



47th Annual Investiture of Student Laureates

Two thousand twenty-one

In 1975, at the suggestion of Geraldine (Mrs. J. Dennis) Freund, the Lincoln Academy began its Student Laureate Award Program. Each year an outstanding senior from each of the four-year, degree-granting institutions of higher learning in Illinois is awarded a Medallion of Lincoln, a Certificate of Merit and a small stipend and thereby becomes a Student Laureate. Student Laureates are chosen by the chief executive officers of their respective institutions, who also serve as Academic Trustees of The Lincoln Academy of Illinois. Student Laureates are honored for their overall excellence in curricular and extracurricular activities. The ceremony is held in the Hall of Representatives, Old State Capitol, and is followed by a luncheon with the Governor and the Governor's spouse at the Executive Mansion.

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: Scott Simon (2016 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

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.

*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

Student Laureates

Student Laureate	Institution	Academic Trustee
Laura Kathryn Keenan	Augustana College	Steven C. Bahls
Gavin Edward Withaeger	Aurora University	Rebecca Sherrick
Maryam Salik	Benedictine University	Charles Gregory
Brianna Milich	Blackburn College	Mark Biermann
Nailah L. Brown	Bradley University	Stephen Standifird
Nekoiya O. Washington	Chicago State University	Zaldwaynaka 'Z' Scott
Anna Elizabeth Baumeister	Columbia College Chicago	Kuang-Wu Kim
Jesse Muehler	Concordia University Chicago	Russell Dawn
Ankit Pal	DePaul University	A. Gabriel Esteban
Nathaly Valdivia Oberto-Besso	Dominican University	Glena Temple
Asha Thompson	East-West University	M. Wasiulla Khan
Jerimiah A. Boyd-Johnson	Eastern Illinois University	David Glassman
Hannah Riley Bacon	Elmhurst University	Troy VanAken
Chloe Kaye Overstreet	Eureka College	Jamel Santa Cruze Wright
Sedona Lynn Smith	Governors State University	Cheryl Green
Adin Fleischer	Greenville University	Suzanne Davis
Lauren Regina Sgambelluri	Illinois College	Barbara A. Edwards Farley
Joyce Gu	Illinois Institute of Technology	Alan W. Cramb
Luke Christian Madden	Illinois State University	Wendy Wintersteen
Daniel John Maisch	Illinois Wesleyan University	Georgia Nugent
Madison Kendall Psinas	Judson University	Gene Crume
Rebecca Belle Gadiel	Knox College	C. Andrew McGadney
Hernandez Mizraim	Lake Forest College	Stephen D. Schutt
Jada Hoffman	Lewis University	David Livingston
Bryce Andrew Cook	Lincoln Christian University	Don Green
Jacilyn Nicole Gunderson	Lincoln College	David H. Gerlach
Alex Almanza Hernandez	Loyola University Chicago	Jo Ann Rooney
Jessica Ann Hoffmann	McKendree University	Daniel C. Dobbins
Nat Mars Long	Millikin University	Jim Reynolds
Elizabeth M. Gustafson	Monmouth College	Clarence Wyatt

Academic Trustee

Timothy L. Killeen
University of Illinois

Daniel F. Mahoney
Southern Illinois University

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Student Laureates

Student Laureate	Institution	Academic Trustee
Louwallien D. Krupa	National Louis University	Nivine Megahed
Bry'Shawna A. Walker	North Central College	Troy D. Hammond
Ellen G. Hilbrands	North Park University	Mary Surridge
Kimberly Nu-Tall	Northeastern Illinois University	Gloria J. Gibson
Megan Nicole Nordstrom	Northern Illinois University	Lisa Freeman
Claire Koster	Northwestern University	Morton O. Schapiro
Natalie E. Cook	Olivet Nazarene University	John C. Bowling
Sophie Hills	Principia College	Jolanda Westerhof
Bailee S. Highbarger	Quincy University	Brian McGee
Ryan Nathaniel Callahan	Rockford University	Eric Fulcomer
Rose Poplawski	Roosevelt University	Ali Malekzadeh
Katherine M. Hutto	Saint Xavier University	Laurie M. Joyner
Shreya Agarwal	School of the Art Institute of Chicago	Elissa Tenny
Francesca C. Burkett	Southern Illinois University Carbondale	Austin A. Lane
Samantha Rae Gallatin	Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	Randall Pembrook
Stephanie Catherine Reitzig	The University of Chicago	Robert J. Zimmer
Evie Jo Dykhouse	Trinity Christian College	Kurt D. Dykstra
Catherine Alles	Trinity International University	Nicholas Perrin
Courtney J. Washington	University of Illinois at Chicago	Michael D. Amiridis
Summer L. Warner	University of Illinois Springfield	Karen Whitney
Alexa Christine Smith	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	Robert J. Jones
Jonathan Matthew Wolf	University of St. Francis	Arvid C. Johnson
Daniel Richard Schmitt	VanderCook College of Music	Roseanne Rosenthal
Elizabeth N. Lutz	Western Illinois University	Guiyou Huang
Natalie Ann Schuetz	Wheaton College	Philip G. Ryken
Edith Sanchez Hernandez	McHenry County College	Clint Gabbard

stees at Large

Brian Durham
Illinois Community College Board

Ginger Ostro
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, "Palmarum 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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The Hon. Rev. Ron Spears, Vice Chancellor*

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Todd Shapiro*, Treasurer
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The Honorable Pat Quinn

The Honorable Bruce Rauner
The Honorable George H. Ryan

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Ernest Wish

**Sustaining Member*

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Most sincere gratitude to contributors to this Student Laureate virtual ceremony.

