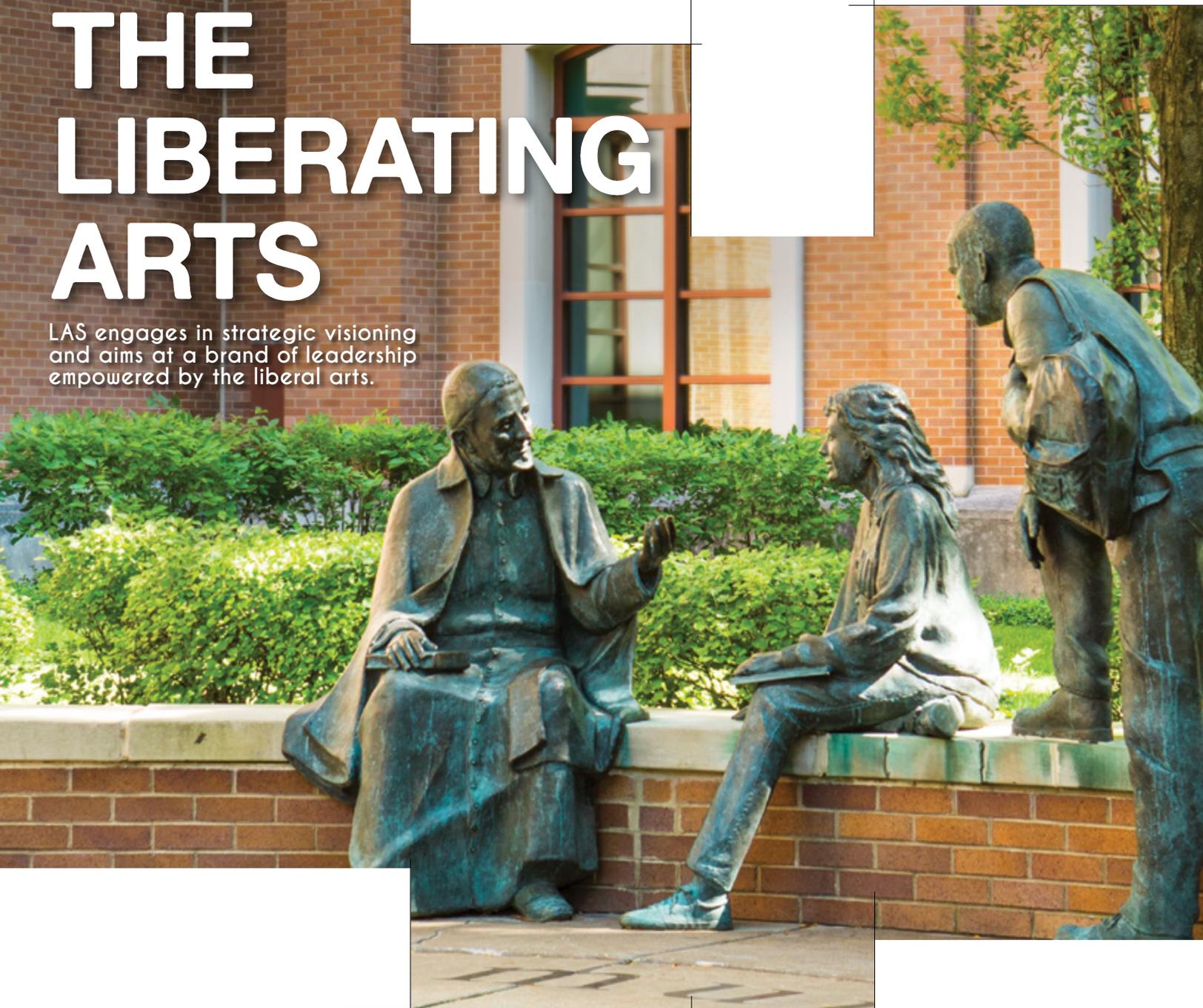


# THE LIBERATING ARTS

LAS engages in strategic visioning and aims at a brand of leadership empowered by the liberal arts.



*Almost 400 years ago, Vincent de Paul raised the question, “What must be done?” setting the foundation for the activism, faith and service to the poor that characterize Vincentian Catholicism. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences is poised to move into the future by looking far into the past, to the legacy of St. Vincent.*

“We believe that the Vincentian question is, in practical terms, a call to leadership,” says Dean Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco. “Leadership is a vocational trade that transcends disciplines and professions, but it requires a targeted education. At the core of that education we expect our students to embrace a collaborative mindset, supported not only by depth, but also by breadth of knowledge.”

