

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

2024 Student Laureates

Personal Statements

Augustana College – Lazlow Brian William Ziebel

Abraham Lincoln's Leadership Legacy provides significant guidance for living a civic-minded life and improving the greater good. Lincoln's key principles of equality, justice, and unity have inspired generations, serving as a powerful guide toward decisions that offer moral clarity and humility in the pursuit of a more unified society. This inspiring message has led me to become a 'Lincoln-hearted' person, while also encouraging those around me to consider a life of public service rooted in compassion for others.

Aurora University – Olivia DeAnn Buzzelli

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy inspires me to actively engage in civic duties and public service. As a student athlete and campus leader, I strive to uphold values like integrity, perseverance, and dedication. Whether I'm on the ice as the captain of the NCAA women's ice hockey team or leading student organizations, Lincoln's principles guide me to lead with empathy and resilience. His example motivates me to contribute positively to my community and pursue a life dedicated to serving others and making a difference.

Benedictine University – Jordan Reilly Werner

Until receiving the honor of being named my university's 2024 Lincoln Laureate, I had not specifically attributed my values and successes to President Lincoln's leadership legacy, but it is now clear that they are inextricable. Faced with the most divided America in history, President Lincoln stood strong by his values and worked to heal a war-torn nation throughout and after the Civil War. He never wavered on his stance against slavery, and it ultimately cost him his life.

Benedictine University was founded by monks of the Benedictine order, the buildings built brick by brick by these men who lived by St. Benedict's rule and his motto, "*ora et labora*," a Latin phrase meaning "prayer and work." My undergraduate education has deeply instilled St. Benedict's teachings in me; I conduct my work as a researcher, educator, advocate, and leader in the hallmarks of stewardship, community, discipline, and, always, love. President Lincoln's legacy of courage, empathy, honesty, and integrity beautifully complement St. Benedict's teachings, and inspire me to be a better leader and community member. I strive to stand for what is right, even in the face of great adversity. I seek to empower the disempowered and give voice to people who have lost theirs. Above all, I work to build a better future in the spirit of both President Lincoln and St. Benedict, starting in my dearest friendships and culminating in community efforts, be them on my campus or in the wider web of our shared humanity.

Bradley University – Marissa Tiana Perez

As a first-generation college student from LaGrange, Illinois, my journey reflects Lincoln's values through my commitment to education, community service, and leadership. Lincoln's ability to lead with integrity and prioritize the needs of others inspires my own civic-minded pursuits.

Through roles such as President of the Health Science Organization and Campus Life Ambassador at Bradley University, I strive to foster leadership and support among peers, highlighting Lincoln's dedication to uniting and uplifting those around him. My work as a Rehabilitation Aide and Facility Supervisor demonstrates my commitment to providing quality care and creating a supportive environment, aligning with Lincoln's focus on the welfare of others. Also, Lincoln's legacy of resilience and inclusive leadership aligns with my volunteer efforts at the American Red Cross, where I engage in meaningful service and advocacy. Embracing Lincoln's example, I am driven to contribute positively to my community, advocate for inclusivity, and lead with a sense of purpose and responsibility. By adhering to Lincoln's ideals, I aim to live a life of service and commitment and to continually striving to make a positive impact in my community.

Chicago State University – Danina Amina Hughes

My diverse experiences—as former President within the Student Government, former Chair of the Volunteer Committee, and a current member of the women's tennis team—have equipped me to embody these values of integrity and honor by raising awareness for critical causes, advocating for my peers, and fostering inclusivity and accountability within my community. I am driven by a purpose to use my strengths for the betterment of others, just as Lincoln did. I believe true leadership means leading through actions, not just words. Lincoln's legacy reminds me that leadership is not defined by the title you hold but by the impact you create. As I continue on my journey, I am committed to living a civic-minded life, channeling my passion and skills into actions that uplift, unite, and contribute to the greater good of my community and beyond.

Columbia College Chicago – Tyler Harding

I am deeply honored to be named a Lincoln Academy Student Laureate, an award that carries the legacy of one of my greatest idols, President Abraham Lincoln. His unwavering commitment to equality and justice, even in the face of immense challenges, inspires me as I pursue a career in public service. Lincoln's leadership and courage advanced our nation's founding ideals toward a more perfect union. As I strive to serve others in my community and contribute to the greater good, I look to his example for guidance, reminding myself to remain resilient and consistent in the pursuit of equality and unity.