Dan & Pam Kelley

Doug & Vicky Stewart

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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Gifts made by Stephanie Pace Marshall, PhD and gifts made on behalf of Dr. Marshall and designated on behalf of the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation and Tellabs Foundation

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(in memory of Tom Johnson)

Saul & Dr. Anne Morse
Kent Noble
Harold 'Hal' Oakley

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Class of 2021 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 47th Class of 2021 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 - Laura Keenan

We often view great leaders as elite people who were born with special gifts and abilities that ordinary people like ourselves cannot attain. Or, we think they were really lucky in life and a great opportunity fell into their lap. Abraham Lincoln, however, reminds us that great leaders are simply ordinary people who wake up every day and choose to contribute to the greater good. They choose this, not for outside obligations, but because they desire within their hearts to do it. When we encounter a difficult situation, our decision-making should be guided by our inner desire to be compassionate, to consider everyone's perspective, to stand up for what is right, and to share the truth, especially when it is difficult. It takes a great deal of courage to choose these principles. It is a daily, life-long commitment. But, Lincoln's Leadership Legacy reminds us that leading from the heart—with courage, integrity, honesty, and empathy—is *always* possible, no matter the circumstances.

Aurora University - Gavin Withaeger

Abraham Lincoln is revered as one of the most respected Presidents to have held office. Lincoln was well-known for his commitment to unite a nation ravaged by conflicting ideologies. Some would even describe his leadership as an act of heroism, but I believe Lincoln would never describe himself this way. Lincoln, a man of humble beginnings, had committed himself to a life of honesty and justice. In accordance with Lincoln's philosophies, I do not believe exceptional abilities are what make someone a hero; more so it is the actions we choose daily. It is the unwavering desire to do what is right, despite the potential for what unfavorable outcomes may follow. As a future nurse and active member of my community, I have committed myself to the healing and protection of all people. I plan to advocate for social justice and defend the basic rights for the people of the world. There will be no reluctance in opening my heart to those in turmoil, no matter the race, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. I hope to serve as a bridge uniting people and empowering them to voice their beliefs, by facilitating an open forum for discussions from both sides. Now more than ever we must listen more than we talk, love more than we hate, and come together more than we divide. In the words of Lincoln himself "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds".

Benedictine University - Maryam Salik

Abraham Lincoln was recognized for his character, perseverance, and as a visionary. His honesty, integrity, and empathy helped him gain the trust of the public. Lincoln's vision was to focus on establishing unity and equality for all people. He was a true advocate for the people and was passionate about creating a better world. These traits allowed him to become an incredible leader and have created his legacy and demonstrates the power of empowering others. To be honored with such recognition is truly humbling. I was incredibly honored and grateful, and it meant to me that I made some positive impact in my community. During my time at Benedictine, I had the amazing opportunity to serve my community during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, and Sexual Assault Awareness Month with Fempower and as a Peer Prevention Educator for the Violence Prevention initiative on campus. Last year, I facilitated a campus-wide Teach-In concurrent session about human and sex trafficking in our communities with an attorney who specializes in providing support and resources to survivors. Also, for two years I helped facilitate Take Back the Night, a national event in support of survivors of sexual assault, at my university. This has been transformative, and it strengthened my passion for community outreach, preventing gender-based violence, and social equity. I am deeply honored to be awarded the Lincoln Laureate award. I hope to continue to find ways to serve my community and to make a positive impact in any way I can.

Blackburn College - Brianna Milich

As a child, I became infatuated with Abraham Lincoln after visiting the museum in Springfield, even picking a copper penny ring at the giftshop to wear so I may view him every day. Of course, his impact in our nation spans far beyond the capital of Illinois, like in my hometown of Washington where Lincoln's footsteps there are set in a plaque proudly in the town square. This was a president who came from a small home with a big dream to serve the American people and bring unity to this great nation. His servant leadership served a greater good and the wake of his footsteps in the nation are found everywhere. Now as a young adult, I have been inspired by Lincoln to start everyday with a growth mindset and simply stop talking about creating unity and start taking action to do so within my community. As a future educator, I commit to equipping students with a growth mindset in themselves and others. I strive to prepare them to use this mindset to in their advocacy of themselves, their rights, and creating peace and unity in their community. At times our nation may seem divided, but through the cultivations of our combined efforts, it is revealed a new era of acceptance and love is just on the horizon.

Bradley University - Nailah Brown

I was always taught, "When you come into your own, when you begin your career and enter into your level of success, do not spend too much time basking in your glory. When you are blessed, you should be a blessing to someone else". This is what shapes my outlook on life and serves as my source of motivation. I am committed to making a positive difference and making sure that I uplift my community and spread my success to others. As I look toward my future, I hope to lend a helping hand wherever I am needed. Through compassion and my respect for every human being, I know I will continue down the path to living a civic-minded life of service and a commitment to a greater good. As Abraham Lincoln once said "kindness is the only service that will stand the storm of life and not wash out. It will wear well and will be remembered long after the prism of politeness or the complexion of courtesy has faded away". I am deeply grateful for the continuous opportunities to represent and advocate for my community. A true leader is one who shines in a dark world and moves forward in faith. I believe alongside my will to succeed, see others succeed, and my confidence in what God has in store for me, that I can continue Lincoln's leadership legacy.

Columbia College - Anna Baumeister

I pledge to serve as a leader with the intention of equal opportunity for all. To act and listen as an ally and advocate in my leadership positions. Under the guide of Lincoln's Legacy, I will continue to work with passion and integrity to better myself and my community.

