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Building Community

Eric F. Spina
University of Dayton, efspina@udayton.edu

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Wednesday August 31, 2016

By Eric Spina

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

In my early days as president, I've been inspired by the University of Dayton's mission to build community and work across differences.

At times we'll be challenged, though, to live up to our Marianist ideals. The complex, often polarizing issues of our day — race relations, terrorism, social inequities, a hotly contested national election — can divide us if we don't do the hard work of cultivating respect for each other and listening — intently listening — to diverse points of view, whether in the classrooms, in the residence halls or on front porches.

In particular, passions will inevitably run high this election season. We must make an extra effort to engage in discourse that's civil and meaningful. Through our conversations and debates, we can model the behavior we want to see in our world: respectful, supportive, empathetic. That's what it means to be a responsible UD citizen and an engaged member of our special campus community. That's what commitment to community is all about.

At last week's academic convocation, senior Maggie Schaller challenged the Class of 2020 to "define community in a new way," to "usher in a new decade of ideas and dreams," to "change our community for the better."

Her words, spoken from the heart, moved me. As we journey through this academic year, let's respect differences as we bring people together around the common good. We may falter on this journey from time to time, but let's keep those ideals front and center in all that we do. I'm confident our respect for each member of our campus community will guide us.

Blessings and grace to each of you,

Eric F. Spina
President