Fifth Year in Review 2016–2017

As DePaul enters the final year of the Vision 2018 strategic plan, new accomplishments continue to create value for students. DePaul’s national academic position rose to 120 among 310 universities surveyed in the U.S. News & World Report 2018 rankings, our highest place in the past decade. Student success measures show important progress with four-year graduation rates improving across all ethnic groups. We are witnessing steady growth in online enrollment, which now comprises over 14 percent of credit hours. In 2016, one in every four students enrolled in an online course. The student body also has become more diverse during the course of the strategic plan, and in fall 2016, DePaul enrolled the highest number of students of color in university history.

TERM AND ADJUNCT FACULTY EMBRACED

DePaul invested in part-time and term faculty to engage them more deeply in the university and recognize their contributions. An elected Workplace Environment Committee (WEC) was created to give adjunct faculty a stronger voice in the university and their department academic life, as well as to help resolve workplace concerns. The university also implemented an increase in the course cancellation fee, multi-course contracts, and an adjunct resources website that provides benefits information, teaching resources, and award-application details to better serve our part-time adjunct faculty members. A new Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Faculty is working with the WEC and Faculty Council to share information more widely and establish a role for term and adjunct faculty in shared governance.

ACCREDITATION RENEWED

After an extensive evaluation of DePaul’s academic programs, student learning, support services, faculty teaching, and administrative protocols, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) re-accredited DePaul for another decade. An external peer review team visited our campuses to ensure that DePaul is a healthy institution conducting its business with integrity and effectiveness. The HLC is an independent body that evaluates colleges and universities in 19 north central states to ensure the quality of academic programs and student learning. DePaul has been accredited for more than 90 years and holds additional certifications for individual programs and colleges.

FIRST-EVER ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP IN HISTORY

The first privately funded professorship in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences was given to attract and retain faculty members in the history department. A scholar with extraordinary promise and dedication to teaching and research, Tera Agyepong, is the first to hold the LeRoy D. Sanders and Mary Clare McHugh Sanders Endowed Professorship. Agyepong has a law degree and a doctorate in African-American history. Her research explores the intersection of history, race, gender and the law. She used her one-year leave to complete her first book.
A powerful sense of belonging and friendships that students develop over shared interests leads to improved retention and academic achievement, a study by College of Computing and Digital Media researchers found. It is an example of the support needed to succeed during critical transitions. Targeting new freshmen women, and also men of color, a linked-course learning community of students who took a programming language course and an Explore Chicago course with the same students had retention rates that were higher than four of five comparison groups. Furthermore, none went on academic probation, while between 7 percent and 14 percent of non-community students landed on probation. As a result, the learning community pilot program has become permanent.

A $3 million endowment will fund the Holtschneider Chair in Vincentian Studies, ensuring scholarly research and teaching on the Vincentian tradition will continue at DePaul into the future. Contributions from trustees made this legacy possible. Located in the Catholic Studies Department of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, the chair is named for the Rev. Dennis Holtschneider, C.M., who concluded his role as the university’s 11th president in June 2017. An international search to fill the chair is underway, and the selected lay scholar is expected to begin teaching in fall 2018.

Phi Theta Kappa, an international honor society of two-year colleges and academic programs, named DePaul to its 2017 Transfer Honor Roll for the second time. The list recognizes institutions that support and invest their resources in community college transfer initiatives. About half of undergraduates who graduated from DePaul in recent years have transferred from another institution. DePaul has devoted significant time and attention to smoothing the transfer process for students and helping them thrive once they arrive on campus through community college partnerships, accelerated transfer events where students can learn, on the spot, whether they are accepted, and specially designed transfer student orientations, among other initiatives.