Concordia University Chicago - Jesse Muehler

In reflecting upon the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln, I am reminded of the immense power found in words. As commonplace as they may be, the ability of words to hurt and to heal, to build up and destroy, remains astounding and inspiring. As the words of generations led to the animosity and hatred that threatened to tear a nation apart, the words of men like Lincoln united and kept our country together. In my vocation as an educator, I hope to use my words for the common good as well. Words that inspire and guide, and words that heal and bring hope. Words that nurture the next generation in order to build up servant leaders dedicated to the good of their neighbor and nation.

DePaul University - Ankit Pal

President Lincoln's leadership legacy has a set of guiding principles which can act as a guide for living a life of service and commitment to positive change. Lincoln led a nation that was deeply divided, a time of civil war and during that period of challenge for the nation we saw Lincoln's true leadership principles. He took action when it was clear that action would be challenged and face staunch opposition but nonetheless he took that action. In a speech to the 164th Ohio Regiment, President Lincoln remarked, "In this great struggle, this form of Government and every form of human right is endangered if our enemies succeed. There is more involved in this contest than is realized by everyone." In these remarks, it becomes clear that Lincoln understands that his leadership is essential despite the criticism, despite the challenge, he must persevere because the implications of his leadership are much greater than his own life but affect an entire nation. At DePaul University, we learn about the Vincentian Question which is "What must be done" and this question is a lens through which I see Lincoln's leadership legacy. President Lincoln was not afraid to do what was necessary to right some of the wrongs of history that he encountered during his presidency. He ended up giving his life to take action against these wrongs but his legacy lives on to the change that we all must seek today and moving forward.

East-West University - Asha Thompson

As we all know, Abraham Lincoln embodied fairness and leadership throughout his term. He molded the leadership role in a manner that any citizen would love to honor and carry out his legacy by living by example. Being nominated and winning such a prestigious award makes me so grateful and appreciative. I vow to be the most committed and passionate citizen and professional that I possibly can be. My goals and ambition as a proud American would allow me to complete my journey and excel to great leadership in my career and community that would profoundly make a true difference.

Eastern Illinois University - Jerimiah A. Boyd-Johnson

Service is the foundation to creating a better society. In these stressful times, it is my duty to continue to give to those who are less fortunate and provide a backbone to those who cannot fully stand. If we want our community to be strong, we must be willing to contribute. My greatest hope is to continue to lift those who need help. To help yourself, you must assist someone else. I pledge to continue to help and contribute my leadership skills to any community who needs me.

Elmhurst University - Hannah Riley Bacon

When I think of the life of Abraham Lincoln, I often think of the Greek term, *atopos*; something being out of place, strange, or unclassifiable. Beyond all of his presidential glory, Abraham Lincoln was not the most qualified on paper, was not the front-runner, and he rarely fit the social mold— "Atopos Abe". I admire Lincoln's unique intentionality, as he lead to *learn*. He surrounded himself with opposing viewpoints, absorbed all sides of the argument, and created a plan of action without demonizing others. This is both admirable and unheard of in our world of tribal, hyper-partisan politics. Counter to modern society, Lincoln did not grip an ideology or fight to preserve his ego. Rather, Lincoln choose to serve something beyond himself, the greater good of the nation, and fostered an environment of collaboration and unity along the way. I may not be responsible for the trajectory of the entire nation, but I hope to imitate a piece of Lincoln's humble yet convicted spirit in all I do.

Eureka College - Chloe Overstreet

President Lincoln left an incredible legacy of courage, servant leadership, and equality for all people. Through the opportunities afforded to me, such as being Student Body President, various internships, a first-generation mentor, and academia, I have learned that a decision may not be popular or easy to make, but one must have the courage to make the decision. Additionally, I have learned that there will never be a perfect life moment to become a leader. One must simply step into the role regardless of extenuating circumstances that one may be facing in the world. As I step into the beginning of my professional life, I hope to draw on the same characteristics that have guided me through my leadership experience at Eureka College. As I consider my goals for the future, I hope to draw upon these characteristics from President Lincoln of demonstrating courage, servant leadership, and equality to help better my community and the world.

Governor's State University - Sedona Smith

Social work is a field that is built on the foundations of service, social justice, integrity, competence, the dignity of people, and the value of human relationships. Former president Abe Lincoln is not only remarkable for his proper display of the social work's core values, but his legacy is further upheld by his civic-mindedness and commitment to "the greater good." President Lincoln's leadership legacy sets a standard for my future career as a social worker. His legacy proves that crisis is not synonymous with failure. Whether it be a client, family, or community that is experiencing a crisis, steadfast and humane intervention combined with empathic leadership can increase the chances of successful resolution.

Greenville University - Adin Fleischer

My commitment to leadership is a commitment to Christ. I have neither seen nor heard of no leader better than the God-man come down to earth in our lowly state. Though Jesus possesses many qualities of the dynamic and multi-faceted roles of a leader, there is one that soars above the rest: Jesus, the Good Shepherd, led from behind. It is my conviction that any call for us to be a leader is the same call to come alongside those who have been placed under our care, recognizing that they are not ours and that it is this same flock that Jesus came, lived, died, and rose for, and to come to Jesus as the source of our strength to continue guiding and tending to our flock. Ultimately, any call to be a leader is the same call to make the decision of loving others; to make the commitment to act for the well-being of others. My commitment to leadership, though it comes with much failure, is a commitment to serve before trying to impress, to be humbled before humbling others, and to love before leading.

