

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois

Class of 2023

Student Laureate Legacy Statements

Augustana College - Rachel Nandelenga

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide and a reminder to always move with conviction to help others and advance the greater good. My passion for advocacy has been something I have strived for in my four years of college and I hope to continue this passion in my future career.

Lincoln was strong and brave in his beliefs and he serves as a pillar to unite all our passions into one collective stronghold. Receiving this award is an encouragement to keep going and to pursue my dedication to helping others succeed no matter who they are or where they come from. In addition, I believe effective leadership encompasses several key qualities: being a good listener, showing respect and kindness, and fostering open communication. While I may not be the most outspoken person in a room, I pride myself on being an attentive listener, ensuring that I hear and consider everyone's viewpoints before expressing my own. This approach is important in a world where it's all too easy to hold misinformed positions simply because we think we're right. By stepping back and actively listening, we can avoid such mistakes and make more informed decisions. This process of listening before speaking allows for personal growth, which is essential in any leadership role. Lincoln was a model of stepping beyond himself to fight for the greater good and I hope his legacy and leadership are a true inspiration to many more.

Aurora University - Mason Allen Brauer

In the name of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy, I am pursuing a life of civic dedication and service in order to lift society up in a positive direction. Like Lincoln, I believe in fostering inclusivity and empathy across diverse communities. By engaging in multiple student organizations, jobs, and being the President of the AU Students' Association, I aim to build bridges and amplify individuals' voices through advocacy, akin to Lincoln's efforts in wanting to unite the once-divided nation. Overall, by embodying Lincoln's Legacy of leadership and public service, I am continually driven to contribute meaningfully to the greater good of society and hold myself to a civic-minded life of service, just as Lincoln had done.

Benedictine University - Ayesha Amin Moosani

As a senior at Benedictine University pursuing a major in Health Science with minors in Medical Spanish and Chemistry, my academic journey reflects the transformative leadership of Abraham Lincoln. An immigrant surmounting language and cultural barriers, I have embraced challenges with steadfast determination, echoing Lincoln's resilience in the face of adversity.

My sports involvement and academic pursuit mirror Lincoln's dedication and commitment. From basketball, soccer, and track participation to consistent Dean's Honors and roles like President of the Student Senate, my achievements encapsulate Lincoln's perseverance during crucial national junctures. My research through participation in various conferences, as well as my ongoing investigation into probiotics, reflects Lincoln's thirst for knowledge and societal advancement. Sharing research insights at academic forums resonates with Lincoln's emphasis on continuous progress. Aligned with Lincoln's legacy of service, my commitment goes beyond academia. Engaging with Alzheimer's patients and volunteering as a Registered Behavior Technician reflect Lincoln's ethos of selflessness and community empowerment. My roles as a Learning and Teaching Assistant, Peer Mentor, tutoring local children, and leading mosque youth programs

underscore my dedication to community growth and mentorship. My personal struggles and the poignant loss of my grandfather have fortified my determination, deepening my capacity for empathy and holistic care. This echoes Lincoln's compassion for humanity's trials, propelling my aspiration to be a compassionate physician who connects with patients on a profound level, ultimately contributing to the advancement of universal healthcare.

Lincoln's transformative leadership uniting a divided nation inspires me to bridge divides and foster unity. With an unwavering focus on comprehensive healthcare, I seek to make a lasting impact and am dedicated to serving and igniting positive change.

Blackburn College - Aryanna Harris

I am God-serving, no better/greater than the next. I could have been an example and corrupt by partaking in worldly things. Yet, I represent a sound of freedom, leadership, and guidance for all people. This is not just a goal or mission, but a lifelong journey and battle. Fear and doubt are always in question, but will never be the answer. Life is about overcoming obstacles, especially when the betterment of humanity is at stake. Courage, honor, and forgiveness, all play a part in this process. May God and the Universe carry us all to that accomplishment of development, kindness, love, and integrity. This is NOT about me, but it is about the Us, making a difference for those who think their voice may not hold value or power. Our world needs great leaders who see the value in Everyone. I Stand and Speak for all. Everyone has a Right, a Choice, and a Decision. May life grant us Prosperity, Peace, Equality, and Freedom. I will be a vessel, a safe place, and a person to come to when it is time to face this matter. I give my all and more, to make sure that everyone can, and will be heard. This is not just an award, but an honor that I will uphold until the end. We can, and we will make a difference by representing Lincoln's Leadership Legacy, by continuing to lead individuals to great things, giving them the voice, encouragement, and opportunities that lead to their success in world.

Bradley University - Brigitte Ashley McCormick

The Lincoln Leadership Legacy's core value of service provides a guiding light as to how I wish to conduct myself both professionally and personally. As a future social worker, my life will be devoted to helping improve the quality of life for others and fighting against the injustices that are present in our society. For me, my passion for environmental education and climate change awareness aligns the most with the Legacy's belief in working towards the greater good. What is a greater good than ensuring the preservation of the planet for generations to come? It's through the connections of communities, people, and beliefs that we will be able to achieve our goals of climate reform. I thank the Lincoln Leadership Legacy and the staff at Bradley University for bringing together communities of strong students who are driven to change the communities they're in.