Concordia University Chicago – Gabrielle Marguerite Mintrup

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide for my life in many ways, especially guiding me in the pursuit of a life of service and reminding me to always do the right thing, even when it is not easy. Whether it be serving as the president of our country, serving in the military, or serving the American people by working in federal law enforcement (as I plan to), service involves putting others before yourself and making difficult choices. Lincoln made a lot of sacrifices in his pursuit of what is right because he knew that it was his responsibility to work for the greater good, and I take

the responsibility to do the same very seriously. From sleeping on a classroom floor and taking cold showers while on mission trips to the late nights and early mornings that I will work protecting the American people and upholding the Constitution, Lincoln's Legacy will serve as a reminder that the commitment to doing what is right may come with a price, but it is one worth paying to serve the greater good.

DePaul University – Jamari Davion Grant

As a soon to be DePaul graduate, Lincoln's leadership has inspired me to lead a civic-minded life that prioritizes service and the greater good. As I attend classes and work on campus I enjoy connecting with new peers, facilitate networking opportunities and build lasting relationships. I am driven by Lincoln's examples of selfless leadership and his commitment to unity and equity fuels my passion for helping African American young men to attend college and making higher education a priority and a space that everyone can succeed in.

Outside of the campus, I am dedicated to serving my community and giving back to those that helped to shape me. I believe in the importance of supporting those in need and strive to be the example that I want to see in the world. Every day is new and offers a chance to create new meaningful experiences and to be better than I was yesterday. In all, these efforts and Lincoln's legacy serve as my guide by reminding me to lead with integrity, compassion and an unwavering commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of others.

Dominican University - Ingrid Bustos Aleman

As a dedicated History and Secondary Education major at Dominican University, I am honored to be the recipient of the Lincoln Laureate Award, and represent a commitment to leadership and community service.

As an Orientation Leader and member of the Learning, Living Community at Dominican University, I had the opportunity to support first-year students navigate college life and foster a supportive environment for their transition. Through the Arthur J. Schmitt Scholar Foundation I have been able to research and highlight the stories of the undocumented community, thus demonstrating a commitment to advocacy and inclusion reminiscent of Lincoln's emphasis on justice and empathy. I have embodied Lincoln's ideals of unity and equality through my continued and active support for the Justice Equity and Inclusion Office, through the organizing of events and managing social media to promote campus inclusivity.

Lastly, I continue to channel Lincoln's legacy of leadership by addressing systemic challenges and advocating for meaningful change by continuously attending and presenting at conferences and panels. This allows for me to share both my research and experiences on how to support undocumented students and immigrant communities.

Eastern Illinois University – Jade Akilah Maxwell

I am honored to be receiving this award; I have always believed that a true educator not only cares for their content and curriculum, but also cares for the community in which they serve. My hope is that as I prepare myself for my own classroom, that I am able to practice giving to those who are not only in need, but to those who wish for a better world. Being the backbone and foundation for a better quality of livelihood for those around me is what makes my career as an educator worthwhile. For me, this award has not only highlighted the work that I've done now, but also reminds me that though my work will never truly be done, my heart for others will remain full and gracious. That is how I hope to carry Lincoln's legacy on.

East-West University – TyBrys Jama Lamb

I am inspired to dedicate my life to public service and the benefit of society by Abraham Lincoln's unflinching devotion to upholding the Union and his moral courage in the face of great adversity. As I work to make significant contributions that have a good impact on my town and nation, I want to imitate Lincoln's moral leadership, unwavering perseverance, and empathy for all people. I shall honor Lincoln's legacy by working for a lifetime to further the common good and preserving his lofty goal of a more just and equitable nation.

Elmhurst University – Lucia Gaviria Vesga

Being awarded the Lincoln Laureate leadership award will guide my actions, post undergrad and onto my future endeavors. My time at Elmhurst University has empowered me to use my voice and knowledge to serve as a leader to those around me. I'm looking forward to using the knowledge that I have acquired in Economics and Finance to teach my community about the importance of financial literacy. Furthermore, in my time in college I discovered a true passion for women empowerment organizations, I hope to continue my involvement uplifting women in the greater scope of the ChicagoLand Community.

Eureka College – Hayden L. Skaggs

In my time doing civil service, my commitment to the greater good has been unwavering as I have learned the importance of adapting to whatever may be most pertinent an issue for any particular group. The changing of one's own perspectives may acutely change how a leader works for the greater good.

Two summers ago, I was in a car accident that left me dependent on a wheelchair for the following five months. This time spent in a wheelchair allowed me a greater understanding of the challenges facing those with accessibility needs. With this extended awareness, I came to recognize the need to learn the personalized needs of people as they may be dependent on their circumstances and experiences. The duty to improve communities for the greater good was one that belongs to all of us and requires we take into consideration all aspects of human life.

