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A Class Act

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A Class Act : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Tuesday May 9, 2017

A Class Act

By Eric F. Spina

I simply can't wait to welcome the Class of 2021, one of the most diverse and academically gifted in University history — partly because I am proud of this outcome and partly because of my engagement with these soon-to-be Flyers.

During this year's campus-wide student recruitment effort, we mailed more than 10,000 congratulatory notes to admitted students, including Stivers High School senior Maya Smith Custer, who won the prestigious W.S. McIntosh Memorial Leadership Award — a full scholarship with a four-year internship with the city of Dayton. When I phoned her with the news, I choked up, too, when I heard her heartfelt joy and tearful gratitude.

I enjoyed dinner with the inaugural cohort of *Flyer Promise Scholars* and welcomed a capacity crowd of more than 200 people at a spring event for prospective students hosted in collaboration with members of our admission team, alumni relations, and athletics. Across the country, our network of admission counselors in Chicago, Charlotte, Atlanta, Puerto Rico,

New York City and Tampa visited high schools and college fairs. We offered Snapchat tours of the residence halls. And for all admitted students, we made the same promise: We'll match any annual increase in tuition to ensure that the amount you pay stays the same all four years, with no added fees.

When Chaminade Julianne High School tweeted a two-second video clip of nearly 30 students celebrating their decision to attend the University of Dayton, my heart filled with joy — and, of course, I retweeted their exuberance.

The Division of Enrollment Management, led by Vice President Jason Reinoehl, set the University's recruitment strategy and worked incredibly hard to achieve our enrollment, academic quality, diversity, and revenue goals. I'm in awe of their leadership and tireless work.

In today's highly competitive student-recruitment market, it literally "takes a community" to attract a high-quality first-year class. Deans, department chairs, faculty, staff, and students helped prospective students understand our distinctive Catholic, Marianist experience by giving of themselves — holding information sessions, appearing in promotional videos, opening up labs and classrooms for visits, tending to every detail that keeps our campus beautiful, hosting overnight visits in the residence halls and leading campus tours. In all, we doubled the number of face-to-face special events for admitted students this spring, thanks largely to the generous spirit of our campus community. I am blessed to be at a university filled with such caring, selfless people who believe in our mission and know how important it is to share it with others.

The results speak highly of our collaborative and strategically focused effort:

- A record number of acceptances and deposits among domestic students of color. About 16 percent of the class identifies as domestic students of color, an increase of 5 percentage points over last year.
- A record number of acceptances and deposits among students from lower-income families. We experienced a 22 percent increase in Pell grant recipients.
- Standard measures of academic quality, standardized test scores and high school GPAs are on par with previous records.
- A record 2,235 deposits, a 24 percent increase over last year and a 7 percent jump over 2015. This growth was spurred by a resurgence in deposits from Ohio and within a 50-mile radius.
- Nationally, higher education has seen a significant downturn in international applications. Even though our applications are down, our deposits from international students are running 35 percent ahead of last year.

I felt humbled and deeply honored this past weekend to preside over the largest undergraduate commencement in our history. Thanks largely to our innovative four-year tuition guarantee, we boosted our four-year graduation rate by eight percentage points from last year and reduced our graduates' cumulative loan debt by \$6 million.

At my installation address, I challenged the University of Dayton community to stay true to our Marianist founders and our history and be known as a university that is accessible to all, that welcomes all in a spirit of faith and hospitality. A more diverse community improves learning and problem solving, enhances research and innovation, and strengthens organizational culture and teamwork. Our incoming Class of 2021 proves that we walk the talk, and it should be a point of pride for all of us.

Welcome, Class of 2021, to the Flyer family.