Chicago State University - Tereshia J. Weathers

Abraham Lincoln once said, "be sure you put your feet in the right place and stand firm in it" and he did just that. It was President Lincoln's wild idea that all people are deserving of simple things like freedom and equality that made Lincoln a defiant leader. He went against the social norm to do what was morally just despite the potential risks. As a leader in my community, I intend to lead with the same tenacity and prowess as President Lincoln to make a substantial difference. Today, there is still much work to be done in the areas of ensuring autonomy, economic equality, access to adequate healthcare and education, and so much more. My ideology is very similar to that of President Lincoln, as I believe those are simple things that all people deserve. My hope is to become an occupational therapist to use my platform to meet those challenges with solutions, even if it's just for one person. Every day I strive to learn as much as I can so that I can make a positive impact on my peers. I will continue to make a conscious effort to lead and encourage others to help improve the future of our communities through service and kindness.

Columbia College Chicago - Elizabeth Barajas Vasquez

As Abraham Lincoln once said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." This quote has deeply resonated with me on my journey to becoming a better leader. I owe my understanding of leadership to the people I have had the honor to call my friends. They have been my North Star, shining light on what it means to hold true to your values and guiding me through the darkest of times when even I seem to forget the reason why I started in the first place. They allow me to witness what it is to be confident and headstrong, allowing others to follow with you, and not behind you. Throughout the obstacles that I have faced, I have also been met by their endless encouragement and support. It is because of them that I have learned that effective leadership isn't about holding a title to your name, it's about the morals and vision that you encompass. It's about the people you uplift along the way. It's about losing sight of why you started and learning how to find your way back to it. Throughout all the adversity I have faced, I have learned that the only real power you have is how you overcome challenges and who you help through them.

Leadership is about the dreams that guide you and the people you rise with.

Concordia University Chicago - Kate Johnson

Growing up in a gym, on the field, and weight room I quickly committed myself to the physical health of being an athlete while lacking the knowledge and support of mental well-being. Since then, I have found a greater passion for service and advocating for athlete's mental health. Drawing on my sports management background, knowledge of psychology, and advanced leadership skills, I have committed myself to fostering a culture of open communication, trust, and collaboration within sports teams and organizations. By actively promoting dialogue around mental health, I will work as a Sports Psychologist to de-stigmatize the challenges athletes face and create an environment where seeking support is both encouraged and celebrated.

DePaul University - Magoli Garcia

My parents immigrated to the U.S because of the foundation of equality and justice for all that promised their children a better life than the ones they left behind. However, at a very young age, I learned that the value of your citizenship in this nation was conditional on the color of your skin or the language that you spoke thus conditioning me towards advocacy.

During a time of extreme uncertainty and conflict in this country, Abraham Lincoln's leadership was essential to reunify our nation as it teared at the seams. Lincoln recognized the importance of civic commitment to strive for a better, equal and more just future for all. In his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln advocated that the fight towards a better future mustn't end when faced with adversity or loss but rather to honor those who gave their lives in the fight and continue as they are the reason the potential of a better future burns brighter with each step forward. Lincoln's leadership legacy set the standard to carry on that torch towards a better future for our nation where the value of your citizenship is not questioned by the color of your skin or language that you speak. I live a life of civic service and advocacy to pay homage to those who came before and advocate for the changes they greatly deserved.

I am honored to be selected as the DePaul University Student Lincoln Laureate of 2023, and promise to continue my efforts to advocate for the greater good of my community through service.

Dominican University - Bianca Leon

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide for you in living a civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good. Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will serve as a reminder for me to always give back to my community. For so long, I denied my community. For a period of time, I ceased to speak my native language and limited my communication with my family in Mexico. When I reflect upon this time, I recall how lonely I was, and once you deny yourself a piece of your identity, you no longer become an active agent. I knew

I had the toolset to help my community, but due to my own personal self-reflection, I refused to do so. I regret this period of my life, thus by receiving this award, I will ensure that my community is taken care of and will continue to push me to become part of the vehicle of change.

Eastern Illinois University - Anna Joy Sipes

It is an honor to be awarded the Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award and become Eastern Illinois University's 2023 Student Laureate of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois. The president for whom this honor is named faced adversity we cannot begin to fathom and endured as a rock of strength, peace, wisdom, and grace to the American people. As Lincoln sought to bring healing to a divided nation, I seek to act as a healing hand in the lives of those suffering. As Lincoln served as a pillar of strength upon which his people leaned, I strive to be a leader to whom others may look in the midst of chaos and find calm. I hope to face trials with wisdom and grace as I pursue a career as a physician in the United States Navy, bringing peace and healing to communities both at home and abroad.

East-West University - Chris Jamison

Abraham Lincoln's Leadership Legacy serves as a timeless beacon guiding me towards a life of civic-minded service and unwavering dedication to the greater good. His resolute commitment to equality, justice, and unity, as demonstrated through his leadership during the Civil War and the crafting of the Emancipation Proclamation, inspires me to advocate for positive change and confront challenges with courage. By embracing Lincoln's empathy, integrity, and the principle that a government should be "of the people, by the people, for the people," I am empowered to contribute meaningfully to society, fostering a legacy of compassion, progress, and unity for generations to come.