Abraham Lincoln lived a lifetime of service and commitment to the greater good. Through civic engagement, Lincoln worked for the betterment of society. His work reflected the desires of the people and worked for the needs of all. As President, he led the nation through a tumultuous time, all the while staying firm to his commitment to civic-minded leadership for the amelioration of each and every one of us.

As a person who tried to live a life of service and justice, I do my best to listen to the needs of all those around me. To improve the situations that people may find themselves in. I commit myself to civic leadership- following behind President Abraham Lincoln.

Governors State University – Latrice Nicole Jones

I have always embodied a superintendence nature, alongside being a scholar of a role model. As a full-time first-generation college student, mother of two children and able to hold a successful full-time career in upper management, I am proud to be on track to graduate with honors by December 2024 with a Bachelors in Psychology. The leadership skills I have gained will be a perfect fit as I continue my education to enter graduate school in Spring 2025, where I will embark on a new academic journey of restorative justice and to advocate for communities in need. My determination and resilience will continue as I make my mark on society for the greater good as a leader who promotes peace and tranquility.

Greenville University – Cate Elizabeth Cota

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy demonstrates the advancing work being done by citizens in varying professions. This legacy drives the "why" behind what I do for the greater good of my community and all of Illinois. I came to Illinois as a college student from out-of-state and was immediately exposed to and inspired by the passion of those around me to contribute to the betterment of their communities. Now, as a Student Laureate of the Lincoln Academy, I am provided the opportunity to contribute in similar ways, committedly serving those around me.

Illinois College – Marvin Romo

Drawing inspiration from Lincoln's wisdom, I recognize that leadership is both a daunting and rewarding responsibility. Like Lincoln, I aim to inspire positive change and advocate for justice in my community. Whether as a student engaged in medicine advocating for all to be seen or as a future teacher empowering students to stand up for their beliefs, I am committed to fostering a culture of empathy, inclusion, and civic engagement. By standing firm in my convictions and encouraging others to do the same, I strive to honor Lincoln's legacy by championing the values of integrity, compassion, and equality in every aspect of my life.

Illinois Institute of Technology – Ryan Stephen Manthy

The Lincoln Academy’s guide of living a civic-minded life resonated with me as an approach that honors a servant leadership ethos of putting the needs of your community first. Growing up with a firefighter father and EMT mother exposed me to the harsh realities of how individuals interact with healthcare and government from a young age. Their stories about addiction, homelessness, and neglect made me aware of the ways society often fails to support its most vulnerable and the pivotal role community support plays in public service. To be an effective public servant means being a faithful steward of one’s community through making contributions every day that uplift the interests and well-being of others.

I hope to embody this spirit by employing my skills as a computer scientist in public interest environments underserved by technologists. My efforts today to build technology to support voter registration and pathways for others to work in technology policy will allow me to contribute meaningfully as a citizen, student, and engineer. Most recently, my work developing the Youth Civic Hub has enhanced the connection to state and local government for more than 10,000 young New Yorkers in the 2024 election season.

Looking to the future, I hope to apply my skills at the intersection of technology, policy, and science to advance a government that innovates to be more responsive to the needs of its people, working toward a future that generates prosperity, equality, and opportunity for my community and beyond.

Illinois State University – Gabriela Ledesma

Lincoln's leadership legacy, characterized by humility, empathy, and a steadfast commitment to justice, serves as a powerful guide for living a civic-minded life. Humility, leadership, and resilience have always been qualities that have allowed me to inspire others to understand that no goal is impossible. I aspire to work at the Permanent Mission of Panama to the United Nations, which is why it is crucial to be a leader who respects and listens to the opinions of all, acting with transparency and justice. Lincoln’s ability to unite a divided nation and advocate for equality inspires me to work towards building inclusive communities and addressing societal injustices. I aspire to honor the Legacy of Lincoln by dedicating my life to serve others by showing them a vision and purpose so they can find their opportunities and generate transformation.

Illinois Wesleyan University – Victoria Ballesteros-Gonzalez

Abraham Lincoln's legacy of leadership serves as a powerful guide in my commitment to a civic-minded life dedicated to service and the greater good. His dedication to justice, unity, and perseverance inspires me to approach challenges with integrity and purpose.

As a student majoring in Political Science and Environmental Studies, I strive to embody Lincoln's values in my academic and extracurricular activities. My former role as Sustainability Commissioner at Illinois Wesleyan University reflects my passion for environmental stewardship,

where I led initiatives to promote sustainability on campus and raise awareness about environmental issues.

My experience as a Bilingual Marketing Intern at the McLean County Small Business Development Center (SBDC) has reinforced my commitment to empowering others. By helping bridge language barriers and support local entrepreneurs, much like Lincoln united diverse communities during his time.

