



# Be remarkable

*"Be remarkable" is the message of a campaign to share the achievements and opportunities that define The University of Iowa.*



**ALEJANDRO A. ALONSO**  
A student's passions stem from early lessons on what it means to be good and make a difference.

Diversity and education go hand-in-hand for Alejandro A. Alonso. The way he sees it, an education just isn't complete when you're only getting one point of view.

"Diversity in education is the conglomeration of ideas," says Alonso, a University of Iowa senior who was born in Puerto Rico and grew up in Nebraska. "How else can you get that variety of perspectives? To have a good education you need diversity. That's how you get so many ideas and concepts and experiences floating around."

That's why Alonso has gotten involved in groups that work to make the University a welcoming place for all students. He's held leadership roles in the Association of Latinos Moving Ahead (ALMA), Black Student Union, and

## Remarkable people



**PHIL DAVIES**

Teaching economics among the poor...



**PHILLIP LEWIS**

Turning a bullet into a blessing...



**RYAN AINSWORTH**

Giving other artists a showcase

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## Remarkable university

Today's University of Iowa builds on strengths in five key areas identified by The Iowa Promise, the University's strategic plan for 2005-2010:

### UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

One of the nation's top public universities, Iowa offers outstanding education at a great value.

### GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

From the arts to health care, Iowa scholars are improving life for people around the world.

### DIVERSITY

Iowa is built on respect for cultural differences, academic freedom, and diverse interests.

### VITALITY

Intellectual drive, community spirit, and smart investment keep the University dynamic.

### ENGAGEMENT

Creative partnerships with communities make the University a statewide resource.

University of Iowa Student Government. He's actively involved with the Center for Diversity and Enrichment, where he works as a student ambassador and tutor, and is a peer leader for Iowa Edge, an orientation program for minority and first-generation college students.

"By being active on campus, I've gotten to meet so many people," he says. "The University of Iowa is like a big playground. You get here and you can do whatever you want—write, research, study, work out, whatever. My thing is I want to get involved to help make a more just world, a more just society. I want to fight for people who are oppressed."

Alonso's passion for social justice is rooted in his experience at a Jesuit prep school in Omaha, Neb.

"The whole focus there was on teaching boys how to become men, how to become good human beings," he says. "It was woven into every little thing we did."

The experience that resonated most with him, though, was teaching English as a Second Language in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood in south Omaha.

Alonso started volunteering with the program as part of a school project, but found himself showing up to the three-hour classes twice a week. Before long, the program coordinator put him in charge of his own class.

Alonso grew up speaking Spanish at home, so was able to communicate easily with the students in his ESL class.

"I was raised in a very white suburb, which gave me kind of an identity crisis," he says. "It was important to me to

sort of help my people. A lot of the people in that class reminded me of my grandma and her friends back in Puerto Rico.”

That desire to help others also inspired him to get involved in politics. In 2008, he campaigned for Barack Obama. “He is a person who has lived life from many perspectives, many different cultures, many different regions, and, to me, that’s extremely important,” Alonso says.

After campaigning in Iowa and taking road trips or making phone calls to talk with voters in other states, Alonso took a semester off of school to work as a field organizer in North Carolina.

“All my life, I’d been looking for a way to change the world, and I felt like working on the Obama campaign would give me that opportunity,” he says. “And it was. It proved to me that someone as small as me can make a difference, can have a direct effect on things.”

Alonso says he’d love to continue the work he started during the election by becoming a member of President Obama’s staff some day, but in the meantime he’s majoring in English, international studies, and religious studies; trying to learn as many foreign languages as he can; and dreaming about the many ways he can change the world.

“If politics isn’t the place where I can fulfill my goals, maybe I’ll go to law school, or go into the Peace Corps or Teach for America,” he says. “I want to work for causes I

care about. If I get paid, that's just a bonus."

*Story by Anne Kapler; photo by Tim Schoon*

*Have a "remarkable" person in mind? Please share your suggestions and help us tell the University's story.*