To this end, LAS has embarked on a college redesign process that puts leadership for the common good at the center of its programs and curriculum. “We are the core, the hub, where people come to establish their connection to the mission,” Dean Vásquez de Velasco asserts.

The direction for the redesign came during a two-day retreat composed of more than 60 leaders from LAS’s departments, centers, faculty senate and advisory council, as well as the Student Government Association and other university units. One of those in attendance was **Mitch Goldberg (History ’96, JD ’99)**, partner at Lawrence Kamin Saunders & Uhlenhop LLC and vice chair of the dean’s advisory council.

“Many people view the college experience thinking about the return on investment, and measuring that monetarily,” Goldberg says. “In LAS’s case, much of the value is in creating leaders and thinkers and people who have a fundamental moral compass.”

## The T-shaped person

A guiding principle of the redesign is the T-shaped person, whom Dean Vásquez de Velasco describes as “someone who knows something about everything and everything about something.” Traditionally known as a well-rounded person, the T-shaped person came to prominence through several T-Summit Conferences promoted since 2014 by technology and engineering professionals seeking to solve the problem of how to educate a workforce with both depth and breadth of knowledge—the T shape—to solve 21st-century challenges.

Dean Vásquez de Velasco says that participants in the T-Summit Conferences are striving for a way to bring creativity and broad-based thinking into engineering and business curricula. But they are trying to do so from within engineering and business colleges, largely ignoring that there

is this thing called the liberal arts that sits at the heart of all of our campuses and is frequently under-explored, under-tapped and under-integrated.

“We hear a lot about entrepreneurship, building enterprise,” he continues. “But we are still stuck in the 20th century when we fail to recognize that in the 21st century, we will need more than that. We will need inspired leadership grounded in a long tradition of humanistic inquiry and insight to guide us in addressing extraordinary social, environmental and political issues.

“We all know we need leadership in the world—the key insight is that it should not be improvised, but rooted in and nourished by the liberal arts and social sciences. Today, nothing is more important than the holistic education of the leaders of tomorrow.

“That’s where we come in. That’s our brand.”

## The LAS Leadership Experience

“A lot of things we teach help forge future leaders for business and society,” says Julie Artis, retreat participant, associate professor of sociology and director of faculty course analytics in DePaul’s Enrollment Management and Marketing Department. Thus, the college has begun defining the LAS Leadership Experience. “The recipe to qualify as one of those experiences is that it needs to be multidisciplinary, issue-based, service-oriented and experiential,” says the dean. “It may adopt the form of an assignment inside a course, a course inside a curriculum, a curriculum inside a department, a department inside a college. It could be Chicago-based, or it could be international.”

## Centers and interest groups

Dean Vásquez de Velasco describes the college’s centers as ready-made interdisciplinary and issue-based organizations, ideal sites through which faculty members can enhance their teaching missions and offer experiential leadership training. He sees interest groups—interdepartmental projects where ideas are tested—as another vehicle for developing the collaborative relationships and creativity necessary for a standout leadership experience.

## Hubs and studios

“We don’t have a mothership building. We’re multidisciplinary, divergent, and it would actually be unfitting for us to consolidate in a single building,” the dean says. “So the idea is to create hubs, physical centers on the Loop and Lincoln Park campuses to serve as manifestations of who we are. Hubs are where the community, faculty, staff and students develop projects. The natural teaching environment for project-based learning is the studio.”

With this in mind, the dean hopes that LAS will be able to proclaim itself the only liberal arts college that delivers instruction in studio format—the opposite of the traditional liberal arts format of instruction in large lecture halls or standard classrooms. “The studio is even smaller, and more intimate and unscripted, than seminars,” the dean asserts. “We have very highly qualified, tenured faculty committed to an issue-based teaching vocation who are perfectly positioned to allow us to deliver this high-end, experiential kind of education.”

The LAS Leadership Experience will put students on the fast track to meaningful careers. “We envision our students walking on graduation day,” the dean muses, “holding their diploma in one hand and a published portfolio in the other, showing how well prepared they are not only to enter the job market, but also to emerge as leaders in the community and the world.”

## Liberating students and society

Jacqueline Lazú, associate dean and associate professor of modern languages, says the college is restructuring along interdisciplinary lines to increase collaboration, flexibility and creativity. “I prepare my students to think in global terms. Cultural competencies and language skills are my philosophy of education. Our students gravitate to us because we are committed to social equity, social justice and change. We have excelled at this for a really long time and stand behind it as part of the identity of DePaul.”

“We are core of the university, foundational to education, a gateway to career and vocation,” Dean Vásquez de Velasco says. “We are the tide that raises everyone up. If LAS thrives, all students at the university do well. We proudly embrace that responsibility.”