Nilvio Perez, Director of the Office of Admission, Albertus Magnus College

By Saida E. Pagán

As Director of the Office of Admission at Albertus Magnus College, Nilvio Perez is very much aware of the emotions that prospective students, especially Latino students, are feeling as they consider the small Connecticut college as their possible home for the next four years. "Many times they come in wide-eyed and apprehensive. They need someone to direct them...to show them what the next step might be," explains Perez. As he goes about his job of recruiting and counseling students at Albertus Magnus, Perez, who was appointed in 2010, can't help but think about his own experiences growing up in Brooklyn, New York. As a first-generation American from a strong and loving Dominican family, Nilvio Perez, now 33, was a popular student at George Westinghouse High School who aspired to become a baseball player. At Westinghouse, Nilvio had the unequivocal support of his teachers and counselors. "I got along really well with the administration. The way people assisted me—they touched me in such a way that I knew I had to give back," recalls Perez.

Guiding him through the college application process, counselors helped Nilvio qualify for advanced placement courses and set him on a path that led to the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. It was there as a marketing major that Perez honed his people skills: playing college baseball, becoming a member of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee and serving as Vice President of the Latin American Club. Shortly after graduating, Nilvio Perez began working as an admissions counselor at the University of Bridgeport. "I knew immediately it was the right course for me," he remembers. Not long afterwards, Perez took a job at the Office of Admission at Albertus Magnus, a nearly 90-year-old Catholic college located in New Haven, Connecticut. Nilvio has been there since 2004 obtaining a Masters of Arts in Leadership at the school. As the admissions director, Perez travels extensively, recruiting at college fairs along the east coast, and Puerto Rico. With an Latino student enrollment of nearly 20-percent at Albertus Magnus, Perez's bilingual skills and bicultural background make him well-suited for his position. "I make Latino students and their families feel comfortable. I can speak to them in Spanish, so that they understand the process of higher education," Perez confides.

Nilvio Perez currently oversees a staff of four counselors at Albertus Magnus and is directly involved in deciding which students are accepted. Perez believes that the school’s small student enrollment, makes it an ideal educational environment for Latinos, some of whom are the first in their families to pursue higher education. "We have only 14 students per class. It is a very intimate setting," points out Perez. In addition, the college works closely with students to choose the best possible major based on their specific talents and strengths. "We personalize every aspect of their counseling and put them on the right career path," Perez states enthusiastically.

Albertus Magnus’ educational philosophy has proven successful, Perez believes. The school is nationally recognized for outstanding programs particularly in Criminal Justice, Education and Art Therapy. As a devoted husband and father of four, Perez appreciates the importance of his role in shaping the lives of the young people entrusted in his care. "The students are always motivated, but sometimes they are a little overwhelmed in the beginning," observes Perez. "It’s our job to help them get comfortable, and that’s what we do." Perez says proudly.