

# SCIENTIA

A publication for College of Science and Health alumni



Students on a study abroad trip to the Dominican Republic sit on the steps of the Monumento a los Héroes de la Restauración in Santiago de los Caballeros. More on page 4.



Fall 2019

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# EDUCATION TAKING FLIGHT



DePaul's faculty, staff and students are spreading their wings beyond the city of Chicago to learn about science and health around the world. Study abroad has traditionally been focused on curricula in the liberal studies. However, faculty in the College of Science and Health are taking on the challenge of providing students with study abroad opportunities that focus on their majors in the sciences.

In this issue, you'll read about how students are learning about differences in health care systems in the Dominican Republic, about ethical sourcing and forestry in Peru, and designing and answering their own research questions in Cadiz, Spain, along with how faculty are contributing to a global data set to understand the effects of urbanization on the environment. These exciting new opportunities are providing our students with the opportunity to expand their learning to the world.

Other new opportunities that will launch this fall for our students include new majors in astrophysics, a BA degree in biochemistry, an MS in community psychology and opportunities for nursing students to become nurse practitioners. Our creative and innovative faculty continue to ensure that our students have opportunities to learn that complement changes in the career landscape.

With all this innovation, we continue to remain true to our mission of doing things well in service to others. I am inspired by our faculty who bring the mission into the classroom, by our alumni who share their knowledge and by the students who will share their Vincentian education with our community.

*Dorothy Kozlowski*

Dorothy Kozlowski, PhD  
Interim Dean



## THE Vincentian Question AND THE Chemistry Teacher

It is customary for professors to communicate with students before the start of class, providing them with a syllabus, advance reading and other information they will need for the course. Computational Chemistry Professor Ruben Parra is no exception, but he also sends his students something extra: a 30-second video that talks about the Vincentian question, "What must be done?" He then spends the first 15 minutes of the first class asking his students to reflect on the question.

Parra says, "Some students, of course, look surprised, like, 'What does this have to do with chemistry?' But eventually, we start the process of unpacking the meaning of the Vincentian question in what seems to be relevant for them. Everybody agrees that they want to pass the class, they want to learn and they want to be successful. So that gives me an opportunity to say, 'Okay, so what must be done? What must you do, what must I do and what must we do as a group to achieve the goal of being successful in this class?'"

This brief exercise starts the ball rolling on the students' odyssey toward taking ownership of their education and developing a caring, sharing relationship with their classmates and with Parra himself.

The genesis of Parra's explicit incorporation of DePaul's Vincentian mission into his pedagogy was the two years he spent training at the Vincentian Mission Institute,



a program of the Division of Mission and Ministry. After learning more about the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Vincentian spirit, Parra wanted to use his newfound knowledge to better serve his students. For the last 18 months, Parra has been developing his approach to bringing the mission to the classroom.

"I started to develop a climate for the class that is very welcoming, supportive and intentional. Anytime I send an email to my students, I usually end with an inspirational quote, many times from St. Vincent de Paul himself. I express my faith in them that they will be able to succeed in this class. I feel