Additionally, my involvement with the IWU MakerGirl Academy and global initiatives like Girls in Science 4 SDGs at the United Nations has taught me the importance of advocacy and education. These experiences embody IWU's mission to "Do Good, Do Well," reminding me that true success is measured by the positive impact we make on others and the world around us.

Looking forward, I am committed to carrying Lincoln's legacy into my future career in government affairs, community engagement, or corporate social responsibility, always guided by the principles of equity, justice, and service to the greater good.

Judson University – Jackson David Fry

As I work to live a life of civic engagement and social duty, the example set by Abraham Lincoln serves to inspire and motivate me to better the institutions around me, enact positive social change, and uphold honesty and integrity in everything I do and everywhere I go. A life of working towards a brighter future for everyone, self-sacrifice, and morality, such as that of Abraham Lincoln, is the life I aspire to live.

Knox College – Jasmine Jane Lerner

A compassionate and motivated student, I'm an Illinois native who has had a wonderful educational career attending Knox College. Throughout college, I have realized my love for working and learning with children. I look forward to working in a behavioral health setting as a bilingual therapist for children and adolescents. I will also continue to sing in choirs and teach voice lessons to continue my love for music. I will serve my community with compassion and keep the empowering spirit of the Lincoln Leadership Legacy with me throughout my endeavors.

Lake Forest College – Josiah K. Kidd

First and foremost, I want to express my deepest gratitude to God for placing me in this incredible position to be considered for the Lincoln Laureate Award. I also extend my sincere thanks to the committee and the state of Illinois for recognizing my leadership and the positive impact I've sought to make in my community. Being selected for this honor is both humbling and inspiring.

As a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma, I live by our motto: Culture for service, and service for humanity. This guiding principle has been central to my personal and leadership journey. The values instilled in me by this great organization have shaped the leader I am today. Through Phi

Beta Sigma, I have learned that leadership is not about individual success, but about uplifting others and serving with humility and purpose. I know that no leader achieves success alone, and I am eternally grateful to the men of Phi Beta Sigma, especially my brothers of Gamma Pi Gamma, for standing beside me every step of the way. They have not only supported me but have also challenged me to grow. Where I have fallen short, they have lifted me up. Where I was weak, they pushed me to turn those weaknesses into strengths. It is through their guidance and unwavering belief in me that I have been able to rise to the occasion and make a meaningful difference.

This award is as much a reflection of their collective support as it is of my personal achievements. Together, we have embraced the spirit of service, striving to create positive change and leave a lasting impact on those around us.

Lewis University – Irena Ilic

Lincoln's legacy is one we should all look up to and aspire to achieve as young leaders today. Lincoln was a man of principle. A man that was true to himself and others. A man who displayed unwavering commitment to his responsibilities and his constituents. His actions carved the path of the modern nation we live in today and for that we should be forever grateful. It was Lincoln who inspired so many across the nation to fight for what they believe in. It is principles such as these that help us, as citizens of the United States, to contribute to our nation's wellbeing and prosperity. Lincoln's life provides a model for us to live a life full of service. We should all look to Lincoln's time as a leader to provide us insight on how to make a positive impact on those around us and the world.

Loyola University Chicago – Rohan Jaiswal

Leaders hold the responsibility of setting a vision that surpasses the status quo, drawing on a network of resources to refine that vision, and mobilizing people towards the mission of executing that vision. I aspire to be a leader in the spaces of medical care and educational equity, to use my platforms to generate meaningful change for underserved communities, and to commit myself to the greater good of all.

McKendree University – Destiny Johnson

Leadership at any level comes with power and the choice of how to use that power. Lincoln's leadership is remembered by his choice to use his leadership power for a higher purpose, maintaining unity. This choice caused Lincoln much trouble and ultimately cost him his life. Despite the conflict, Lincoln continued to lead with the goal of unity in mind even though giving up would have been easier. It is said that one of Lincoln's best leadership attributes was that he never wavered on his core principles, even at his own expense. Lincoln's leadership legacy is one of sacrificial leadership, putting the betterment of others and community before the betterment of self. No matter what leadership role I take on in the future, whether it be a soccer coach, a management

position, a mother of my household, or an older sister, I will strive to lead selflessly like Lincoln did because I know that leadership gives me the power to make a difference in the lives around me for the greater good of others, but I have to actively choose to do so. Therefore, Lincoln's leadership legacy will guide me to assess every situation through a Lincoln lens: put my selfish ambitions and motives aside and focus on how I can help others and the community through the power that I attain by being a leader.

Millikin University – Olivia Claire Swords

Wearing a lofty size 14, President Lincoln left staggeringly big shoes to fill. At a meager size 7 myself, such a task seems remarkably daunting. Perhaps the goal, however, is not to fill the enormous shoes Mr. Lincoln left behind, but rather to follow humbly within his trail, utilizing his shoe prints beacons of progress, growth, and leadership. Each step represents both a template and an opportunity for departure as I carve out my own unique path within President Lincoln's remarkable legacy.