Elmhurst University - Daizja Hollman

Lincoln's leadership legacy will forever inspire me and motivate me to live a life dedicated to public service but also to doing everything within my power to benefit the greater good. This will remind me throughout my future career that what I do truly matters, and that I have the potential to create a brighter future for those who come after me.

Eureka College - Hannah Colleen Cliff

Abraham Lincoln's leadership legacy provides a timeless blueprint for aspiring civic leaders worldwide. To guide my leadership journey, I follow two main principles demonstrated by President Lincoln: resilience and unity. During some of the darkest hours in our nation's history, Lincoln did not shy away from the challenges that lay ahead. He worked tirelessly for many years, and despite facing obstacle after obstacle, he persevered. His resilience while leading an entire country inspires me to remain steadfast, both in self-leadership and in service to my community. This ability to keep going stemmed from his devotion to reunify the spirit and physical capacity of the union. As a civic leader today, I am confronting increasingly polarized times in a country with vastly diverse opinions. My goal is to foster collaboration and always remain committed to unity. Thanks to Lincoln's legacy, I fiercely strive to serve all individuals in a determined fashion for the betterment of the greater good.

Governors State University - Laila Atra-Yassin

Abraham Lincoln's leadership serves as a guiding light for my journey of a life dedicated to civic responsibility. By exemplifying unwavering dedication to unity and justice, Lincoln showed that serving our community and nation extends beyond fulfilling obligations; it involves standing up for fundamental principles

of the welfare of all. His enduring legacy teaches that possessing civic consciousness entails more than completing acts of goodness—it requires an ongoing pledge to strive for progress, fairness, and empathy.

Lincoln's courage, unwavering commitment to abolish slavery, and talent in bringing together a divided nation underscore his devotion to serving others. However, what truly captivates me about Lincoln is his empathetic leadership style, exhibiting empathy and compassion towards friends and foes alike. Having a civic-minded attitude goes beyond personal interests and recognizing the interdependence of society. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was not only a display of political genius but also an admission that any suffering experienced by one group weakens the entire nation. It is a valuable lesson I carry: service involves more than just assisting others; it encompasses fostering a community where every individual can fully realize their capabilities. Lincoln's legacy further underscores the significance of resilience and flexibility. Despite encountering immense obstacles, he stayed true to his mission. This endurance teaches that a life dedicated to serving others may face hurdles, but staying steadfast and adjusting when necessary is crucial.

In conclusion, Lincoln's legacy guides me towards a life where service and commitment to the greater good are not optional but essential. It informs my decisions and actions, pushing me to be a better person, always focused on unity, justice, and uplifting all.

Greenville University - Lucas Dean Motsinger

Having grown up in the Illinois education system, President Lincoln played a vital role in my learning experience. What he accomplished as a man and through his presidency will never be forgotten. His leadership and perseverance should be recognized more in today's society because he represents a life of service concentrating on his country's needs, and not his own. It is important that we all attempt to embody the traits of President Lincoln, so we can make a difference in the world we live. In my future endeavors, President Lincoln's character will be foremost in my life decisions.

Illinois College - Shannon Engmann

The basis of leadership is teamwork. With my experiences in Student Senate, Residential Life, and being involved on a sports team, I have quickly learned that leadership requires the ability to work with others to complete the overall goal. Lincoln once said "A house divided against itself cannot stand", emphasizing how sticking together will allow a goal to be accomplished. As a biology major interested in ecology and animal conservation, I plan to continue executing this philosophy in my future career and other future endeavors. Working with others, putting ideas together, and taking action together is the only way to create a change in how we conserve the diversity of our planet.

Illinois Institute of Technology - Alison Frances Yurchak

One aspect of Lincoln's legacy in his leadership that will further guide myself in the direction to a greater good is his commitment to service of a local community. Before I was even enrolled at Illinois Tech, I expressed my interest in joining the university to continue on from my previous acts of service in my small hometown of Hilltown, Pennsylvania where I led a group of high school students to raise over \$1,000 for an orphanage in Vietnam to purchase generators. Once I arrived in Chicago for college, I knew there was more that my new community needed. My scholarship group at Illinois Tech and I soon created a literacy program for southside elementary schools just a few blocks away from our campus in Bronzeville. To which we have collected over 200 donated books and have read to over 300 children in the program's first year at only 2 local elementary schools, and we're just getting started. The joy my group and I gain from giving back to our community and the nostalgia it brings me from leading my previous efforts, help drive my civic-minded life commitment to servicing my community. I hope that you can see this legacy of Lincoln's leadership to community service in all of today's Lincoln Academy Laureates, among myself.

Illinois State University - Shariq M. Zaman

Leadership and service, defining attributes of Abraham Lincoln's enduring legacy, stand as essential qualities for every physician. As I strive to enter medical school and embark on the journey to becoming a healthcare provider, Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will guide me in keeping an altruistic mindset throughout my career.