A new set of Guiding Principles for Speech and Expression that affirms that speech and expression is essential to the pursuit of knowledge was adopted by the university. The principles ensure “the right of individuals to express their viewpoints, even at the risk of controversy.” The principles also note that “speech and expression that serves only to threaten or intimidate” does not further the goals of advancing and enlivening the intellectual life of the community. A new Speech and Expression Advisory Committee will implement a university-wide program to educate the DePaul community about the Guiding Principles and consult on integrating them into activities, policies and procedures.
Two internationally recognized opera singers are among the 30 new tenure-track faculty and 39 term faculty hired in the 2016-17 academic year. Nicole Cabell and Christopher Magiera joined the School of Music as vocal performance and opera faculty. Building and retaining an outstanding and diverse faculty is a top strategic goal as the university welcomes dozens of new professors annually. Cabell, a lyric soprano and winner of the BBC Singer of the World Competition, is a Decca recording artist who delivers high-profile performances regularly. Magiera, a baritone who has performed in operas across America, was a National Grand Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions, a finalist in Placido Domingo's Operalia World Opera Competition and a Grand Prize winner of the Sullivan Foundation.

Believed to be the first of its kind in the country, the new Center for Student Development and Engagement provides a place for School of Hospitality Leadership students to connect with industry leaders and alumni mentors for personalized career preparation and guidance. Among the center’s new initiatives is an ambassador program that enables students to work one-on-one with Chicago hospitality executives within their organizations. The new and expanded facilities were made possible with a $1.8 million grant from the J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation.

DePaul has deployed a new data science and predictive analytics software to identify students most likely to drop out, allowing the university to help them address their challenges and stay in school. This software, Civitas, also predicts course demand to ensure courses are available to students when they need them and enables students to select the most convenient course schedule—all methods of keeping students in school until graduation. Meanwhile, use of the BlueStar student success system that enables faculty and advisors to track academic performance and intervene when necessary, increased across the university. In fall 2016, tracking times in the system were up 16 percent, inclusion of reference notes were up 23 percent and student appointments were up 38 percent.

National diversity experts spoke to the DePaul campus community about implicit bias and free speech in the context of academia as the university implemented its Action Plan on Race and Speech. Administrators, faculty and staff attended cultural competency and implicit bias seminars to raise awareness of these topics and improve the campus climate for all. DePaul also analyzed its diversity data, benchmarked African-American resource centers and other best practices, and posted online resources for diverse students to web pages that disseminated the information more widely. The action plan, while completed, will continue its monitoring and education activities for many years to come.

A new faculty development center encourages faculty with common interests to collaborate using digital mapping tools, data mining, 3-D modeling, data visualization and other digital methods to advance their research and create new pedagogies at the intersection of the humanities and computing. A recent lecture at Studio CHI, as the center is known, demonstrated the use of digitized newspapers as data sets. The studio complements other collaborative activities around the university and seeks to expand teaching with digital methods across the curriculum.
DePaul is bringing NCAA basketball back to Chicago. Its men’s and women’s teams will play home games at the new Wintrust Arena at McCormick Square beginning in late fall 2017. The Wintrust Financial Corporation entered into a 15-year sponsorship agreement naming the venue, which is expected to host concerts, sporting events, conventions, family-friendly shows and other major special events in addition to Blue Demon basketball. The university also will hold its 2018 commencement ceremonies at the 10,387-seat facility.

The new Center for Journalism Integrity and Excellence is preparing communication students to engage in quality journalism at a time when the media is under fire. Students produced stories on gun offenders and marijuana laws that aired separately on the public television news magazine “Chicago Tonight.” Meanwhile, Lester Holt, anchor of “NBC Nightly News,” and data journalist Ben Welsh of the Los Angeles Times were honored with the center’s inaugural journalism awards for modeling the highest principles of journalism, including truth, accuracy, fairness and context.
ONLINE ENROLLMENT EXPANDS

Credit hours generated from online courses hit an all-time high of 14 percent in academic year 2016-17. Graduate students are leading the way, with 20 percent of their credit hours tied to online classes. Thirteen percent of undergraduate credit hours were linked to online classes. Overall, one in every four DePaul students took at least one online course in fall 2016. Fulfilling a growing demand, DePaul offered students 21 degree programs completely online. Students are taking the university up on the opportunity to complete coursework remotely. Seventeen percent of graduate students and 5 percent of undergraduates took every one of their courses online in fall 2016.