At age 12, my career aspiration became apparent: to serve as a justice on the Illinois Supreme Court. Nearly a decade later, my passion and commitment to serving the state of Illinois as a facilitator of justice has only grown stronger. As I enter the next stage of my education in preparation for a career in law, the same field Mr. Lincoln himself boldly governed into a new horizon during the most schismatic years in our nation's history, I can think of no more esteemed professional to regard as the blueprint in an industry founded upon moral advocacy and the stewardship of the most paramount ethical standards.

Mr. Lincoln once said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." As a recipient of the Lincoln Student Laureate Award, this quote perfectly defines my guiding hope as I stand on the precipice of tomorrow; the hope to eagerly follow the vast trail of size 14 shoe prints as I remain steadfast in my dedication to live in the spirit of Lincoln while paving a brave new path across the great state of Illinois and beyond.

Monmouth College – Lea Kristine Selquist

Leadership is not simply a role one takes, but a way one lives their life. Every decision is made with the concerns and interests of others in mind. Abraham Lincoln knew this and lived his life as a role model and example to those around him. He diligently observed the needs of others and framed his life around service to them. He understood that to be a true leader, one must put themselves on the back burner and focus on how they can improve the situation for everyone involved. For me, I strive to lead by example in every aspect of my life. I hope to bring a smile to other's faces and add value to their lives by being kind and seeking out ways to help others in everything I do.

National Louis University – Edwin Rosendo

Abraham Lincoln's legacy as a leader who led with empathy and humility deeply resonates with me. His ability to connect with people from all backgrounds, understanding their struggles and needs, is a quality I admire and strive to emulate in my own life.

Lincoln believed in the power of empathy and the importance of understanding others' experiences. My background and life experiences have led me to have a strong empathy for others. As a proud bilingual individual with roots in Mexico, I've seen firsthand the challenges that many in my community face, from accessing basic necessities to overcoming educational barriers. These experiences have fueled my desire to help others, whether by volunteering at my old middle school in Chicago or assisting in my church community.

As a future teacher, I am committed to making a difference in the lives of young people, particularly those from underserved communities. I aim to be a role model who embraces diversity, ensuring that every student, regardless of race, religion, identity, or color, feels valued and supported. I also hope to extend my efforts beyond the classroom, contributing to community initiatives both in Chicago and, if possible, in Mexico, where I can give back to the place my family calls home.

Inspired by Lincoln's example, I am dedicated to leading a life of service, guided by empathy and humility. In every decision I make, I strive to make a lasting impact on those around me, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive society where every individual is respected for who they are on the inside.

North Central College – Jasmine Alely Tixta

As a first-generation minority student, I know far too well the struggles of everyday life. I have come a long way since I first started my undergrad journey, and I believe that I have picked up useful tips and wisdom along the way. Just as my mentors continue to guide me and open my eyes to new ideas, I hope to one day do the same for others. I feel a sense of gratitude that can only be repaid by trying to help others like it was once done for me.

I have often asked myself, what makes a great leader? Is it the ability to speak to a crowd, to be able to plan, or is it the capability of giving orders? I say, it takes more. Being a great leader like President Lincoln, involves doing the opposite of what others expect. When they expect failure, you gather the strength to rise. When they expect you to follow the crowd, you lead with new ideas. When people are silenced and dismissed, you give them a voice. That is the kind of leader that Lincoln was and the kind I will continue to strive to become.

A great leader provides opportunities for others to rise in order to create the leaders of tomorrow. It involves seeing everyone's potential and helping them achieve it. After all, when one benefits, we all benefit. As a leader, my aspiration is to unite people of diverse backgrounds to work for one common "greater good". We never fully know the effect our kind actions will have; thus, by acting today it is guaranteed to impact our future.

North Park University – Rebekah Joy Yue-Ming Baker

My work in both nonprofit organizations and art and heritage conservation are rooted in a desire to serve underserved communities and ensure equal access to resources for generations to come. Preserving histories through art, object, and text is vital in the process of building identity, determining how we want to shape our future, and upholding important core values. Guided by values of equality, excellence, honesty, and compassion, I seek to be an active advocate in my community for women and BIPOC artists by creating inclusive opportunities and fostering cultural and historical platforms through which diverse contributions can be learned from and celebrated.

Northeastern Illinois University – Lisa Marie Sanders

Abraham Lincoln embodied integrity, unity and civic mindedness. These qualities are what inspire me to commit to a greater good. Lincoln's humility and compassion are what guide me through my actions and this award is a reminder of what I have achieved, but it is also a reminder that there is more work to be done.