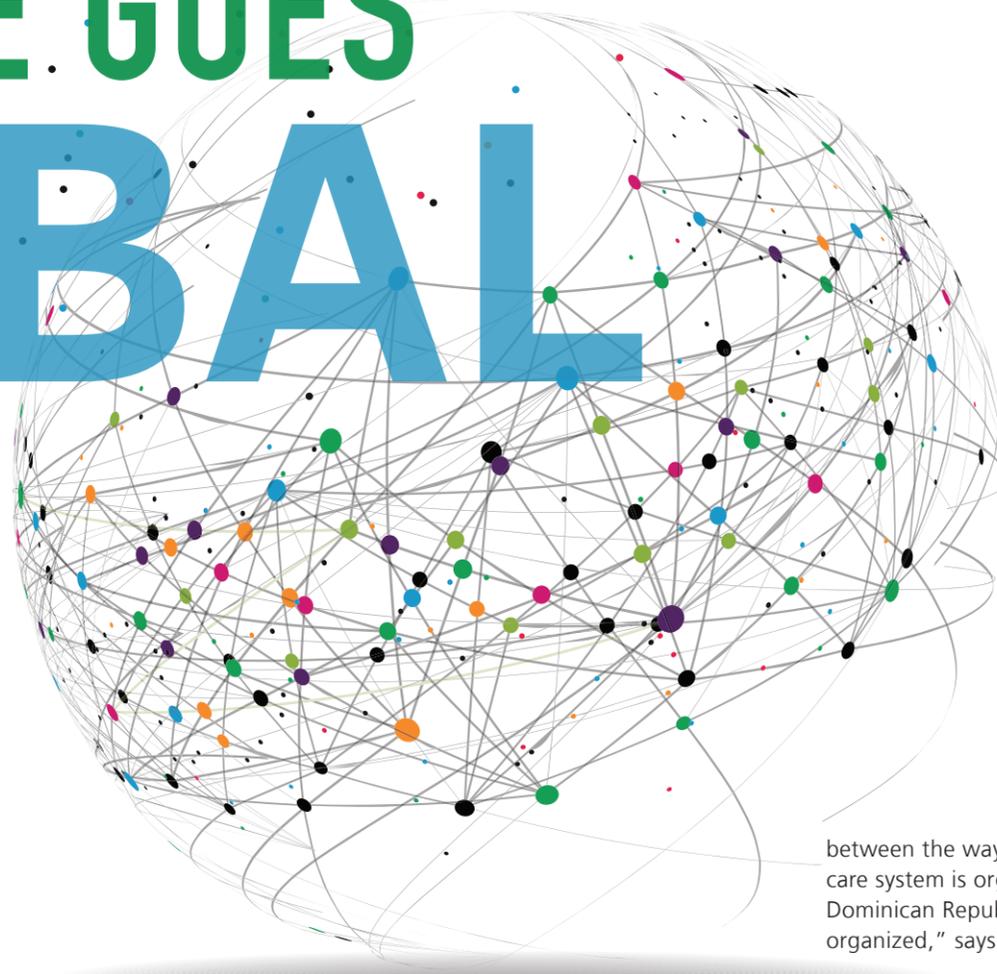
my students see me as someone who they can come to talk to, and it opens up more opportunity for me to help them."

Parra also shares his personal journey in a video on DePaul's Teaching Commons Faculty Oral History page in which he talks about the difficulties he had as a first-generation college student and how he overcame them. He reads an email a student sent to him after viewing the video: "Dr. Parra, thank you so much for sending this. I really enjoyed watching the video and learning more about your story. You are so inspiring."

Being more approachable has its challenges. "The influx of students to my office hours has gone up significantly, so that has forced me to be more creative in how I do office hours." Parra now holds office hours in his classroom before regular class time. Up to 40 students out of a class of 60 may come to discuss issues they have on any given day.

Parra's approach seems to be working for his students. Class attendance is at 90 percent, and performance has improved compared with student outcomes from past years. Parra hopes to publish results when he has accumulated more data, but in the meantime, he is sharing what he has learned with interested colleagues and refining his methods. "The faculty and staff serve as role models for students, and we can help them develop themselves and realize their potential."

# SCIENCE GOES GLOBAL



In 2017, research from The Ohio State University found that “the number of multiple-author scientific papers with collaborators from more than one country more than doubled from 1990 to 2015 ... and 58 more countries participated in international research in 2015 than did so in 1990.” While scientific collaboration across national borders has occurred for centuries, the opportunities to engage with researchers around the world have never been better.

Study abroad programs and coordinated international projects are two ways that CSH students and faculty are participating in global scientific discovery and advancement.

