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A Peek at Visioning Day

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Wednesday October 12, 2016

By Eric Spina

This was not a sight I had previously seen on campus. When University of Dayton students left for fall break, faculty and staff played with Legos and took a stroll through virtual reality.

But they weren't playing. They were dreaming together about the University of Dayton's future and using a creative variety of ways to express their hopes and dreams.

One group constructed a monorail that would run between the center of campus and River Campus. Another built an urban farm in a reclaimed factory as an experiential learning space. Using virtual reality, others walked through a classroom of the future and considered ways they might revolutionize teaching by supplementing their lectures with engaging, immersive experiences.

This was the scene on campus on "Visioning Day," a series of opportunities for faculty and staff to think seriously about our future. In my wildest dreams, I never imagined so many people from units and groups across campus — parking services, facilities management,

faculty from every school and the College, Marianists, vice presidents, administrative assistants and many more — would take time in the middle of a busy semester to gather together to think creatively and courageously about what tomorrow holds.

I left the six different sessions impressed by the breadth and depth of engagement, the passion and enthusiasm, and the thoughtfulness of the discussions. It's clear people truly love the University of Dayton and care deeply about our core values and our future.

That was evident when more than 120 faculty and staff started the day in the Kennedy Union ballroom with coffee and “speed conversations” around 20 challenging questions.

They imagined what classrooms would look like in two decades and brainstormed research and scholarly initiatives that would benefit humanity and bring greater national prominence.

They grappled with the affordability of a UD degree, increasing diversity and inclusion at all levels of the University, creating more flexibility in pathways to degrees and deepening students' skills in civil dialogue, intercultural discourse and peacemaking.

Later in the day, they wrote headlines for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and CNN about the distinctive value of a University of Dayton education in 2037.

No matter what session I observed, the ideas flowed freely. I eavesdropped on many conversations and heard only respect for diverse viewpoints. Overall, I felt such positive energy. This is what it means to come together in community and wrestle with hard questions.

I applaud the strategic visioning steering committee and the working groups for carefully designing a day that inspired the campus community to think big and dream about the possibilities.

It's not too late for the campus community to join the conversation. Six more drop-in sessions and two future vision labs are scheduled this semester. I will soon meet with the Student Government Association, but a few hundred students have already offered their big dreams on Post-it notes on a “Roaming Dream Board” that moved between the RecPlex, KU, the library and Marianist Hall.

We are also busy connecting and listening to alumni. This week, I'll gather with Dayton-area alumni for a visioning session in the Alumni Center on River Campus. I've already met with 80 alumni at the Alumni Leadership Conference, had a session with more than 100 alumni volunteers from our advisory councils and visited alumni communities in Chicago and Los Angeles, with trips planned to Cleveland, Washington, D.C., New York and elsewhere to hear our graduates' dreams for their alma mater.

The [VisionUD website](#) includes updates to the event calendar, discussions of the weekly visioning questions and other resource materials, including the posters shared during the Oct. 6 Visioning Day.

We have a history of boldly adapting for the times while honoring our heritage. As we journey through this yearlong strategic visioning process, I'm encouraged by the level of engagement and the wealth of creative ideas. I'm moved by the deep commitment to the process.

I'm confident that, together, we will create a compelling, lasting vision that will guide the University of Dayton to a future filled with the possibilities we can only imagine today.