Inspired by Lincoln's spirit, I will be committed to serving communities as a leader and making a positive impact on patients, their families, and society at large. The responsibility of every physician is to fulfill the role of being a guardian of humanity, entrusted with protecting the health of fellow citizens. My mission is to excel in this role and deliver high-quality, equitable healthcare to all, especially to the underserved. I aim to extend my leadership and service beyond the walls of a clinic or hospital. Just as Lincoln made a lasting impact by bridging divides and uniting the nation, I will dedicate myself to addressing health disparities to bridge the accessibility gap in healthcare, improving the overall health of communities near and far. Service is at the heart of medicine. As a future physician, I will be committing myself to a life centered around service. The values and principles embodied by Lincoln will guide my vision of practicing medicine. I aspire to honor his legacy by leading a civic-minded life dedicated to advancing the well-being of humanity through empathetic care and community engagement.

By upholding Lincoln's Leadership Legacy, my future will involve leadership, service, and compassionate care, all acting as strong pillars of my medical journey. My commitment to carry forward this legacy through medicine will be a testament to Lincoln's continuous influence.

Illinois Wesleyan University - Nora deLaine Robinson

At Illinois Wesleyan, we are often reminded to "go into the world and do well. But more importantly, go into the world and do good," a message from former IWU President Minor Myers Jr. As I think about Lincoln's legacy and how it might guide my future, I see that true leadership is going out to do good to help others and make our communities stronger. I am committed to living into that legacy by working with the people in my local community and beyond.

Judson University - Erin R. Aubrey

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide for me as I step into the field of education in the near future. I value Lincoln's legacy of being honest, putting other's needs first, and being a fair and compassionate guide to those around him; I will strive to do the same--not only with my future students but also with those around me in any leadership/professional capacity I may hold. Abraham Lincoln has inspired me to stand on my values and advocate for others who may need someone to amplify their voice in times of uncertainty and injustice. I appreciate all that Lincoln stands for and hope to serve in correspondence with his legacy in commitment to a greater good.

Knox College - Angelica M. DeBenedictis

I've spent much of my time wondering "What's my purpose here on Earth?" and "What am I most passionate about?". I know now that I've only really just begun to find the answers to these questions. However, in my short time at Knox College, I've been able to uncover a part of me that was just bursting at the seams to come out; a strong-willed, social justice oriented activist. I've had many opportunities at Knox to foster this part of me so much so that I'm coming out of college with a firm commitment to living a civic-minded life of service to underserved communities. I'm really not sure yet where my life will take me and what future opportunities lay ahead, but I do know that regardless of where I am, who I'm with, and what I'm doing, part of my purpose of being alive is to serve the greater good of our society. I know this work isn't easy, but the reward of serving communities in need is far too important to ever give up.

Lake Forest College - Hayley Headley

Leaders who commit themselves to the service of their fellow citizens are dreamers. Without a commitment to a radical, aspirational and better future, we cannot fully commit ourselves to serve that mission in our communities. I have always held a firm belief that there is a brighter future for us, I know now that we all must work to build it. Lincoln and the many leaders I have admired have lived with those same convictions and have made progress where others saw few ways forward. I continue to lean on the words and experiences of leaders who have gone before me as I learn and grow in my own practice of changemaking.

Lewis University - Morgan Maria Jennings

In 2019, I began my first year as a freshman at Lewis University. There was no way I could be prepared for what would happen next. Over the course of the next four years, my understanding of who I was, what I wanted to do, and what I could do was completely reimaged. The past two years have truly solidified my resolve in what I want to do with my life. Last year, I began working on a grant as the student coordinator within my school's archive. This project put me in acquaintance with members of the community who worked as volunteers at their various organizations. In working with them, I learned just how much care goes into sustaining a community and I saw firsthand how much invisible labor is put in to make these projects run. Though there were points at which I wasn't sure if what I was doing was for me, obtaining the Lincoln's Leadership award has proved to me I can continue to be a force for good and an advocate for community outreach. I will continue to take the values I learned from that project and this award into my adult life and career. Being a civil servant is not only a career, but a mindset. We all should be cognizant of the spaces we share with each other and strive to sustain our community through volunteer work and local outreach.

Lincoln Christian University - Shayne Ignacio Alcantara

Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will guide me in a civic-minded life in service and commitment to the greater good in a religious context, more specifically, through and within the churches I regularly serve. Indeed, as I progress forward in life, the framework through which I act will be one of service and commitment to the community around me as a teacher and a preacher. I will make great efforts to tend to and shepherd the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of my community.