Illinois College - Lauren Sgambelluri

Education exists to serve the common good. Knowledge we acquire and discoveries we make are for the purpose of bettering not only our lives, but the lives of those who will follow after us. We are preserving a home for our family, our descendants, and people we will never even meet. In the midst of a devastating and worsening climate crisis, we can follow Lincoln's example. Lincoln once said, "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." In addition, Lincoln emphasized the need for sacrifice and empathy to build a better future. These principles can be applied to saving our environment and our future. We must act now, sacrificing for the good of those most vulnerable. I will carry these principles with me through my life, modeling myself on one of the most remarkable presidents of the United States by sharing my knowledge, empathizing with the less fortunate, and advocating for a better future for those we love but will never meet - our descendants, our legacy.

Illinois Institute of Technology - Joyce Hanyue Gu

Abraham Lincoln brought together a racially divided nation, leaving behind a legacy of fighting for racial equality. Being born in China, I came to the United States when I was 6. Back then, I was always the follower, never the leader. Perhaps, the language barrier contributed to my low self-confidence and hindered my development of those charismatic qualities typically seen in a leader. Knowing that I wasn't naturally gifted with the genes to become a great leader, I instead became a fighter. I fought hard to be academically and socially competent in a society that my parents couldn't help me navigate. I not only fought for myself but others who were less fortunate, collaborating with them to build a successful future together.

In the midst of this process, I emerged as a leader who fearlessly approaches the world. Next year, I will be entering medical school to pursue a career in osteopathic medicine. I'm honored that one day I will be able to serve others in society by providing medical treatment. Just like how Abraham Lincoln brought together a divided nation, I hope to nurse a nation back to health and leave behind a legacy of healthcare equity.

Illinois State University - Luke Madden

To live a civic-minded life requires a multitude of attributes, but more importantly tasks us as humans to be resilient in every aspect of life. President Lincoln faced a great deal of adversity not only serving as the leader of our nation but also as a husband and father. His perseverance and immeasurable impact on our country has led to his legacy being shared beyond his presidential era, to serve as a cornerstone for the gold standard of leadership. To effectively balance a personal and civically engaged life requires a great deal of skill, and those who do often provide stellar examples of humanitarianism in our world. These various aspects of life often work in tandem with one another to develop our skills as members of society, all in service of the greater good. Facing complex challenges is inevitable but when we practice resiliency in either element of our lives, the other benefits as well. It is without a doubt that President Lincoln often faced days where challenges from both sides of his life emerged simultaneously, but his legacy shows us that he was someone who utilized resiliency with the knowledge that it would help others overall. Practicing the attribute of resiliency challenges us to continue to live an active lifestyle —as family members and in our communities— in order to help develop a better society for generations to come.

Illinois Wesleyan University – Daniel Maisch

Abraham Lincoln said it best, “whatever you are, be a good one.” As I leave my time in higher education and move on to the next chapters of my life, it is these words that I will carry with me as a life-long Lincoln Academy Student Laureate. It will be these words that are my driving force for civic-mindedness, leadership, and service. We have the unfortunate reality of living in a world where good does not always prosper. However, the Lincoln Academy is creating a community of individuals who have a reaffirmed commitment to excellence both in the classroom and out in the community. I believe the true essence of the Lincoln Leadership legacy is the idea of creating a community of leaders and advocates that go out into the world and do good.

Judson University - Madison Psinas

In a time of warring conflict, Abraham Lincoln addressed the citizens of the United States with messages of unity and courage, and with bold intentions of honesty, empathy, and integrity. Though we Americans are divided on more than one front today, the call to unity as one nation—under God, *indivisible*, and with values of liberty and justice for all—remains as pertinent now as it did when we were in the trenches of civil war against one another. It takes the courage displayed by former President Abraham Lincoln to stand up for the greater good of all people, to rise above differences in opinion and lifestyle, and to reach a peaceful common ground.

Lincoln modeled civic engagement in ways that surpass modern standards: he sought diverse counsel from those with whom he did not always personally agree; he used his position of leadership to inspire change for the greater unification of America (and not the preference of one group over another); he stood his ground on difficult issues that demanded faith and hope to see them fulfilled. His commitment to a vision of a just country that tackles inequities in society *together* is a model for us to build an even better civilization than the one we have inherited. When we seek the truth, when we choose to care for our neighbor, and when we humbly maintain and act on honorable beliefs, we are building a better community for ourselves and for those to come.

Knox College - Rebecca Gadiel

In thinking about the legacy of Abraham Lincoln, what resonates most with me is Lincoln's unwavering belief in the possibility of a better world, and his steadfast commitment to helping bring about that change. With as much progress that has been made since Lincoln gave his Gettysburg Address, we still have a way to go in our quest for a more equitable, just, and kind world. I feel fortunate to have been raised with these values in mind, and privileged to have spent the duration of my college experience in an institution committed to these ideals. I look forward to continuing to work towards a better world as I pursue a career in social work, with the goal of ensuring every individual has the resources and support they need to live healthy, secure, and fulfilling lives.

Lewis University - Jada Hoffman

10 years old is when I became a leader. From 10 to 13, I gained three siblings. Being the eldest is not easy --- some say it's like being the second mom. At such a young age my parents trusted me to babysit three kids, while they worked full-time jobs as a chemist and a nurse. Fast forward to today, being a leader has become who I am. I'm committed to making an inclusive campus by giving everyone a voice. At times, people are uncomfortable voicing their opinions, or their opinions are silenced, and that's why I stepped up. I am the first African American female president of Lewis University's Student Senate and with this great honor, I ensure different communities across campus are represented and that administration works to meet their needs and desires. Similar to Lincoln, I am committed to my beliefs and values and I stand my ground when needed. If the student body wants something, I work my hardest to get that done. I will continue to dedicate my life to the betterment of society by learning from other leaders. Although my experiences have granted many lessons, I know there's always more to learn. I will also pass the baton to those who aspire to be great leaders and teach them how. I believe everyone deserves a mentor and I will be just that. Lewis instilled in me the importance of giving back, whether it's monetary or by being a mentor and role model. I will do whatever it takes to continue Lincoln's legacy and impact lives across my campus and the communities I touch post-graduation.