## ETHICAL SOURCING, MINING AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

Christie Klimas, an associate professor of environmental science and studies, leads a first year abroad trip to Peru to study ethical forestry. Partnering with a fair trade exporting company called Manos Amigas, Klimas helps students learn about the social and environmental impacts of our purchases, the benefits of fair trade, and other ethical sourcing options. Klimas and Professor of Political Science Rose Spalding co-led a trip to Peru on mining and forest management. There, students learned about deforestation from gold mining and the difficulties of diverting workers toward other sources of income.

“[Students think that] maybe you can convince them that what they’re doing is

wrong. What that misses is the fact that some of the things we buy are actually driving these choices. The most lucrative opportunities are those that are most destructive. I wanted to make the supply chain and the people that make things we purchase more visible to students,” Klimas explains.

Her students meet farmers who grow cacao for chocolate production and scientists and activists who are working with them “to try to maximize production in these sorts of fruit forests, instead of having the only option be gold mining. We talked to a scientist who works on more ethical mining of gold and how to make it safer for the miners, who use mercury to extract the gold,” Klimas says. “We also went to a large copper mine.

It looks like a lunar landscape. What it reminds me of is the Grand Canyon, because that’s almost how big it is.”

Klimas finds from her study abroad courses that “students are often more open to learning about the complexity inherent in environmental and social challenges if it’s not in their backyard. We tend to push back against things where we’re clearly a part of the system.”

## PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

With universal health care a hot topic in the United States, the students who traveled to the Dominican Republic with Associate Professor of Health Sciences Jessica Jerome got a chance to see how one public health care system works. “I try to highlight some of the differences

between the way our country’s health care system is organized and how the Dominican Republic health care system is organized,” says Jerome.

There are private care and private health insurance in the Dominican Republic, but the entire population is assigned on a per capita basis to a clinic in their geographic region. “The best analogy is to think of the way our public library or post office systems generally work; in every American town you would find a library or a post office or an elementary school,” Jerome explains.

“There it is very much organized around the idea of having community clinics in rural and urban areas to give everyone access to a basic level of health care, particularly preventive care like prenatal care, screenings, blood pressure checks, and diabetes control.”

Students learn that the U.S. system was built to focus on acute care. Preventive care, Jerome says, “is something we’re try to build into the system, but it wasn’t done from the ground up.”

**“I THINK IT’S A WONDERFUL PRIVILEGE TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO AND CONTRIBUTE WITH PEOPLE FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE EARTH.”**

—Associate Professor Windsor Aguirre

## INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK IN SPAIN

For the past three years, Associate Professor of Comparative Physiology Jason Bystriansky and Associate Professor of Inorganic Chemistry Kyle Grice have been taking students to Cadiz, Spain, to conduct research. The two want to give their students a realistic picture of what it means to do scientific research, as well as expose them to world-class international scientists and a different culture.

“We want our students to recognize that you have to go out into the field somewhere different, usually in a compressed time scale, to get data collected and analyzed,” Grice says.

The students take a planning course in the spring and get their final grade after completing their fieldwork and research report in the summer. “We let the students come up with their own projects. It’s probably the most challenging part of the whole program,” says Bystriansky.

“They figure out how to do it all, and they collect their own data. They interpret their own data, and they write up and

communicate their own findings. They feel like they own the project,” Grice adds.

Another important part of the experience is learning how international laws and norms of the scientific community affect global research. “I work on fish,” Bystriansky says. “Any work on a vertebrate animal requires oversight from different government agencies because everything has to be done in an ethically sound way. So, DePaul’s animal care committee develops a memorandum of understanding between our university and their university. It takes a lot of time in advance.”

So far, none of the students have asked to work on anything that requires special permission, but they are prepared nonetheless. “That’s why we have the planning course. We need to get the students thinking about things we have experienced, and most come to feel much more confidence in what they can do,” Grice explains.

## THE GLUE PROJECT

Associate Professor of Evolutionary Biology Windsor Aguirre and Associate Professor of Ecology Jalene LaMontagne are participating in the Global Urban Evolution (GLUE) Project. Organized by the University of Toronto, the project has scientists around the world studying how urbanization affects the chemical defenses of white clover.