Loyola University Chicago - Nathanael "Nate" Jeffrey Caamoan

In today's society, multitudinous populations of people wish to have their voices heard. They call out for change, yet nothing is done. Not knowing what to do or being afraid to make changes, people choose to stay idle. Why does this happen when everyone is capable of coming together to bring about change in the community? This is because most people are afraid to lead as the consequences appear daunting. To be a leader, one must be able to fail in the public eye. Even if it goes against what most people favor, a leader trusts one's instincts. Although taking on a leadership role seems complex, demanding, and burdensome, at its core lies one simple capability: the ability to humanize. Being able to humanize others through empathy is what empowers a leader to take a stand. Despite all our differences, we are all humans with feelings, worries, and ambitions. As a future nurse, I have acknowledged this and have been compelled by empathy to help make people's voices heard. Throughout all of the service projects I had the opportunity to partake in, I made sure to humanize each person I encountered. As I continue to seek ways to help the community, I will call to mind the leadership of Abraham Lincoln as he embodied such as attributes of a compassionate leader. Because Lincoln was able to employ empathy during his presidency, he was able to bring about change in the country. He listened to his people and strived to make their voices heard. Similar to Lincoln, I will use the humanization of others to guide my efforts for the betterment of society.

McKendree University - Bradley L. Eston

I like to believe that I am a strong advocate for change and could be seen in Lincoln's Leadership legacy. I will strive to create an equal, safe space in my classroom where an student can be who they want to be. As Lincoln strived to make this world a better place, I plan to follow in his footsteps creating a change that showcases the beauty, especially in music that we have here in the United States of America. I will make it my duty to serve with my fellow Lincoln Laureate Award recipients and make this world a better place for the greater good.

Millikin University - Elyce M. Knudsen

In 1982, forty-nine historians and political scientists were asked to rate all the presidents through Jimmy Carter in five different categories: leadership qualities, accomplishments/crisis management, political skills, appointments, and character/integrity. Abraham Lincoln stood at the top of the list among everybody in each category (Burlingame & UVA Miller Center, 2023), standing out among some of the greatest and devoted leaders of the United States. It is truly lonely at the top, and what you are willing to sacrifice for success shall not be frowned upon but applauded. My success is not limited to my accomplishments but that of my character and strong leadership skills, and I have been given the great opportunity of sharing my character with those around me. Through hard work and determination, anything can be accomplished but holding the character through is the most important.

Monmouth College - Lillian Zhang Hucke

Following in the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln, I commit myself to leadership and the betterment of society. Lincoln's Legacy will guide me through obstacles and hardships, I will persevere with bravery, empathy, and integrity. I will serve as a role model for those around me by using effective communication and creating an environment based on cooperation to support others in their pursuits to lead successful lives. As a future school psychologist, I will strive to inspire the next generation of students to become leaders themselves just as I have with my peers.

National Louis University - Nathan Cristea

I am a first Generation student from Romania, raised in a low-income household. In my neighborhood, the common attitude was that every man was for himself. Neighbors refused to help someone in need and local leaders seemed absent and unaware of how challenging our community was for so many. In my home, my parents valued honesty, hard work, faith in God, and education. I survived my tough neighborhood by staying close to my family and by following the convictions of my faith. I'm thankful for my Christian upbringing, which helped me to be compassionate toward those least fortunate.

In high school, the Bible Club introduced me to the act of servicing others by going to Lower Wacker and feeding the homeless. I will never forget the interaction I had with a homeless man who taught me one of my greatest life lessons. Even though he was poor and living on the streets, he was still happy and content. He said that being homeless was his penance for the choices he made in his life. He expressed gratitude for those of us who were willing to give our time and effort to help. I never saw him again, but I still reflect on our brief conversation when I learned that just a small contribution can make an impact on someone's life. I also learned that gratitude and empathy are a decision we all must make. So, I have decided to make service to others a part of my education and future leadership experiences. I hope to live up to the values that the Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award represents.

North Central College - Erica Leigh Johnson

Everyone wants to make the world a better place, right? While this may be a common goal, there are some individuals who truly exemplify this idea and live a life of leadership. I believe a leader is not someone who acts for recognition, power, or control. A leader is one who has a genuine desire to use their voice to make positive influences in the lives of others. President Lincoln did all of this and more. He prioritized developing genuine, meaningful relationships, all while fighting for equality. Lincoln was courageous and empowered those around him to share their ideas and develop as leaders themselves.

Lincoln's leadership legacy is one that is deeply rooted in our society and serves as a great example of how to be resilient, optimistic, and passionate. I strive to exemplify all these qualities while continuing to live a civic-minded life with commitment to a greater good. Upon graduation from North Central College in May 2024, I aspire to be a strong, female leader dedicated to service and mentorship. I plan to support organizations in creating healthier working environments for their employees to promote fulfillment and success. I hope to be a source of light for humanity, just as Lincoln was. I have learned firsthand how challenging life can be, but will continue to use these experiences as fuel to make change in this world. President Lincoln led a community of growth, and I endeavor to continue this movement and inspire those around me to see that we do not simply get through life and all of its challenges, but we grow through it, together.

North Park University - Isabella Christine Santos

Two of President Lincoln's legacy that serve as a guide for me is the mentality to work hard every day and to genuinely care about people. His mentality of not leaving any work for tomorrow that can be done today resonate with me. In addition to his commitment to his work, his genuine personality and care for other people is something I try to live out every day in school, in ROTC, in clinical, and in life.