Lincoln Christian University – Bryce Andrew Cook

I was raised on a farm outside the very small town of Wolcott, Indiana, though my parents themselves are not farmers. I am the youngest of three children, and my family has always been active within the Church, and my siblings and I all remain strong in our faith. While I was in high school, it became clear that a life of ministry had been laid out before me, and I came to LCU with that in mind, settling into the Biblical Studies department and falling in love with the study and exegesis of scripture. Currently I am serving as the pastor of San Jose Christian Church in San Jose, Illinois, and plan to continue serving there as I pursue a seminary degree following the completion of my undergraduate studies.

Lincoln College - Jackie Gunderson

Abraham Lincoln's Leadership Legacy is a timeless call on our nation to dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work of fighting for equality, civic engagement in our democracy, and realizing freedom for all. Over 150 years later, we continue to struggle with inequality and discrimination, and as Lincoln once said "*you cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.*" It is this new generation of engaged and informed students, picking up the unfinished work before us and becoming resilient change agents interrupting the cycles of inequity. Lincoln's legacy of leadership has earned him the recognition as the top-rated President on many occasions due to his careful, calculated, and competent character. He has inspired many to the moral and passionate pursuit of a more perfect, more just, and more enduring Union with "malice towards none" through his courageous leadership. Lincoln was able to learn and grow amid great calamity. His resilience and grit demonstrate that leaders do not just make the moment; they meet it and, in the process, are changed by it. We don't build resilience by walking comfortable paths, and for me, this has been a long journey, full of obstacles, and twists and turns, but I am so proud of the fact that I persevered, even when it felt impossible, and this is an honor that I will treasure long after graduation. I am inspired to channel Lincoln's Leadership Legacy to continue to be an informed, engaged, and active citizen working to leave this place a little better than I found it. I will lead with integrity and dedication to the greater good.

Loyola University - Alex Almanza Hernandez

As a student at Loyola University Chicago, one is taught to lead with the intention to set the world on fire. To me, this has meant leading with compassion, resilience, and a curiosity to push the boundaries of social justice efforts within whatever I am studying. Throughout my undergraduate journey, I have sought learning opportunities in political science, international relations, anthropology, history, and foreign languages. This educational path has sparked opportunities to work as a middle school tutor and mentor, tour guide, high school college coach, international resident assistant, undergraduate researcher, think tank intern, and penal affairs shadow. I have also proudly served my campus as a Board of Trustees Undergraduate Representative, Associate Justice to the Student Government of Loyola Chicago, President of Order of Omega, the Greek Honors Society, and President of the Xi Chapter of Alpha Psi Lambda National Inc. My college experience has challenged me to push my limits in the pursuit of growing into a more well-informed, empathetic global citizen. However, none of this would have been possible without the support and care provided by my surrounding communities of Round Lake Beach and Rogers Park. I am the first-generation daughter and granddaughter of Mexican immigrants, who have worked incessantly to not only help me get to where I am today but also instill within me the importance of advocating for those around me. These values inspire me to walk with and alongside disenfranchised communities, as I seek to contribute equity-oriented perspectives to international human rights policy relating to migrant, educational, and environmental justice.

McKendree University - Jessica Hoffmann

The essence of how Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide in living a civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good:

Lincoln led by example, ready to serve
He sprang into action, did not just observe

By inspiring many, he created great change
He persevered even when some called him strange

As president, people looked to his lead
He did not disappoint those slaves that he freed

Committed to service, he gave and he gave
I think there's no doubt that man was quite brave

As a math teacher, I will follow his actions
Inspiring my students while teaching them fractions

Math concepts are not the only thing I will show
As I teach servant-leadership, to help them grow

I strive to give back by helping those in need
And hope they'll pay it forward with another good deed

When others see the good and do their own part
The world will be a better place- at least it's a start

My students already are doing great deeds
They do all the work; I just plant the seeds

At the young age of one more than a score,
My belief in each child will help them soar

Lincoln's example has helped shape me
Into the invested teacher I'll always be

Some of these students have had hard lives
They need some guidance in order to thrive

Staying in my hometown, working at a school
An education for all is the very best tool

As I follow in Abraham Lincoln's fine track,
I'm ready for the future and the chance to give back

Millikin University - Nat Long

I am a student who is committed to the betterment of society and leadership in every single aspect of my life. As I exit my undergraduate institution and enter the whirlwind of being a citizen of this world, no longer as a student, I will always strive to better the lives of others and of society as a larger whole.

As an LGBTQIA+ and transgender student, I know the importance of creating an equitable society in which all members of such a society feel as though they are at home in their world. Actionably, I engage with human rights, LGBTQIA+ organizations through volunteerism and financial support and fight in my local community for LGBTQIA+ inclusion, anti-discrimination, and complete inclusion. I am also dedicated to working with disabled individuals in the education and healthcare fields and am committed to helping pioneer new methods of special education, healthcare practice, and overall inclusion of disabled individuals to help deconstruct ableist societal practices. I am committed to making this society a safer, more inclusive, and widely equitable system and know that every small action I do in pursuit of this goal makes a difference somehow. In short, I am a leader who has a great drive for human service and am thrilled to begin engaging in this type of service and am committed to doing so for as long as I am able.