“We’ve known humans are affecting the way ecosystems work. Many species are being forced to respond to changes we’re causing in the environment,” Aguirre explains. Because white clover is found all over the world, any researcher can participate. Importantly, “there’s a protocol that everyone is following, so that means that the data are being collected consistently. That makes the inferences that are made much more powerful and reduces the ‘noise’ related to experimental design.

“These types of collaborations have the potential to tell us things that we would be missing if we only try to do the work at one institution in one city,” Aguirre says. “I think it’s a wonderful privilege to be able to talk to and contribute with people from every corner of the Earth.”

# Minister of HOPE

Neurosurgeon and cancer researcher Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa, MD, believes hope is more powerful than fear

Cancer. It's a word everyone fears, and when the diagnosis is brain cancer, the prognosis is grim and especially terrifying. Why would a physician choose to specialize in brain cancer, an unforgiving, sophisticated disease that has thus far thwarted all efforts to eradicate it? "I decided that I was going to be a crusader and that I was going to give my patients hope," says Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa.

The good doctor knows a lot about the power of hope. A capable student in his home town near Mexicali, Mexico, he made his hopes for his life real when he sneaked into the United States illegally in 1987 to pursue his dreams.

He supported himself as a welder while he learned English and attended San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, Calif. A scholarship to the University of California, Berkeley put him in the orbit of renowned neurobiologist Ed Kravitz and set him on the road to Harvard Medical School, U.S. citizenship, and his current position as Mayo professor, chair of neurosurgery and director of the Brain Tumor Stem Cell Research Laboratory at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla.

"I got interested in brain surgery early in my medical school years," Quiñones says. He focused on brain cancer because "it's the most devastating cancer affecting the most beautiful organ. Why do I say the most beautiful? Because it is the organ that allows us to communicate, to love, to

describe, to innovate. Without it, there's nothing. It's the essence of who we are."

Quiñones is challenged by this deadly cancer. "Somehow, the cancer cells figure out the way to migrate, move, infiltrate [the brain]. They find their niches, and they find a way to trick the body's immune system."



Quiñones and his team have been working on developing new technologies to understand how and why cells migrate and how a cell that is 100 microns in size can squeeze through a 1-micron-wide space.

To observe cancer cell movement, the team experimented with sending the cells through nanometer-size grooves. "That allows us to see cancer cells migrating so we are able to quantify their speed," Quiñones explains. "It's amazing how fast the cells move." The team also discovered that

sodium-potassium-chloride and sodium-hydrogen exchanger channels assist in cell migration, allowing the speed and direction of the cancer cells to be quantified.

Another breakthrough came in discovering that a mechanism called the Hippo signaling pathway helps the cells grow, migrate and conform to different shapes. Now Quiñones is working on cellular therapies using the stem cells from fat to stop the cancer in its tracks. "We are, I'd say, 15, 20 years away from doing that," Quiñones remarks, "and I'm being realistic."

As a professor of neurosurgery, Quiñones says that "medical education not only complements research, but is the foundation. Our country does have some of the most amazing medical education in the world, but we are all born as scientists, as explorers. When we are children, are we not constantly exploring?"

It is in this spirit of exploration that Quiñones asks his students to understand themselves: "What are the things that make you get up in the morning and say, 'I want to try this?'" If you're passionate and you believe that you are on the right path, stick with it."

*On June 15, Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa, MD, spoke at the 2019 College of Science and Health commencement ceremony and received an honorary doctorate from the college.*



## See What's New

The college introduced four new programs and tracks in its offerings for the 2019-20 academic year.

### ASTROPHYSICS

Modern astrophysics/astronomy is thriving, as new observational efforts both from the ground and in space are launched. The new astrophysics major taps expertise already present among several full-time faculty members and coordinates with advanced courses in astrophysics and science courses with an astrophysics focus already offered by the department. The faculty participate in leading-edge research in collaboration with international facilities, including the Very Large Array and the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, and these research collaborations will be made fully available to astrophysics majors so that undergraduate students can get real-life experience doing research in astrophysics. Among the courses that are part of the new major are Stellar Astrophysics, Star Formation, and Astronomical Data Analysis.