Northeastern Illinois University - Bianca "Mykee" Defensor Vives

Embracing the privilege of dedicating one's life to community service is a profound honor. Just as Abraham Lincoln trod this path with grace, humility, and unwavering integrity, I am inspired to follow in his footsteps. Rooted in these timeless principles, I am driven to exemplify commitment to my community, channeling my efforts into meaningful service for the betterment of others. Lincoln's exceptional leadership skills stand as a guiding light, illuminating attitudes and behaviors that I am eager to not only emulate but also amplify in all my future pursuits.

Northern Illinois University - Merveille Muyizere

Coming from a society with little to a community full of opportunities, I push myself every day through the grace of God to learn how to lead, communicate, and better provide for my peers. This commitment to serving others paved the way for me to learn how to offer hope to others in many ways such as advice, guidance, and solutions. This correlates with my life goal of becoming a missionary doctor for "To live without hope is to cease to live"-Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Northwestern University - Lily Ng

There is no doubt that Lincoln was driven to serve the people. He pursued justice and was not afraid to do what was right despite having to go against the mainstream. This is the style of leadership I want to exemplify: one that listens to others to know what is best for all, and one that is grounded in doing the right thing, even if it's not the easy thing. Like Lincoln, I aim to be patient yet persistent while freedom dreaming towards the future, practicing hope as a discipline with optimism and confidence. I also know, like Lincoln, the power of having strong people to work with. I recognize there is no way I can do it all on my own, and I rely on building a dependable network where we can work together to accomplish more. These guiding principles that

exemplify why Lincoln is a memorable leader are qualities that I hope to continue to carry on in the way I engage with my community.

Principia College - Gloria Ishimwe

I was recently asked a question that made me pause and reflect. The question asked was “Why should anyone be led by you?” and while it took me the better part of a day to truly get an answer, I came to the conclusion that I am a good leader because I care about the welfare of those I lead. I want to lead a life that is exemplary, by standing up for what is right; emanating compassion and fervor that moves others to do the same. A life that uplifts everyone in the community, and treats all people with kindness and respect. I used to believe that being a leader meant being certain about everything. Today, I pride myself on knowing that I don’t know everything, and that I don’t have to know everything. Leaders know how to lean on others, especially when they are well suited in those moments. The betterment of society will be reached, if we, as a community, call on each other’s strengths.

Quincy University - Graci White

First, I am deeply honored to be receiving this award. Growing up, I was taught about the honorable, genuine leader that Abraham Lincoln was, and the fact that he is still such a powerful figure today holds true to that. With this award, I truly hope I am able to embody what a good leader should be. Like Abraham Lincoln, I will treat people with dignity and respect. I will hold my head high in tough times and persevere, never losing sight of the end goal. I will also recognize my weaknesses because, to me, part of being a good leader is acknowledging your flaws. However, instead of crumbling underneath them, it is vital that you mold them into something beautiful and serviceable. I will understand that nothing in this world is ever going to be perfect, which means that I will not be perfect either. I will also never forget that even if you are an amazing leader, that means nothing if you do not have anyone to share your victories with. No leader in this world could be a leader without the support system they have behind them. I will always cherish the people around me who have supported me and helped me throughout my journey, and the ones who continue to do so. It truly takes a village.

Richard J. Daley College - David Lopez

Lincoln’s Leadership Legacy is a guide to civic-minded life of service because it makes us recognize that our choices have impact. Regardless of how others feel about our choices or policies, recognizing that what we commit our lives to is worth the positive impact.

Rockford University - Nor Ali Alamery

We strive for perfection, a world lacking hardship, a world merciful to all who live. In our pursuit for perfect we often forget the leadership and dedication required for progression. It is in the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln’s legacy that I continue to lead through compassion in collaboration with the community I serve. As Lincoln had discovered, it is only as a people united that we can move forward. It is my hope to continue to lead in the compassionate and courageous footsteps of Abraham Lincoln.

Saint Xavier University - Cydni R. Washington-Bolden

As a 2023 Lincoln Academy of Illinois Student Laureate representing Saint Xavier University, my dedication to fostering a culture of inclusion, belonging, and connectedness welcomes aspiring college students to our tight-knit campus community. I have witnessed true leadership through contributions, efforts, and embodiment of our university's eight core mercy values: Respect, Excellence, Compassion, Service, Hospitality, Integrity, Diversity, and Learning for Life. Individuals who choose to lead continuously learn and grow to live out Saint Xavier’s Mercy Mission and rich Mercy Heritage. Advocating for the Sisters of Mercy's five critical

concerns—Anti-Racism, Earth, Immigration, Nonviolence, and Women—is paramount for many exceptional student leaders to value the betterment of society, civic engagements, and beyond the greater good. Living out Lincoln's Leadership Legacy means not only committing to civic-minded service but also leading by example with a clear sense of purpose. Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt once said: “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” As a woman of color, I have come to realize that leadership is both a privilege and an opportunity granted to us. Leadership is a continuous learning experience on the journey toward significance, encompassing promising joys and difficult hardships. There is only a matter of time to build anew before we reach our destination, so we must live in every present moment through grace and gratitude.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago - Liberty Harris

As I have gone through college, one of the main driving factors of my design work, studies, and extracurricular activities has been how it can impact people in a positive way. I'm a seriously silly graphic designer with a love for all things fun, playful, and borderline kitschy and I always strive to make people smile with my work. I'm lucky enough to be so positively impacted by the actions of those I let into my life and I can only hope that I can grant others the same.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale - Alexis Hamon

Abraham Lincoln once noted “that some achieve great success, is proof that others can achieve it as well.” Little did Lincoln know that his own quote would clearly describe his own character and the model that he built for others to follow. Lincoln was a man of honesty, integrity, and selflessness. He used his position to inspire others by building trust and pushed for equality among all. I align with each of these qualities that Lincoln embodies and desire to demonstrate them each day.