21 NEW PRACTICUM SITES

The Master of Public Health program established 21 important new on-site practicum placements with health agencies serving a range of clients from infants to the elderly. Nine-month practicums at locations like the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Rothstein CORE Center in the Cook County Health and Hospitals System enabled students to apply their learning and refine their technical skills in preparation for careers in community health practice. The program had its largest class to date in 2016-17—two cohorts totaling 44 students—who needed placements to provide real-world learning experiences as they promoted health and disease prevention among vulnerable populations.

PROFESSIONALS COMPLETING DEGREES

The School for New Learning delivered an accelerated Bachelor of Arts degree program to cohorts of working professionals—two cohorts totaling 47 students affiliated with the Fraternal Order of Police and one cohort of 11 students from Fifth Third Bank. These groups are part of a larger university initiative called the Corporate and Employer Outreach (CEO) program. Now well into careers as patrol officers, sergeants, bankers and branch managers, these students are pursuing knowledge and credentials that will enable them to progress upward in their fields. More than 600 working adults from 25 businesses and organizations have taken business, legal, education and other courses at their places of employment since the CEO program launched in 2014.

LAW STRENGTHENS PRACTICE PREP

The College of Law strengthened its curriculum to better prepare students for the future of legal practice in the growing field of health law. The law school expanded its Juris Doctor, Master of Jurisprudence, and Master of Laws in health law curriculum to offer courses in the rapidly developing areas of health care compliance and the intersection between health law and intellectual property. The new courses include food and drug law, risk management and patient safety, patent policy in the health industry, data breach notification law, and the practice of health care law in multiple settings—an experiential learning course. Prioritization of programs in areas central to the College of Law’s mission is a key component of the school’s new strategic plan, created to guide it over the next five years.
DePaul set racial and ethnic diversity records across nearly every student segment in 2016-17, demonstrating that its founding commitment of providing access to high-quality education remains relevant today. The statistics are impressive. DePaul enrolled the largest number and proportion of students of color in university history, with 36 percent of students (8,316) self-identifying. DePaul also enrolled the largest proportion of underrepresented students of color, the largest number and proportion of Hispanic students and the second largest proportion of African-American students. DePaul is delivering on diplomas as well, with four-year graduation rates trending upward across all ethnic groups over the past six years (2011-2016).

Deploying best practices in education, the Office of Innovative Professional Learning (OIPL) has prepared teachers to apply the most effective teaching skills in education today. Whether performing its role as the preferred provider of professional development for the Chicago Public Schools, or called upon by the superintendent of the Archdiocese of Chicago to create a mentoring and coaching program for Catholic school leaders, OIPL delivered customized programs that teach and model best practices. It also has shared its expertise with Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, Rush University Medical Center, the Barat Foundation and facilitated projects with partners in China.

The internationally recognized Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD) has relocated to the DePaul Irwin W. Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning and Community Service Studies from its previous home at Northwestern University. Bringing ABCD’s national headquarters to DePaul provides enhanced opportunities for collaboration. At its core, the ABCD Institute works with community residents and local entities to analyze and build upon already-existing neighborhood assets, empowering communities to create a more sustainable future.

Student Affairs launched a new effort to help students who do not earn enough credit hours to optimize their academic progress or who fall short of the target grade point average to keep them on pace to graduate. The early outreach was designed to connect students with support resources that exist but are not as well known or as well utilized by students who could benefit from them. These resources are timed to get students back on track to prevent academic probation. In winter 2017, Student Affairs worked with 166 students who were at risk of academic probation, and in spring 2017, staff worked with 213 students, all of whom benefitted from this attention.
EXECUTIVES MENTOR STUDENTS AND FACULTY

In a new program that is among the first of its kind in hospitality higher education, three highly successful business leaders became the first executives in residence at the School of Hospitality Leadership. They network with faculty, advise students and connect students to Chicago’s world-class hospitality industry. Jerrold Melman and Marc Jacobs, Lettuce Entertain You executive partners, and Paul Daly, area vice president for Hyatt and general manager of the Hyatt Regency O’Hare, were the inaugural executives who are shaping the future of hospitality in Chicago.