Monmouth College - Elizabeth Gustafson

Abraham Lincoln exemplified what it means to lead with integrity, kindness, and empathy. Even though he was constantly faced with opposition, he persevered and pursued justice above all else. Lincoln serves as an example of what selfless, intentional leadership was meant to be. This is one of the many reasons Lincoln's Leadership Legacy has served as an inspiration throughout history. Lincoln faced immense challenges during his lifetime and worked tirelessly for justice and peace, even though he knew he may never live to see the fruits of his labor. I have lived in Illinois my entire life and am proud to be an Illinoisan because of leaders like Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's Leadership Legacy serves as a reminder to all about what is most important in life: justice, peace, and freedom.

North Central College - Bry'Shawna Walker

My favorite way that people have described the United States of America is as not only a country but an idea. I believe that we Americans have inherited this place with all its' beauty and heavy history. To me in order to be a civic servant it is my duty to continue to push the necessary conversations and the country forward.

Northern Illinois University - Megan Nordstrom

As my time as an undergraduate student at Northern Illinois University comes to a close in May, I have been able to reflect and look back on the last 4 years as a college student and the amount of growth I've seen in myself personally and academically. One of my professors during my junior year told me that 'the best leaders are able to see a big picture goal, and then figure out steps to achieve that goal.' In my time as an NIU student, I have gained more skills to plan and execute big goals with the help of my faculty members and fellow students. This is one of the traits that embody the characteristics of a good leader. Abraham Lincoln is one of the most well-known American presidents, and I believe he also exemplified this same 'big picture goal' characteristic. This is shown through his time as President of the United States during the Civil War with his efforts to preserve the Union. He was able to recognize the steps he and his cabinet had to accomplish to get the country to where it needed to be. An important detail about Lincoln's cabinet, is that it was comprised of individuals with different political views and backgrounds than his. Many of the individuals on the cabinet did not even want the others to be there because of their opposing views! This shows that Lincoln was able to overlook the amount of power he had in his position to choose individuals that would offer insight from many different backgrounds to do what was best for the country, achieving his 'big picture goal.'

Northwestern University - Claire Koster

Lincoln's legacy is one of working within existing systems to create greater unity and quality of life for all. I deeply appreciate the necessity of world-building work and of creating new, more life-affirming systems, and I also see the strength and value in the work Lincoln sought to do. As a future teacher, I, too, must learn how to work within existing systems to improve the lives of students. The K-12 school system in the United States, as it exists, creates massive disparities for many of the same groups of people that Lincoln tried, and sometimes failed, to protect. Lincoln's legacy inspires me to constantly look for ways in which I can subvert and challenge systems of oppression in order to make my classroom a space of care and support for each student who enters it.

Olivet University - Natalie Cook

In a time of heightened awareness of the need for racial reconciliation, the legacy of Abraham Lincoln provides lasting insight into how the quality of one's character can positively impact those they call their neighbor. Lincoln spoke out strongly against the institution of slavery and set the mechanism in motion for the freedom of slaves. While his stance was not necessarily popular among his peers, he stood strong in this truth despite the difficulties he faced because of it. Lincoln was president during the Civil War, incontrovertibly the bloodiest, most devastating conflict in American history. His desire for peace and justice stemmed from his heart of empathy and compassion. He sought out the voices who were being silenced and listened to them earnestly. In a nation still recovering from the lasting impacts of slavery, Lincoln shows us how reimagining our society and living a civil minded life of service enhances the quality of life for everyone. I admire Lincoln's resoluteness in the face of popular opinion to the contrary. I hope to live into this where I can fight for truth and justice in spaces where people may not agree. He demonstrated the character of true leadership in his relentless pursuit of what is right.

Principia College - Sophie Hills

In the Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln famously commended Union soldiers for giving “the last full measure of devotion.” That phrase sums up one of the biggest lessons I’ve learned during my time in college. Whether playing sports, researching for a paper, or struggling to communicate effectively with someone, it’s the last effort – which, coincidentally, is usually the most daunting – that matters the most. Pushing through thirty seconds of physical exhaustion to make a run in soccer, putting in the extra work to thoroughly comprehend academic sources, or summoning the courage to have a hard conversation with a friend can represent the “last full measure of devotion.” Not only is the effort rewarding, but it’s also just the right thing to do and signals commitment to success, personal growth, integrity, and service to others.

As I move into life beyond these four years, I will continue striving to give that last full measure in all the ways I’m called upon to do, whether personally, professionally, or otherwise. Giving in that way often requires putting my “self” aside. The last full measure of devotion requires selflessness. But it doesn’t mean I lose individuality. Instead, I enhance it, because once I’ve given that devotion to others I find my own “self,” or individuality, to be fuller, more substantial, and more capable.

I won’t pretend as though I’ve always given the last full measure of devotion. But, I’m inspired to build the courage and dedication to give it more and more by the models of others, like Lincoln, who found the grace to step outside of themselves in service of a greater cause.

Rockford University - Ryan Callahan

Today, with the great divisions that harbor across our country, I myself as a leader think about Lincoln imploring the citizens of our nation to remember the bond that brings us together as one.

In his first inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln appealed to the “better angels of our nature.” He searched for the unity that brought us together and stood hopeful for our nation, declaring that “we are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies.”

As a young leader at Rockford University and within the Greater-Rockford Region, Lincoln’s sentiments serve as a forefront to my philosophy on leadership. I implore all to speak to each other, learn from each other, and remember that we must not be enemies for our nation to succeed.

