lead, I can make that change.

University of Illinois Urbana Champaign – Isabella 'Issy' Marquez

Growing up in Chicago, "Honest Abe" transformed beyond a nickname for our late president. Being honest in all we did was a marker of pride for my fellow Chicagoans and I. Our neighbors, school teachers, firefighters, hospital workers, all turned to honesty to guide us through the painless times, the difficult times, and all of the mundane in between. Being true to our word, being sincere to our honor, and being authentic in all we did was key to why we got out of bed every morning and worked as hard as we did.

Honesty became the guiding principle of my school work, my career aspirations, and my community commitments. Every time I look at one of my students, professors, friends or loved ones, I show love through my honesty. It reminds me why I was taught to always recite "honesty is the best policy!" in my elementary classes every February, as we all put on top hats, long beards, black jackets and all haphazardly sang. This mindset, embodied by President Lincoln, transcends this facet of moral character and makes it a core requirement in humanity. All that it takes to be a human is to have a pulse, but to be humane, as President Lincoln showed us, was to be true in all that you do. Truly obtaining the quality of honesty is no easy task, as Lincoln guided the country through one of the hardest political, moral, and constitutional times. Dedication to honesty like Abraham Lincoln is a continual process that will forever require sincere diligence, devotion, and faithfulness beyond comparison.

University of St. Francis – Alysa Ann Kline

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy is a true representation of courageous leadership, persistent determination, and endless advocacy. Lincoln's legacy acts as a compass for leaders today who wish to cultivate a society that illuminates and values characteristics of respect, fairness, justice, and equality. Lincoln made it clear in his Gettysburg Address that our work as a nation is not done. The leadership provided by us today lay the foundation and sets example for leaders of future generations. Through fruitful contribution to society, we are capable of preserving our freedom, individuality, and unity, something our Nation and ancestors have worked so hard for.

Abraham Lincoln was a voice for those who did not have one, he shed his light in times of darkness, and he fought for those who could not fight for themselves. As a student nurse with a passion for helping those who are critically ill, I wish to carry out and carryover Lincoln's legacy by devoting myself and my life's work to leadership and service. I am committed to offering my hand to anyone who needs help and to lending a listening ear to those who wish to be heard. I'm committed to caring for others without limits and to advocating for any and everyone. Lincoln is an example of how it is with courage that true leadership develops.

VanderCook College of Music - Ashley Barajas-Galan

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy is a reminder to us all that every single individual has the power to change the world around them in a positive way. President Lincoln was a determined and dedicated man, it is because of these qualities we are able to live in a much more peaceful world. Although we are far from the perfect nation, we have come far and must continue Lincoln's work. Through civic engagement and community service we can contribute to the betterment of humanity. As I prepare to enter my field of work, music education, I am reminded to inspire future generations to do good. Like Lincoln, I should not take action for selfish reasons but take action to improve the quality of life for others. I may not reap the benefits of my work or even live to see the outcome, but I can live knowing that I helped create the world I would want to live in. I hope that my work will greatly affect not only my students but also the community, and through that leave a lasting impact in the lives of many.

Western Illinois University - Paula Ramirez

Lincoln's selflessness, his profound love for learning, and his self-discipline serve as a guide for my ongoing journey as both an international student and a young leader. As a child in Colombia, I never foresaw an opportunity to study in the United States, much less in the Land of Lincoln. I did not live in a single room log cabin, nor did I lack education, *but* I did experience hardships and observed injustices and abject poverty thwart the aspirations of many relatives and friends. Thus, much like Lincoln, I understood that taking my education for granted would equate to throwing away a treasure that many others may never have the chance to discover.

My mission to carry out a civic-minded life centers around sharing my education for the benefit of others. I aspire to not only help individuals suffering from various disabilities, but I also wish to mitigate the stigma attached to their condition. Whether it is individuals with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, or terminal illnesses, addressing the psychosocial needs of these vulnerable populations is the focus of my future work as a music therapist and psychologist. I hope to imitate Lincoln's empathetic listening and trustworthiness as a future therapist, as well as his tenacious character as an advocate for those who faced cultural inequality and diminished opportunity.

Western Illinois University - Paula Ramirez, cont.

Lincoln states that "it is for us the living" to commit to "the unfinished work" begun by the soldiers who shed their blood for this great nation. I, too, aspire to resolve this unfinished task by becoming a therapist that will live her life not as her own, but as a gift to others.

Wheaton College – Matteson 'Tess' Aliece De Pretis

The threads that tie society together are rooted in communal dedication to equality and liberty. Devotion to these principles didn't escape President Lincoln; he knew the value in building up a nation that would be prepared to sacrifice time and effort for the purpose of unity. Alongside Lincoln's legacy, I too see the potentialities in a world in which people would sacrifice for one another in order to foster communities that promote equality and liberty. Ultimately, I am eager to take part in preparing young adults with the tools necessary to engage in civil discourse, to communicate through bridges of *humility*, and to engage in communal hospitality. Through conducting ethnographic research and teaching in a higher educational institution, I hope to give students the space to recognize cultural dissimilarities as *opportunities to learn*, and diversity as a valuable catalyst for growth. As Lincoln said, "The best way to predict your future is to create it." As long as our leaders and communities are continually equipped with the proper tools to truly promote equality, liberty, and freedom, then I believe our future is bright.

College of DuPage – Samiha Syed

Courageous, tenacious and steadfast, Lincoln inspired a sense of devotion in others. Lincoln was a servant leader; his desire to serve his country stemmed from a place of devotion. To inspire devotion we, too, must be devoted because only in that complete and utter devotion lies the salvation of mankind and our most whole selves. My aspiration to serve as student trustee stemmed from a deep-rooted devotion to our college community and passion for service. Lincoln's legacy epitomizes what it means to lead altruistically with values of principle rooted in the utmost regard and fervor for humanity and freedom above all.

This past year and continuing, I volunteered 350+ certified hours tutoring, mentoring and working with refugee children and their families through FORA, a 501c (3) non-profit. I served as a Tutor Mentor, Youth Advisory Board Supervisor, Speech/Debate and Model UN Program Coordinator, Research Assistant and Urdu Liaison. I learned that freedom in its most whole form can be experienced in helping facilitate freedom for others. Lincoln freed and revolutionized the nation from the pervasive oppression of slavery and put an end to the Civil War. Sharing Lincoln's leadership philosophy, I found myself on a path to helping refugees explore and gain freedom by finding their voice. I also helped conduct research on how to empower refugees to become civically engaged, mitigate educational disparities, improve quality of tutoring services/resources available and acquire additional grants. Education liberates the mind, body and soul; I feel a sense of honor in facilitating its pursuit in all capacities. In the future, I aspire to found a non-profit that mitigates educational and health-care inequities in third-world countries.