### BIOCHEMISTRY

In 2017, the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry introduced a BS degree in biochemistry to prepare students for graduate work and careers in areas such

as biochemistry, biophysical chemistry and medicinal chemistry; the degree also helps students meet the requirements to enter preprofessional health programs, such as medical or pharmacy school. Starting this fall, the department began to offer a BA degree in biochemistry with more open-elective options that would provide more flexibility for students interested in biochemistry-related careers that involve health, law, education and business. The BA also will provide the opportunity to develop other early-opportunity programs with Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science.

### NURSE PRACTITIONER TRACKS

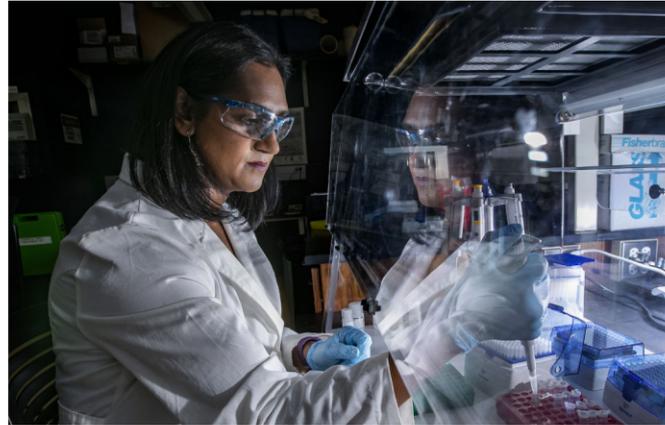
Family nurse practitioner and adult gerontology nurse practitioner tracks have been added to the current nurse practitioner degree. These graduate-level programs are open to students seeking to earn a bachelor's degree at the same time as they work to complete their master's degree. Students with an associate's degree can complete their nurse practitioner track in 4.75 years. Those with a bachelor's degree in any discipline can finish the track in 3.75 years. Courses such as Health Assessment

for Advanced Practice, Pharmacology, and Clinical Management of Acute and Chronic Illness, plus completion of 600 practicum hours, will qualify students to become advanced practice nurses.

### COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

The Master of Science in Community Psychology is a program for practitioners involved in upper administration and program development in a variety of community-based organizations. By exploring the concepts, theories and methods employed by community psychologists, students will learn how psychologists engage in community-based research and practice that emphasizes fair, equitable allocation of resources, opportunities and power in a society as a whole. Students will learn how a community-based social justice perspective recognizes inequalities, promotes the exercise of greater power (access to resources and decision-making) for communities that have been marginalized, and creates ties to advocacy work with oppressed populations. Courses include Principles of Human Diversity, Emotional Development, and Prejudice and Intergroup Relations.

# LAB NOTES



## CHAUDHARY RECEIVES NSF CAREER AWARD ▲

Assistant Professor of Environmental Science Bala Chaudhary was awarded a Faculty Early Career Development grant, also called a CAREER award, from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The award is the most prestigious given by the NSF to support early-career faculty who show leadership potential in research and education that will advance the mission of their department or organization. Chaudhary will apply the \$715,000, five-year research grant toward her multifaceted project that studies the dispersal of mycorrhizal fungi, which are beneficial fungi that support all plant life on earth. Chaudhary has been teaching courses in plant biology, environmental data analysis and climate change at DePaul since 2016.



## SCHOLAR BOWL WINNERS ▲

Lakerrie Forrest, Nyierra Golden, Alexandra Goodman, Ema Mujic, Claire Newby and Jessie Rosario-Wynn had another successful Public Health Scholar Bowl, winning two of their three head-to-head competitions. The team was led by faculty advisors Michele McCay (center in red) and L. Cricel Molina de Mesa (far left).