As a leader of several student organizations, I hold a position in which I am able to use my resources to empower others. By leading in a compassionate manner, I build those around me up in confidence and spirit. This mutual empowerment built among a group is a powerful thing. Being President of Timmy Global Health I have seen this come to life. Encouraging young students to use their knowledge as power has allowed me to watch them flourish and pass along the inspiration. Continuing to grow myself, I hope to use my knowledge and position to serve those around me. As a physician, I plan to impact healthcare in a positive manner through promotion of equality and compassion. I will do so by using my knowledge to provide medical care, take time to listen, and to speak for those whose voice is not heard. By acting as a model similar to Lincoln, I hope to inspire others to take similar action and continue the chain. I believe this comprehensive demonstration is the secret that will allow for our world to prosper in knowledge, health, and compassion.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville - Hannah Patrice Sheahan

To be of service is not to simply be a leader, but to be intentional about every action- to be unwavering in your beliefs, but understanding of what needs to be done for the good of those around you. It is not a choice, but a calling you accept with compassion, integrity, honesty, courage, and conviction. It guides you to understand your privileges in life, and how you can uplift those who have not been granted the same privileges.

It is often easy to get discouraged by your position in the world, feeling like one person cannot make a difference, but Lincoln shows us that it is all about the perspective. In every action you take, whether it be in service, in leadership, or throughout your day, you never know the ripple that it may create. What may seem small at the time can make the ripple into a big wave of change, spreading positivity, and promising better days ahead. Whatever my actions may be throughout my life, I want my actions to create a positive ripple. I will strive each day to answer the call of service, and be a strong, yet empathetic leader that understands the needs of my community, and how my privilege can lessen those needs.

Trinity Christian College - Matthew "MJ" Huizenga

I believe that Abraham Lincoln was a great leader because he saw potential for what he could improve in this world, and he pursued it with great zeal. He recognized that he couldn't fix everything that was wrong with the world, but he could impact change and that change could inspire future generations to carry on the task at hand. That is the model that I try to follow in my life. I know that the actions I take can't fix everything, but they can make a change. And that change, no matter how small, can ripple into the future and have impacts far bigger than we ever imagine. But no one person can create that brighter future alone, we must work together. So, to those who are on the precipice, deciding between pursuing change and falling into complacency, I say join us. Stand up and make that change. Because together, there's nothing we cannot do.

University of Chicago - Amanda Chacon

The Lincoln Academy of Illinois's Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award emphasizes a commitment to serving others, and this mission resonates with me through a desire to critique and improve museum presentation of marginalized communities. US art institutions are not structured to serve Latinx populations. As pivotal as they have been for my education as an Art History major and my interest in an Art History PhD, I have often struggled to see my identity reflected in art presented there. I want to work towards the elimination of this issue with my research of Latin American Art influenced by Pre-Columbian cultures. My mission in the future is to obtain a curatorial position that would allow me to create exhibits that display the artistic importance of Indigenous heritage in Latinx identity. By juxtaposing ancient Indigenous art with contemporary Latin American works, I hope to create spaces for dialogue and exploration, thus helping audiences understand the importance of art and museums in their own lives. My interpretation of Lincoln's Leadership Legacy of civic engagement is focused on museum spaces because of its strong potential to reach and inspire diverse communities through education and art. I want my scholarship and curatorial work to allow Latinx people to see themselves in art at museums, and for all visitors to see that indigenous history is not dead—it will always be relevant.

University of Illinois Chicago - Abigail Elizabeth Pettineo

Abraham Lincoln was what many call a transformational leader. He encouraged others to continue their efforts toward freedom, utilized the strengths of those around him towards a common goal, and motivated others to learn from their failures in order to face challenges head-on and persevere. Lincoln's Leadership Legacy is one I am inspired by in my own relationship with others as a leader myself. Lincoln's ability to bring people together with a commitment to bettering the nation is a quality I emulate and aim to replicate in my day-to-day life on campus and beyond. Each day, I lead with the goal of leaving every place I go better than when I arrived. Lincoln did that through his dedication to empowering people to stand up for what was right and have their voices heard. I utilize these qualities in the organizations I am a part of to include each member's input to have a more holistic and well-rounded perspective on issues and planning. Lincoln's ability to create unity amongst divisions is one of his most shining characteristics stemming from his exceptional communication prowess and creativity. By leveraging the collective strengths of those around me, valuing diverse perspectives, and focusing on shared goals, I am dedicated to forging a sense of community that propels us toward impactful change. Just as Lincoln harnessed the power of collaboration to shape a stronger nation, I am dedicated to leaving a lasting, positive impact in every realm I engage with.