Roosevelt University - Rose Poplawski

A condition of strong leadership is humility. In Lincoln's infamous letter to Ulysses Grant on the siege of Vicksburg, Lincoln demonstrates humility by acknowledging that he was wrong and Grant was right. Although Lincoln initially questioned Grant's strategy to take the city, his ability to work with and surround himself with people who challenged his ideas proved to be essential to becoming a highly respected leader.

The fundamental leadership qualities exhibited by Lincoln will guide me in living a civic-minded life of service. Those qualities of the willingness to have ideas disputed and exercise emotional intelligence through self-reflection are of utmost importance for a strong leader to embody. Growing up, I was taught to look at Lincoln as a hero. However, I think more can be learned from his complexity and integrity in the face of profound challenge and doubt.

As I reflect on my educational journey at Roosevelt University, I am grateful for my time at Roosevelt as I have had the privilege of learning in an environment that supports actively challenging processes and ideas in a safe space. Embodying Lincoln's qualities must go beyond the classroom and be sustained throughout life. Lincoln is a respected leader for his persistence and consistency to work for the common good of the people. As I pursue law school, I will hold Lincoln's essence of humility closely to both guide and motivate me towards a lifetime of civic-minded service.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale - Francesca Burkett

Time—each of us possesses a limited amount of time. However, Lincoln, the man who devoted his life to bringing unity in times of division, said "In the end, it's not the years of your life that counts--it's the life in your years." Amidst the bloodshed, hatred, and disunity, Lincoln used his years to serve, to seek "the better angels of [human] nature;" to unify the nation toward a common good. Like Lincoln, one person, no matter their vocation, can live a life devoted to unity, healing, and offering hope to a broken, divided world.

Through volunteering with Hands of Hope, I have assisted with diverse groups from different nations and witnessed them unify for a common good—for emergency relief (Ebola outbreak, etc.), for combatting human trafficking locally and internationally, for bringing education and medical care to communities around the world. Yet, serving "the greater good" is also frequently a quieter and less visible endeavor: namely investing time in mentoring youth. Regularly volunteering with children is important to me, whether through leading educational programs, music productions, or extra-curricular workshops. Education unifies. Through education, children learn to communicate, to understand others, to respect and consider new ideas, to seek answers, to acquire knowledge. Education awakens the "better parts of humanity". Through working with youth, I hope to serve and to inspire unity and growth in the community around me. Devoting one's life for the common good—this is Lincoln's legacy, and to this end I strive. "I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep on doing so until the end."

St. Xavier University - Katherine Hutto

Lincoln's leadership legacy provides a guide for living a civic-minded life in both leadership and service. Abraham Lincoln had a vision and followed it because it was the right thing to do despite the fact that it was not widely accepted. All people have the right to share their voice and it is our duty as leaders to stand up for the underserved and disadvantaged to provide aid in times where they may not be able to do so for themselves. Being a leader that motivates and inspires others is one of the most important qualities of leadership which is something that I have begun to do with my leadership positions in my community. I will continue to live by this legacy and use it to guide me to serve the world and make it a better place.

The University of Chicago - Stephanie Reitzig

In an 1884 biography of army nurse Rebecca Pomroy, Anna Boyden attributed the following remark to Abraham Lincoln: "All through life, be sure and put your feet in the right place, and then stand firm." The quotation derives from a posthumous and third-hand account. Apocryphal though it may be, however, it captures two tenets of Lincoln's leadership philosophy which I strive to emulate in all things I do: to be guided by principle, and to act with determination.

Trinity International University - Catherine Alles

Abraham Lincoln understood that our words are not as powerful as our actions. The way we live our lives is much more important than the words we say or the speeches we make. Lincoln used his platform during the Gettysburg Address to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice: those who had lost their lives in the Civil War. In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln highlights that sacrifice and its impact. In remembrance of all those who have given their lives for our country, it is the least we can do to live our lives in such a way to advocate for freedom and fight for equality for all Americans. The work towards freedom is still unfinished in America today. It is our responsibility to continually advance the fight for freedom as Lincoln encouraged us all those years ago.

University of Illinois at Chicago - Courtney Washington

Abraham Lincoln's legacy is a reminder of the continued fight toward justice for all communities that have historically been marginalized and taken advantage of by this country. As I embark on this new journey following my graduation, I aspire to maintain the same level of conviction Lincoln embodied in all of his decisions and use my role as a leader to advocate for those expanded opportunities for these communities. My focus will primarily be on how public school districts can better serve their Black and brown students by providing more funding and resources geared toward their academic achievement. My education journey allowed me to recognize the privilege I hold in terms of the educational opportunities I have been afforded, and I want to use my privilege to change the policies that continue to hinder many Black and brown students. I have chosen public service to play a major role in future educational policy changes, particularly those policies impacted by broader economic policy. I admire Lincoln's ability to transform his commitment to social change into concrete action, and as I continue on in my career, I intend to embody this same level of dedication by continuing the work that serves my community and strives to create a more equitable society.

University of Illinois Springfield - Summer Warner

Courage, empathy, honesty, and integrity are the four qualities associated with Lincoln's Leadership Legacy, and I feel that I have worked to display these qualities throughout my life. As a non-traditional student, I've attended college while also serving as a foster mother to many young children. I've also been working for my local school district, helping to improve the reading skills of elementary children. I feel that these experiences are examples of the life that I wish to live, a life rooted in service.