Northern Illinois University – Emma Gladys Whitlock

I believe that a life committed to aiding others and providing service to the local community is a life full of purpose and joy. No one gets through life on their own, and it is important to acknowledge that by reciprocating that same kindness back to the community in any way possible. This sentiment was instilled in me by my parents at an early age and will continue to push me to pursue volunteer and mentorship opportunities as I advance in my education and career. When I become a medical student, I hope to serve as a mentor for students pursuing a career in medicine as finding the resources to understand the medical school process is an arduous task. As a doctor, I hope to complete missionary work in places that have little to no access to healthcare as healthcare is a basic human right.

Additionally, I hope to be involved in medical research as I go through medical school to further devote myself to helping others and bettering society. There is still so much we do not know about the human body, and in order to advance society for the better, more research needs to be completed. The quote "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants" by Isaac Newton exemplifies the process of scientific research. One must first learn what the countless other brilliant minds of the past have discovered in order to begin to write the next chapter in scientific knowledge to further humanity. If I can make even a small contribution in discovering new knowledge, that will be a success for me.

Northwestern University – Maya Alexandra Vuchic

Lincoln's belief that all people are united by a common humanity is something I have held and will continue to hold close to heart through all work I do alongside and in service to others. The privileges I hold--being able to lead my peers at Northwestern and participate in my communities--put me in a position to, like Lincoln, bring the values of equity and justice to all the work I do.

Principia College – Tobin Blair

Today, it is easy to support a belief with minimum effort. Signing a petition on change.org, liking an activist social media post, or sharing your opinions on those sites are all easy ways to do little but make yourself feel good. In the history of humankind, the people who changed the world shared one trait—they stepped up and acted. They made the crucial step beyond simply believing in their ideals. Take Simone Weil as an example.

Simone Weil lived her ideals to such a degree that Albert Camus called her “the only great spirit of our times.” To Weil, ideals and beliefs are things to be acted on. When she was five, she went without eating sugar in solidarity with the soldiers in WWI. For the rest of her life, every belief she held impacted how she lived her life. She lived to make the world better, not to satisfy her own whims. Such a commitment is a moral dedication—that it is morally wrong to believe in something without acting on it.

This moral dedication to act is the foundation of world change. It is the same mentality as Lincoln during his political career. It is this spirit that will bring change to visible and invisible problems of today. And it is the mindset I strive to enact so I may, like Weil, like Lincoln, leave the world a better place

Quincy University – Parker John Lymenstull

I, Parker John Lymenstull, pledge to continue to commit my life to be a leader my peers can look up to and to better society in any way possible. I promise to continue my work as a leader by assisting others with their academics through my peer tutoring sessions and helping bring them to the level of academic success they want to achieve. Also, I plan on expanding my role as a leader for the Quincy University Men's Bowling team with my ascendance to the role of assistant coach to keep everyone on the same page and further develop a feeling of brotherhood on the team for both returners and newcomers alike. My work will not stop there as I plan on continuing to uphold the Franciscan Values of Quincy University by serving others in their time of need, giving my time to local soup kitchens to make sure those less fortunate can put some food on the table for their family. Not only that, but even the small things in life like simply treating others the way that I want to be treated and helping spread kindness and respect for others throughout my local community. After all, we all only have one life and it is of the utmost importance that we leave the world a better place than how we found it.

Rockford University – Julisa Gutierrez

I am the daughter of two Mexican immigrants as well as a first-generation college student. Growing up as the oldest sibling in my family, leadership was always something that was naturally instilled in me. However, as I have navigated through life and post-secondary education, I have been introduced to a new meaning of leadership. Much like President Abraham Lincoln, I strive to improve the well-being of my community, whether it be on or off my university campus. I aim for excellence in everything that I become a part of, and I plan on continuing to do that throughout my professional career as an educator. Not only that, but as I walk through life, I am inspired to carry the same honesty, humility, and grace that is reflected in President Lincoln's legacy.

Roosevelt University – Hlib Miasnychenko

It is an honor to receive the Lincoln Leadership Legacy Award. It will inspire me to live a life dedicated to service and civic responsibility, embodying the principles of integrity, compassion, and commitment to the greater good.