## ◀ MIKELS RECEIVES NIH AWARD TO STUDY STRESS

Joseph Mikels, an associate director in the psychology program and director of the community psychology PhD program, received an award from the National Institutes of Health to study age-related stress. While

later life is characterized by shifts toward positivity, certain age-related vulnerabilities may compromise the ability of older adults to regulate emotions. Mikels' project seeks to understand how aging individuals are adversely affected by stress and how they might use their strengths to diminish its negative consequences, including cognitive decline, and promote healthy aging.



## 2019 CSH COMMENCEMENT ▲

On June 15, graduating students and well-wishers assembled at Wintrust Arena at McCormick Square for the 2019 commencement ceremony. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa, MD, a neurosurgeon and brain cancer researcher (see page 6), delivered the commencement address and received an honorary doctorate from the College of Science and Health.

## RETIRING FACULTY

DePaul offers fondest good wishes to CSH faculty who retired at the end of the 2018-19 academic year: Lynn Narasimhan, director of the STEM Center; Douglas Cellar, associate professor of industrial-organizational psychology and community psychology; Stanley Cohn, professor of cell biology; and Paula Kagan (CSH MS '00), associate professor of nursing. Narasimhan joined the full-time faculty as a professor in 1979; Cellar, in 1988, as an associate professor; Cohn, in 1989, as an associate professor; and Kagan, in 2001, as an assistant professor. We thank them for their decades of dedication to DePaul.



## ◀ 2019 MEEC CONFERENCE

Nineteen biology and environmental science students attended the 2019 Midwest Ecology and Evolution Conference at Indiana State University. Among the conference highlights were plenary speeches by Edmund Brodie, Runk Professor in Botany at the University of Virginia and director of the Mountain Lake Biological Station, and Armin Moczek, professor of biology at Indiana University.



## WOMEN IN SCIENCE LUNCHEON ▲

On May 2, 2019, the Women's Board of Chicago's Field Museum hosted its annual Women in Science Luncheon designed for young women interested in or studying science. Thirty women faculty and students attended this event through the generosity of Jessica Sarowitz, a member of DePaul's Board of Trustees. The luncheon featured Dr. Amal Alachkar, a groundbreaking Syrian neuroscientist, in conversation with Angeliq Power, president of the Field Foundation. Dr. Alachkar established the first neuroscience lab in Syria and supported the student movement for dignity, justice and free speech. After fleeing Syria in 2011, she joined the University of California, Irvine, where she continues to lead important research on neurological and psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia.

## ◀ SANKOFA AWARDS

At the 22nd annual graduation celebration for students of African descent, the Sankofa Award was presented to Quinetta Shelby, chair of the department of chemistry and biochemistry. The Sankofa Student Leadership award went to psychology student Kiah Sandler. Established in May 2012, the Sankofa Award recognizes the work, service and legacy-building efforts of individuals within the DePaul University Black Leadership Coalition.



# A TEACHER WHO REALLY COUNTS

GOLDEN APPLE RECIPIENT CANDICE CORTESE (CSH MA '10) REFLECTS ON HER LOVE OF TEACHING MATH

It was just a normal day for Candice Cortese. "I was teaching my precalculus class, and I had just finished the lesson and was passing out worksheets. Then the principal came in, and then the Golden Apple people and this news crew!" Cortese, a math teacher at Hononegah Community High School in Rockton, Ill., received the iconic statuette from Golden Apple representative Thomas Kress and got a round of applause from Hononegah Principal Eric Flohr and her students. She said at the time, "I love teaching, I spend a lot of hours here and I'm very dedicated to the students. So, this means the world to me to get recognized."

The award is a highlight of a career that Cortese thoroughly enjoys. She has spent all 14 years of it at Hononegah, a large, economically diverse high school that draws students who have grown up on farms and others who come from the more urban area of Rockford. "There's a real sense of pride in the community and in the school district," Cortese says.

Cortese learned that a student had nominated her for the award. "Knowing the student and our relationship and how things have been for him in high school, I would say that I was nominated because I'm pretty patient," she says. He also was not a fan of math. "I was able to make it enjoyable for him. I have a sense of humor. I talk with the students and try to get to know them individually. I just made him

feel comfortable in class. I was able to get through to him so that he could learn these topics and believe that he could do it."

