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Luis O. Sanchez (LAS '02)
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When Luis Sanchez was learning to write policy papers in his public service management courses at DePaul, he never thought he would be using those skills to help develop policy for the conflict in Afghanistan. "I've never imagined myself where I am today," he says, "working where I'm working and talking with whom I'm talking."

Sanchez works in Washington, D.C., for the European NATO office in the Department of Defense (DoD), where he is involved in high-level strategy. "I was part of the President's Pakistan-Afghanistan Strategy Review team—a very small, intimate group between the State Department and DoD. My office primarily focuses on the allied and the international efforts in Afghanistan. We're the ones that work with Allies and international partners on their efforts in Afghanistan."

Educating "the entire global audience" about NATO's efforts in Afghanistan is another important goal. "There are a lot of players. It isn't just a U.S. mission, it's also an international mission," says Sanchez.

Sanchez first went to Washington during his senior year at Loyola University in Chicago to intern with Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) as part of a national summer program with Latino appointed and elected officials. Sanchez stayed to work for Gutierrez for two years in Washington and Chicago, and the two still have monthly lunches together.

After two years of graduate study in DePaul's School of Public Service, Sanchez landed the Presidential Management Fellowship, a national program that enabled him to market himself to federal agencies. Rotations with the Office of the Secretary of the Navy and the policy office for the Secretary of Defense led to opportunities to work on such projects as counter-narcotics in Colombia and stability in Haiti. After the fellowship ended, Sanchez landed a "dream job," he says, working on Latin American policies for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and serving as his regional director for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Sanchez says he always knew he would do "something important" because of his "drive and passion." His mother knew, too; she tells the story of 7-year-old Luis surrounded by a group of her women friends as he engaged them in a discussion.

As to the policy papers he wrote at DePaul, Sanchez says, "I would write three or four pages, and now I have to write a policy memo that can't be longer than a page. Now I know where my professors were coming from."