Saint Xavier University – Gavin Marcel Dudley

I am devoted to living a civic-minded life of service and dedication to the greater good, and Abraham Lincoln's leadership legacy serves as an everlasting light for me to follow. His steadfast commitment to justice and equality, as demonstrated by the Gettysburg Address, motivates me to advocate for equity and inclusivity in my own community. Lincoln's ability to bring a divided nation together and his perseverance in the face of hardship serve as a reminder to me of the value of empathy, morality, and brave leadership in promoting constructive change. I hope to make a significant contribution to society by resembling the same efforts as Abraham Lincoln and constantly working to defend values that promote liberty, equality, and the quest of a brighter future for all.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago – Mya Nicole Jones

My name is Mya Jones, I'm from Northeast Philadelphia and I will be graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago this Spring. Throughout my life I've been blessed enough to be surrounded and enriched by culture and education. From a young age my horizons were widened beyond what was in front of me. Since High School I've embarked on a journey to seek challenge and elicit change. Living in Chicago, I've packed my days with initiative; improving student life for black students by leading our Black Student Union, speaking with Mayor Johnson and fellow peers to make positive change in education for black youth in Illinois, diving deeper into culture and the arts of Illinois by writing and editing my school's newspaper, and now making larger moves for the student body in student government. In my spare time I also create content on Youtube to share my life with other students so they can begin to see the possibilities of their futures as well. I've made it my mission to be a pioneer and a leader. I'm extremely gracious to The Lincoln Academy of

Illinois for acknowledging and further inspiring my contributions to the state of Illinois as well as to arts, culture, and students all over the world.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale – Carlos Emil Gomez

President Abraham Lincoln was keenly aware of the past's power to beget change in the present. Speaking to an assembly of onlookers on November 19th, 1863, at Gettysburg he was surrounded by the past's consequences. The war that had claimed so many lives was not a product of sudden developments. It was an outgrowth of America's original sin: slavery. Since its founding, slavery, and the poisonous legal, social, and political institutions it birthed had stood over the United States like a shadow. Now, they threatened to destroy the Union.

Yet, the past offered reprieve as well. Lincoln saw the City upon a Hill that America could be, and he spoke about the foundations built for that City by its original architects in 1776 and 1789. In evoking the efforts of those constitutional crafters -to create a nation that promised freedom for all regardless of origin- Lincoln used the past to present an alternative image of America's future: one where the enslaved were free and where freedom was for all.

Like Lincoln, I believe that history can generate change in the present. It can inspire its students to build a kinder, freer, more loving world. It's a world that I have faith in, and one that I, to paraphrase the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr, believe the arc of America's long and sometimes painful story is continuously bending towards. That story, and the wider world's, have inspired me to learn about their nuanced realities and to express them to dozens of my peers now, and hundreds of students in the future to build what President Lincoln believed in.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville – Anozha Singletary

This award will be a continued reminder of my purpose, a commitment to lead and serve beyond the basic requirements. As cliché as it sounds, I was honored to even be nominated for this award. I thought for sure that was where it ended. I do not serve to be recognized, however winning this award means that not only those who I tell what I am working on can see the effort I put into being involved and serving others, but those I have not uttered a word about my endeavors to believe in me to lead by serving others. I aspire to be a midwife, and I know that in my field I will continue to uphold the standards of the Lincoln Leadership Legacy.

The University of Chicago – Monica Ruiz House

Lincoln once counseled a young nurse to “put your feet in the right place” and “then stand firm.” Even when I err, I hope to keep my feet in this right place.

Trinity Christian College – Julianna Padilla

The essence of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy guides me to continue living a civic-minded life of service and commitment to the greater good by integrating five strategies. I want to make sure that I am making a significant and positive impact on my community so I integrate the following practices to help my goal and improve my leadership style. My current practices and strategies are engaging with my community, leading by example, promoting inclusivity, educating and inspiring others and lastly staying informed and reflecting.

It's important to engage with one's community because we must understand our community in order to learn about the values, concerns, and needs of our people. This helps foster open communication among us all. How can I lead by example if I'm not actively participating and volunteering in my community? It's essential to get involved and offer my time and skills to local organizations. This includes initiatives that are diverse and inclusive. All of us are knowledgeable and can share our knowledge to help educate and inspire others such as mentor future leaders. Seeking diverse perspectives helps me stay informed and open minded from different viewpoints. It allows me to regularly reflect on my practices and make an impact on my community for the better.

University of Illinois Chicago – Monica Jocelinne Padilla

Abraham Lincoln reminded us that the United States was founded on the principles of equality and liberty, ideals that are crucial in addressing today's healthcare disparities. As a first-generation American, I have seen how low-income and immigrant families are disproportionately affected by these inequities. These injustices have inspired me to pursue a medical degree and a master's in public health, with the goal of advocating for a more just and accessible healthcare system.

Lincoln's leadership legacy, characterized by his commitment to justice and compassion, guides my own aspirations. His belief in the dignity and worth of every individual drives me to work toward bridging the gaps in healthcare access. By advocating policies that prioritize the well-being of marginalized communities, I hope to echo Lincoln's dedication to fairness.