DEPAUL ALUMNI WIN A PULITZER PRIZE AND AN OSCAR

DePaul alumni distinguished themselves last year by earning prestigious top honors in their fields. For example, video journalist Ali Rizvi, a graduate of the College of Computing and Digital Media, won a Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting for his contributions to the Panama Papers, an international investigation that examined more than 11 million documents that identified illegally established offshore accounts that hid as much as $2 billion in assets. Meanwhile, playwright and Theatre School alumnus Tarell Alvin McCraney won an Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay for “Moonlight.” The film also earned a Golden Globe for Best Drama and other awards.

STUDENTS WIN INTERNATIONAL STUDY AWARDS

Six students and alumni won prestigious Fulbright scholarships, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, to study in Colombia, Czech Republic, Guatemala, Jordan, Malaysia and Mexico. They earned the coveted awards from a pool of more than 10,000 applicants and received a year of funding to live in a host country, where they will conduct research, study or teach English. DePaul’s Fulbright advisor assisted students in preparing their rigorous applications. Additionally, three students won competitive Boren and Gilman scholarships to study or intern abroad. Just 160 of these scholarships were awarded in the United States. These students will study in Hungary, Jordan and Oman.

PRESERVING CHICAGO ART

A transformative donation of 114 paintings, photography, sculpture, drawings and other works to the DePaul Art Museum acknowledges the university’s commitment to curate, exhibit and collect art from the local community. Works by 59 artists strengthen the museum’s focus as a meaningful resource for people wishing to study artists with ties to Chicago. Donor Chuck Thurow collected the artwork during his tenure as director of the Hyde Park Art Center and hopes faculty and students will examine the relationship between a physical place like Chicago and the creativity that has flourished here. Meanwhile, the museum was the 2017 recipient of the Northern Trust Purchase Prize, an annual gift of artwork selected from EXPO CHICAGO that also strengthens the museum’s Chicago collection.
Engaging Children Through Theatre

More than 32,500 people attended theatrical performances at The Theatre School’s (TTS) artistic venues last year, an upward trend that includes 2,000 attendees who purchased tickets for the first time. TTS offered many schoolchildren their first theatre experience through the Chicago Playworks Series. The school also made special efforts to ensure performances were accessible to disabled populations by providing options for autism-friendly shows, interpreted shows using American Sign Language, audio descriptions and captioning, and wheelchair access.

Energy Usage Reduced and Recognized

DePaul’s success in reducing energy usage was recognized by the city of Chicago with the university’s induction into the Mayor’s Leadership Circle, an honor for buildings in the city’s Retrofit Chicago program that surpass energy reduction goals. The John T. Richardson Library achieved 24 percent energy savings when DePaul upgraded its boiler burners and controls, installed frequency drives for its electrical system and retrofitted lighting throughout the building. The recognition comes as DePaul has ramped up its green thinking, energy efficiency and sustainability initiatives in recent years. DePaul’s is the first library to win the Mayor’s Leadership Circle award.

Reaching Mobile Students

After converting all 10 college websites to a mobile-friendly format, the university has focused on making the 800 pages of depaul.edu responsive to our prospective students. Because web traffic to depaul.edu from mobile devices is growing—and currently at 20 percent—it is important for the website to recognize the type of device visitors use so it can reformat graphics and information to be consumed easily on mobile screens. This redesign emphasized pairing visual design with editorial content to create a more engaging user experience, a valuable endeavor considering DePaul’s website generates 9.6 million page views annually.