Math was always Cortese's favorite subject, and she tries to make learning it seem like a game or puzzle. She meets the common objection about the supposed uselessness of math in everyday life by emphasizing that math is about logic and problem-solving. "Even if you're not going to be graphing functions in your job someday, the ability to be able to sit down and work with a group to solve a problem is a skill that employers and colleges want," she explains.

The Schiller Park, Ill., native may have learned how to pass along her enthusiasm for math and its possibilities from her professors at DePaul. She and her sister, Brooke Kiska (CSH MA '10), who teaches at Elmwood Park (Ill.) High School, decided to pursue their master's degrees in math education at the same time. "We heard a lot of good things about the program from a couple of my colleagues, and DePaul has a good reputation," Cortese says about their decision to enroll.

"It was such a great experience! Every teacher was so good and passionate about what they were doing and about math. Their willingness to help you and talk to you about the subject was amazing," Cortese recalls.

"DePaul touches so many lives. That's what stands out to me about DePaul."

"DEPAUL TOUCHES SO MANY LIVES. THAT'S WHAT STANDS OUT TO ME ABOUT DEPAUL."

# ONE SMART COOKIE

CHEMISTRY STUDENT LUCIENNA WOLF SAYS, "IF YOU REALLY APPLY YOURSELF, THE TEACHERS ARE MORE THAN HAPPY TO HELP YOU."



of my parents are kind of in the science field, and when I was little, I wanted to become a doctor.' So I decided to change my major to health science."

Part of her coursework in her sophomore year included general chemistry. "I really liked my chemistry courses," she says, but

**"I've been able to take care of myself. The scholarships are extremely helpful."**

applications. This is technology that we can use to save the planet," she says.

While in the lab, Wolf contributed to a specific carbon reduction research project: "I did some experiments involving infrared spectro-electrochemistry. Basically, you apply a voltage to a species and a graph comes up. You continue to take these graphs as you apply different voltages, and it gives you information about what's being formed in solutions and how the species is changing as you manipulate it."

The results of this research were published in the March 2019 issue of Journal of the American Chemical Society, with Wolf as a co-author. Wolf was on a plane when she got an email from Grice congratulating her on her first publication. "I was actually talking to a computer science professor from Purdue on the plane, and I told him. He was really excited for me, so that was cool."

Through scholarships she received from DePaul, Wolf says, "I've been able to take care of myself. My family is going through some financial instability right now, so I know my family is relieved. The scholarships are extremely helpful."

With faculty encouragement, financial support and hard work, Wolf is cutting a path toward a successful future. She was awarded top poster in chemistry at the 2019 Chicago Area Undergraduate Research Symposium, which has contributors from across the city and suburbs. Wolf said, "It was really exciting to be able to represent DePaul's excellence."

Not every student finds their niche right away, but when they do, there is so much they can accomplish. Lucienna Wolf, an undergraduate chemistry major in her senior year, wasn't sure what she wanted to do when she first enrolled at DePaul. Starting in the business school, where she could fulfill many of her required courses, Wolf "was doing well, but it wasn't my thing."

A course she took during her freshman year gave her the opportunity to take personality tests. "There was a book called 'Do What You Are,' with a bunch of career fields," Wolf says. "Among them were medicine and science, and I thought, 'Both

they were hard and nearly defeated her. She remembers that her teacher, Associate Professor Quinetta Shelby, gave her the confidence to continue: "She said, 'You're a smart cookie, you can do it.'"

Wolf decided to change her major to chemistry and started thinking about getting involved in research: "After my second quarter, I got an offer to work in Dr. Grice's lab, which was awesome!" Kyle Grice, an associate professor of inorganic chemistry, put Wolf to work investigating carbon dioxide reduction. "That was pretty interesting because you can basically recycle carbon dioxide and use it for a lot of

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