University of Illinois Springfield - Molly Harms

I hope to live a civic-minded life of service by giving back to and supporting the communities that have shaped me throughout my life, including the LGBTQ+ community, my local community, and my friends and family. The legacy of Lincoln's leadership encourages me to be actively involved and inspires me to seek out new opportunities. Looking toward the future, I want to continue to find new ways to support and give back to everyone who has provided me with safe spaces, given me room to grow, and helped me succeed.

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign - Caren Marie Morris

Receiving the Lincoln Laureate award has been an absolute honor. It stands as a validation of the hard work I've put into my community and shows that I have been seen and heard. Growing up as the youngest in my family, I was always surrounded by role models that poured into me because they saw my potential, and it has shaped me into the person I am. In college, my goal was to be genuine and intentional in my pursuit to pour into others and inspire their potentials to thrive. Knowing that I can inspire my fellow youth with the legacy I create is motivation enough. More specifically, Lincoln's Leadership Legacy motivates me to continue to further the passion I had to get this far and to take it even further after my college years.

University of St. Francis - Daniel S. McLaurin

The Lincoln's Leadership Legacy will be a guide for me in living a civic-minded life of service and commitment to a greater good. It reminds me to stay up to date about who has decision-making power in my community and to volunteer in my community to affect the existence of important organizations, charities, and individuals. The Leadership Legacy also guides me to be aware of the privileges that I hold, so I can use them in an optimistic and influential way, vote, and stay passionate about making change while taking matters into my own hands about topics I hold close to my heart. As a future social worker, I plan on creating youth camps for kids who have dreams about becoming doctors, lawyers, sports professionals, educators, etc.

VanderCook College of Music - Amanda Joy Siegert

The traits that Lincoln exhibited throughout his life are exactly those that are the foundation for a great teacher. He was patient, kind to all, and purposeful in all that he did. Throughout my years of schooling, I have had the opportunity to learn from and have learned the most from teachers who also embodied the same great qualities. Lincoln was also respectful of all and a great leader. I want to embrace these traits in my own teaching because I want all students to feel welcomed and safe in my classroom. I want to be able to lead them through the rough spots that we might encounter and help them overcome their challenges. As stated in the Gettysburg Address, "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." We often talk about how our students will not remember all the lessons that we teach them in the future, but they will always remember the guidance and leadership that we provided when they needed it the most. This award will inspire me to continue to be the best person that I can be for my students.

Western Illinois University - Jordan W. Rouse

Abraham Lincoln was a leader who dedicated himself to the advancement of ordinary Americans and the nation he led. As a student leader, I must remember that I do not work for personal gain. Student leaders are the civil servants to the student body; they are the reason I continue to work. Being civic-minded is recognizing the struggles and needs of others and using my position to pursue potential solutions.

Service is a significant component of my life. My service mentality started as a Boy Scout and culminated in my Eagle Scout project, where I constructed a food pantry for a local church. At this point, I discovered the prevalence of food insecurity in our community. My concern for others is most notably reflected in my commitment to the WIU Food Pantry, which has been one of my most rewarding endeavors. During my

presidency, the Food Pantry has grown from serving 60 students, faculty, and staff per week to over 150. Food insecurity is a prevalent issue that I am consciously attempting to eliminate or reduce within our community. The Pantry has several ongoing projects to combat food insecurity on campus. The Pantry provides an unmonitored supply of food when it is closed. Our food orders provide various options to satisfy our diverse patrons' needs. Recognizing that individuals feel embarrassed about needing food relief, we have developed training for dedicated volunteers to ensure everyone feels welcomed when entering the Pantry, along with finding the necessary food and household supplies. Modeling Lincoln, I have learned that it does not take special skills to help others—just a conscious decision to help.

Wheaton College - Hannah Marie Helinsky

Since moving to the state of Illinois in 2020 to attend Wheaton College, I have gained much respect for the leaders that are from here. Along with Abraham Lincoln, Illinois is home to amazing trail-blazers, such as Jane Addams, Ida B. Wells, and Frances Cabrini, and home to the Wheaton staff and faculty that shape my personal development and academic career.

Lincoln would have made a great mentor, with strong characteristics of integrity, social justice, and selflessness. Comparable to Lincoln's generous heart, my mentors possess a personal commitment to work towards equity, though the task is laborious and self-giving. I benefit from the labor of those before me that fought for a better society and women's rights, thus I would love to do the same and labor for my community and future generations. With these selfless people as my inspirations, I also have a personal commitment to the lifelong work of equity. I plan to do this through an occupation as a social worker, and through an enduring posture of servant leadership in and outside of work hours. During college, I am practicing having a generous heart like Lincoln through different leadership roles and servant positions. Currently, as President of Solidarity Cabinet, I seek to bridge different cultural and racial groups on campus and develop an ally identity among the student body. Lincoln's legacy has influenced many leaders after him, and his disposition of generosity has gone through the generations to reach me. As I have during college, I plan to continue surrounding myself with and learning about great leaders, as they serve as templates for living generously and selflessly.