In an era where the values of equality and liberty are increasingly challenged, Lincoln's example serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing need to uphold these principles. My commitment to the healthcare rights of immigrants and refugees is deeply rooted in this vision. I am determined to fight for a future where healthcare is not a privilege but a fundamental right—accessible, equitable, and compassionate for all. Lincoln's legacy compels me to serve others with the same sense of purpose and dedication that he exemplified. By leveraging my education and experiences, I aim to contribute to a society where every person, regardless of their origin, can receive the care they deserve, fulfilling the promise of equality and liberty that Lincoln so passionately advocated.

University of Illinois Springfield – Anna Schurz

As a Student-Athlete on the Campus of UIS I highly value a strong engagement in academics, athletics and my community. I will continue to strive to make an uplifting and positive impact on those around me.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign – Ashley Equihua

I am honored to be recognized as a Student Laureate of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois; alongside exemplary individuals dedicated to shaping a brighter future for the world. I am deeply grateful for the guidance and support from those around me, and I am eager to replicate this for others.

The concept of the Lincoln heart comes from within, an intrinsic quality, and is uniquely shaped. This has been evident to me since a young age and remains true into adulthood, where I find personal fulfillment in the success of those around me. This award serves to champion my ambitions, allowing a first-generation Latine student to become the first physician in her family. The Lincoln Heart will ensure I continue to make local and global contributions to advance medicine and the world. My profound appreciation goes to the Lincoln Academy for its unwavering support. Si se puede!

University of St. Francis – Michelle Valencia

Abraham Lincoln made profound changes in society and rose above tumultuous times when discord reigned among the people. He knew the importance of uniting our country and ensuring freedom for the most vulnerable in society.

Lincoln had courage to speak up for the oppressed and gave the country hope during discouraging times. He empathized with his compatriots and those suffering under the inhumane hand of slavery. Lincoln proved his exceptional leadership skills by being transparent and honest with those around him, ultimately leading him to succeed in his endeavors. Lincoln had the integrity to remain faithful to his beliefs despite facing opposition.

I am committed to using my leadership skills to serve society and advocate for the common good. I will be courageous when confronting obstacles, honest in my interactions, maintain integrity in my beliefs, and have empathy for those less fortunate than I am. Our world needs people who are unafraid to let their voices shine and be the guiding light to inspire future generations. I am ready to be that voice and guide people towards a better society like how Abraham Lincoln led those of his time.

VanderCook College of Music – Courtney De Venuto

As a 2024 student laureate, I have a personal commitment to follow Abraham Lincoln's legacy and his principles of bravery and integrity in my life. Whether it be guiding my students to be compassionate, to advocate for others and assist those in need, or personally devoting myself to standing up for what is right, I pledge to help improve society in any way I can.

Western Illinois University – Richard Anzueto

My interest in the betterment of mankind began in high school when I first joined the Youth Leadership Program at Youth Crossroads. This non-profit organization with counseling and various services, led me with the desire to help people. I saw the impact Youth Crossroads had on students but also their clients. I completed over 500 volunteer hours and had the opportunity to grow leadership, communication, and public speaking skills.

When I enrolled at Western Illinois University, I pursued a double major in Social Work and Spanish to learn how to be more empathetic and supportive but to also improve my native language. I want to return to Cicero, IL and Chicago, IL to give back and invest into the community. With increasing Latino/Hispanic populations, it is essential to be proficient in Spanish and to be culturally competent. I plan to return and work for Youth Crossroads to give back to the organization and to help other children in the community. I aim to help Latino/Hispanic youth and single-parent families prevent domestic violence and child neglect.

As a contracted cadet in the WIU Army ROTC program, I plan on commissioning into the Illinois National Guard Medical Services with interest in Military therapy. It is important for veterans and service members to receive the benefits they protect, education assistance, healthcare, retirement, and therapy. It is essential to prepare our veterans for success when returning to civilian life.

I plan on improving social services, policies, and conditions within the Chicago area. I hope to provide families, children, and veterans with the resources and counseling they need in order to achieve greatness.

Wheaton College – Anna Elizabeth Moore

I am incredibly grateful for this award and its reminder of the work and sacrifice of former President Lincoln. Lincoln's strength of character and commitment to justice is a compelling example of true public service to all of us. The integrity and work ethic evident in his life, along with his consistent humility, model the essential characteristics of effective leadership. It is my hope to cultivate and carry these values with me as I graduate from Wheaton and hope to attend law school at home in the United Kingdom. In all areas of my life, I will endeavor to display the same courage, kindness, and respect while devoting myself to helping others as Lincoln did.

