



Fraternal Order of Police

CHICAGO LODGE 7

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Lodge 7 members bring lessons from DePaul classroom to the community

Chicago Police Officers Brandon Sanchez and Marcus Brown are recent graduates of DePaul's bachelor of arts degree completion program in business administration. Both credit the flexibility of the faculty and program for helping them reach their goal of obtaining their bachelor's degrees.

Sanchez has been a Chicago Police Officer for four years and is currently working in the 2nd District. He credits DePaul for helping him become a better leader.

"I was excited to take advantage of the tuition reimbursement for FOP members with DePaul University so I could finish my bachelor's," said Sanchez, who received his associate degree in Iowa.

"We are honored to work with Chicago Police Officers and members of Lodge 7. Knowing that the DePaul experience, our DePaul mission and our faculty are helping shape the future of our City through educating our City's police officers feels like important work," said K.K. Cleland, assistant vice president of corporate and employer outreach and enrollment at DePaul University.

Cleland added that some officers who have benefited from the DePaul experience have continued into their graduate program through the school's combined degree offerings. And in these programs as well, officers have the potential of receiving 100 percent tuition coverage.

"The timing of getting my bachelor's degree was perfect, because now I am a role model to my three daughters," noted Brown, who works on a tac team. "They



Chicago Police Officer Marcus Brown recognizes how much going to DePaul has helped him to be successful on the job.

saw me graduate and realize that it is possible. DePaul makes it easier for the officers because they understand the rigors of our job."

Brown also commented about professors being aware of the intensity of the pressures of the job due to the George Floyd incident, 12-hour tours and RDOs

being canceled. He noted that the opportunity to work around his schedule and having professors be very flexible and accommodating on assignments made a huge difference in completing his degree.

“DePaul recognizes that maintaining work/life balance is critical in order for officers to take on this commitment and get the most out of their academic experience,” Cleland added. “That is why officers in the degree completion cohort program can choose between taking classes during the daytime or in the evening to accommodate the changing schedule demands of the Chicago Police Department.”

Another benefit members have highlighted is that officers in the degree completion program have the opportunity to develop and present a capstone project. These projects represent the deep commitment officers make to creating solutions and developing ideas that will have an impact for their own work, members of CPD, the City or the larger field of law enforcement.

“I did my capstone on community policing. Based on the anti-police climate that we are in, I wanted to learn how to build trust with the community,” Sanchez explained. “My research showed the importance of what I can do to make a bigger impact with the community by walking the streets, getting to know the business owners on a first-name basis and letting them know they can reach out to me if they need anything. Ever since I was young, I always wanted to give back to the community. My father was a police officer in the 15th District, and he helped out in the community. It was important for me, growing up, to do the same.”

Brown said his capstone focused on leadership’s impact on police officer retention. He wanted to show how good leadership helps with employee camaraderie and stress levels.

“The more you learn from leadership, the more you want to contribute,” he added. “In law enforcement, it is important to be proactive in the community and to receive the support of leadership.”

Sanchez said he was able to take lessons from the classroom on leadership and apply them to his job immediately. These included how being a better leader for his officers and showing empathy for them and the community that needs them is priceless.

“While in the degree completion program, I realized the benefit of gaining the knowledge and the experience that comes from it,” Sanchez said. “I did not



Chicago Police Officer Brandon Sanchez, right, receives a Lodge 7 Life Saving Award from President John Catanzara. Sanchez notes the many benefits of getting his degree from DePaul.

want to leave anything on the table, so I decided to do the DePaul combined degree program, and I will receive my master’s in organizational leadership next summer. Being a student while at the same time working 12-hour days is tough, but I have learned great time management skills and have become very good at multitasking.”

As many students who have been through the program realized, Brown confirmed that getting his degree has enhanced his career as an officer. Much of this came from taking classes on leadership and human resources and learning skills for dealing with the community and with co-workers.

“I loved learning and going to school as an adult versus when I was 18,” he continued. “I enjoyed learning to learn, instead of learning to get through a course like I did when I was younger. This program helped me stay grounded and better prioritize, and those are skills that I now use at work. With the completion of my degree in June, I have such a sense of pride and accomplishment.”

Some additional lessons that have been particularly important came from classes teaching how to better understand individuals. The coursework emphasized that it is also important to know when to be a leader and when to be a follower. And being part of a cohort allows an opportunity to speak with other officers who go through the same exact situ-



ations on the job.

There is definitely an all-in-this-together atmosphere in this program.

“It was critical to learn in my classes the importance of showing empathy for the people in my community that I come in contact with and realize that they just want to be heard,” Sanchez said. “Having a degree from a prestigious university like DePaul makes me feel so proud.”

DePaul is currently recruiting for the 2023-24 academic year, including for the undergraduate bachelor of arts degree completion program, the master’s of legal studies and the doctor of education. To learn more about these programs available to members of Lodge 7, visit go.depaul.edu/fop or scan the QR code on this page.