Secure Housing for Students

Students without permanent housing are benefiting from a collaboration between Depaul USA and DePaul University that links students with stable lodging. Homeless students’ needs run the gamut from requiring a place to stay during breaks in the academic year to requiring shelter for an extended period. The causes are plentiful: an unexpected job loss, overcrowding in the family home or financial aid that did not cover all the expenses a student incurred, among others. The Dax housing program recruits host families and institutions, including parish rectories and senior care centers, to house students. Depaul USA is working to buy a two-flat to provide affordable housing for up to 10 students by the fall of 2018.
NEW TECH TOOLS IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

Students, faculty and staff now have new, high-value technology tools readily available to improve productivity. High-density wireless access points were expanded to serve 150 devices simultaneously, and connectivity has become more widely available outside campus buildings. Inside, unlimited web storage and new video streaming and content management software allow faculty to upload and manage video content in D2L. Skype for Business enables web collaboration, desktop audio/video conferencing, and chat functionality, while a new virtual computer lab environment lets Mac users use Microsoft Access. Mobile responsive websites across the university complete an effort to make DePaul more tech-user friendly.

VINCENTIAN STUDIES INSTITUTE FUNDS RESEARCH

Three new books on Vincentian history were published by scholars with the support of research grants from DePaul’s Vincentian Studies Institute. A new biography of Antoine Frédéric Ozanam by Raymond Sickinger presents a comprehensive picture of this teacher, writer and principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The second book, “In Missouri’s Wilds: St. Mary’s of the Barrens and the American Catholic Church, 1819 to 2016” by Richard J. Janet, illustrates the Vincentians’ role in the westward expansion of Catholicism by examining the history of Saint Mary’s of the Barrens, the Vincentians first and oldest foundation in the United States. The final book, “Fealty and Fidelity: The Lazarists of Bourbon France, 1660-1736” by Seán Alexander Smith, explores how the mission of the early Vincentians changed after Vincent de Paul’s death.

CO-WORKING AND LAUNCH COMPETITION SPACE EXPANDS

DePaul’s highly ranked entrepreneurship degrees and activities recently expanded into 4,000 square feet of space. A new-venture competition called Launch DePaul, an internship program that pairs students with newly founded Chicago businesses, and various workshops, seminars and speaking engagements have moved into this new home. The modern, flexible space features a main room that can be converted easily from a co-working area for student entrepreneurs to an 80-seat venue for the Coleman Entrepreneurship Center’s programming of about 100 guest speakers annually.

CAMPUS SAFETY IMPROVED

Student Affairs adopted a new case management system, improving the efficiency of the university’s response to safety and behavior concerns on campus, including complaints of sexual or relationship violence. The system also enables anyone in the university community to report a potential issue and feel confident that the correct staff have been informed and can act on it. The tool—Maxient—is used by the Dean of Students, Student Care Team, Residential Education, Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity, and Title IX Coordinator, among others. It serves as a centralized reporting and recordkeeping system to share concerns between departments, ensuring students’ needs are addressed so no case falls between the cracks.
CONULTING COURSE EVALUATIONS

A Student Government-led effort to give students access to class evaluations has moved forward, and today, students can see evaluations for courses taught in six colleges and the honors program when they register. Although questions asked can vary for each course, there are now six standard questions asked of every student enrolled in every course. These questions query whether the student fully applied himself or herself and whether the instructor clearly communicated the goals, assignments and course expectations. The questions also seek to confirm that respect permeated the course and that course evaluation criteria were appropriate. Thousands of students consult the evaluations prior to each registration.

NEW IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RESOURCES

Further solidifying its commitment to be a welcoming campus for all, DePaul enhanced its efforts to assist college students who immigrated to the United States as minors by developing and promoting helpful information for immigrants and refugees online. The material includes legal and support resources available at DePaul and beyond, as well as an extensive list of scholarships, internships, fellowships, and mentoring opportunities in fields including law, communication, health and science, among others. The university also designated a formal point of contact for undocumented students, who can now visit the associate director of Multicultural Student Success for assistance.

CONSULTING COURSE EVALUATIONS

The global Catholic television network EWTN, whose programming reaches more than 250 million homes in 140 countries, aired shows that featured the creativity of School of Cinematic Arts students and faculty. The 13-episode series, “Our Faith in Action: Today’s Society of St. Vincent de Paul,” followed the spiritual growth of society members as they served people in need. A DePaul crew attended the society’s national convention and filmed what became a “Vincentian Moment,” featuring a personal reflection by a Vincentian that was included in each episode.