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# Introductory Remarks: Global Voices on Campus

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## I.     **Introductory Remarks: Global Voices on Campus**

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and Alumni Chair in the Humanities*

Global Voices on the University of Dayton Campus Symposium emerged in an atmosphere of optimism. During the last decade, UD’s profile as an international campus increased in several ways. With roughly 10 percent of its students identifying as international, the University restructured its curriculum to include more programming and course offerings that are global in nature and scholarly scope. There was an uptick in study abroad and cultural immersion programs. Simultaneously, UD’s efforts to recruit more domestic minority students, especially African American, Hispanic, and Native American students, is on the right trajectory. It is moving upwards. Last year, 16 percent of the first-year class reported being of African American or Hispanic descent. This represented, in numerical terms, the best recruitment of domestic minority students in the University’s history.

Those are wonderful achievements. However, to guarantee continuous success, the University must work to improve campus engagement for all. To do so is right—and consistent with the ideas of Blessed William Chaminade, founder of the Marianist Religious Order, who called for vigilance and reflection because “new times require new thinking.”

In his inaugural address, University President Eric Spina acted on this when he charged the University community “to create a more diverse, welcoming, and intercultural inclusive campus.” This will neither be accomplished in one week nor in one semester, he noted, and perhaps not even in a year or more. But, he continued, let us begin, and each one should do his or her part.

The UD campus is multicultural. And we—its faculty, administrators, students—have a “sacred obligation” to ensure the University reflects and nurtures this multiplicity in its institutional decisions, actions, and mission. Transforming our diversity commitment into reality will require changing deeply rooted perceptions and stereotypes, in order to transcend racial, class, gender, sexual, and national boundaries and find our common humanity.

Historian Leonard Thompson observed that “everywhere, powerful people make decisions that affect human lives and prosperity in the light of historical images that they have acquired in their youth, even though scholars know those images to be false.” Consistent with that overarching theme, novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warned of “the danger of a single story.” Adichie argues that stories can exclude, marginalize, and denigrate. “Stories matter,” she noted. “*Many* stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can be used to repair and empower and humanize. [...] Stories can break the dignity of a people,” she continued, “but stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

This symposium will use stories—to educate, inform, and contribute to the ongoing conversation about global voices on our campus. To enhance the University’s inclusive community, it brings together students from all corners of the globe to tell stories about their community. It is the hope that these stories will help us to find commonality in the human experience, identify those things which unite rather than divide, and create a narrative currency for better informing, learning, and engaging one another. It is the hope that the symposium will, in the end, encourage more cross-cultural and cross-national engagements on our campus, and perhaps even foster more discussion about global voices in the wider local and global communities at large.