University of Illinois Urbana Champaign - Alexa Smith

I am honored to be recognized by the Lincoln Academy as a laureate among some of the greatest company Illinois has to offer—from world-class athletes to Pulitzer Prize-winning authors. Our diverse, intergenerational commitment to civic engagement is fierce and untamable, and our endless fuel for change stems from our homestead roots—which have been enriched by Abraham Lincoln's unwavering commitments to leadership and unity. Unwilling to tolerate injustice and relentlessly motivated to pursue a life of service, Lincoln's values live on in my own journey as an environmental activist, author, volunteer and social entrepreneur. One token of wisdom that Lincoln shared with the world is that: "the best way to predict the future is to create it." For him, that meant a centuries-long legacy as a president who introduced equality into American democracy.

As someone who strives to follow in his path, I hope to create a paradigmatic shift whereby the rights of the Earth are considered alongside the rights of the people. A future where individuals and communities live harmoniously *with* the planet as opposed to living *on* it, and a future defined not by economic growth but by social well-being. My commitment to environmental justice and sustainability engagement is a purposeful extension of the equality that Lincoln hoped to create. I am carrying his torch by challenging my own role as a student, a consumer, and an environmentalist in order to challenge the status quo. I sincerely hope to inspire others to follow in our footsteps and continue igniting the flame of social change for the benefit of our people and our planet.

University of St. Francis - Jonathan Wolf

A large part of Lincoln's legacy rests in his Gettysburg Address, an address that showcases his leadership and how such hinges on integrity, courage, and truth. He led using these attributes through one of the most turbulent times in the history of the United States, giving an example of true leadership with respect to each person's God-given dignity. These attributes are the guide that allows for leadership that upholds the dignity of each person while displaying morality and truth, which come forth from God.

These attributes are continually fading from leadership and thus society; however, with the strength of God and looking to the example of leadership displayed by Lincoln, these attributes can be revived in culture. Leadership can be displayed by continuing to serve others around us, from doing small actions such as holding a door to doing larger acts of service such as aiding a food pantry. Moreover, such leadership should strive to serve and protect those who are unable to protect themselves so that each soul may be cherished with the dignity that God so graciously gives to each person, from conception to natural death. This protection of human dignity through leadership is one that is not displayed in today's leadership and culture, but through integrity revolving around morality and with courage; true, unsecularized, apolitical leadership can be used to improve society. This betterment will lead to a culture that does not focus on the pleasures of the flesh, but rather focuses on the needs of the soul, which include truth, morality, and love; the source of which is God.

VanderCook College of Music - Daniel Schmitt

My coming-of-age has directly coincided with a progressive division within the public with the rise of social media, politics, and a deadly pandemic. Abraham Lincoln's legacy is one of a president that sought to stand a house that was thoroughly divided and preserve the Union. As a future music educator, my job will not be to pass judgement or to play politics—my job will be to reach the weary minds of children and provide them with the ability to improve their lives and communities through a musical education. It is through this education that I will reach these students and help them to become better, compassionate humans via teamwork and the shared creation of art, and bring them together as people.

Besides affecting change within my students, my role as a band director is that of a community liaison to music. Part of my role is to quite literally bring the community together at concerts, football games, parades, and any event that can benefit from music—which is most of them! The greater good that I will be working towards is one of harmony through sound, community, and humanity.

Wheaton College – Natalie Ann Schuetz

Lincoln exhibited a life full of courage, empathy, honesty, and integrity. He stood firm in his beliefs even as people ridiculed and despised him. As I stand in my own beliefs I will strive to exhibit this same courage that does not fear what other people will do or say to me. Lincoln served and cared for the hurting and vulnerable in society. While I will in no way be perfect in caring for others, it is my goal to count others more significant than myself and to love them in ways that honor and respect each person.

Lincoln also was a man that spoke truth and had actions that reflected what he said and believed. In my own life like Lincoln, I want to have my speech and actions be consistent and trustworthy. I strive to speak the truth in love, that others would respect my words and be uplifted by them. In the way Lincoln lived and the changes he sought to make in society he also exhibited strong moral convictions to do good even if it led to hardship. Today doing the right thing is often met with opposition yet even as I face this I will stand strong in pursuing truth and justice.

Western Illinois University - Elizabeth Lutz

I hope to spend my career as a civil servant. This past summer, I spent 25 hours per week working as a paralegal for a nonprofit law firm out of Madison, Wisconsin. I was exposed to environmental issues presented to the common civilian. I learned through this experience that it is crucial I serve my community in order for me to have a fulfilling career. I believe that Lincoln's Leadership legacy will guide my civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good through honesty, integrity, and work-ethic.

My hope is that my law school education will teach me how to most effectively and efficiently serve my fellow citizens, particularly in regards to our right to a healthy environment. I believe that everyone is entitled to clean air, water, and living standards: this is the fight that I'd like to dedicate my life to. I wholeheartedly believe that Lincoln's Leadership legacy aligns with my passions, interests, spirit, and demeanor.

Each day I strive to reflect the same qualities that Abraham Lincoln embodied. As the great American leader once said: "The best way to predict your future is to create it."

ICCB - McHenry County College - Edith Sanchez

As the 2021 Lincoln Academy of Illinois-Student Laureate, I want to inspire and motivate other students to make a positive change and make a difference in the community. As a first-generation Latina and being the first in my family to pursue an education, I am dedicated to pursuing a career in education as an academic advisor. Throughout my education, there have been many obstacles that have helped me become a stronger person and a leader. Being a leader means you empower people, inspire people, share a vision within a group to achieve a common goal, and lead a change in the world. I describe my leadership skills as an open communicator who leads by example. I want to be able to help guide students with my own experience and I want to let students know that their actions matter and have a place in this world. I want to make sure students have a voice in this very loud world. This award will allow me to reciprocate to the future generation and highlight the importance of leadership and service in the pursuit of the betterment of humanity.