

3-26-2018

## This is our UD

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### eCommons Citation

Spina, Eric F., "This is our UD" (2018). *President's Blog: From the Heart*. 106.  
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# This is our UD : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Monday March 26, 2018

## This is our UD

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By Eric F. Spina

I long for the day when *all* talented students, no matter their socio-economic status, have a shot at receiving a life-changing education. A real shot.

It's the cornerstone of our Catholic, Marianist mission and our aspirational vision to be "The University for the Common Good." More than that, our country's future hinges on it.

I applaud our alumni and friends who are stepping up to help us meet that challenge. Take Bill Stankey '80. Last year, he made a \$1 million commitment to endow a "Pay It Forward" scholarship fund that will provide four \$10,000 annual scholarships to other first-generation college students like himself.

Bill knows how important that support can be. When he fell short on tuition to finish his last semester, the University of Dayton gave him a scholarship that enabled him to return to school. He never forgot that gesture of generosity.

“My life changed as a result of having the opportunity to go to college. And it changed dramatically as a result of being at the University of Dayton,” says Bill, now president of Westport Entertainment Associates, a talent management agency.

In the *[This is Our UD 2017 Impact Report](#)*, you’ll find stories about how our nearly 14,000 donors last year funded game-changing scholarships, experiential learning opportunities, research programs, and the largest construction project in school history with the beginning of the three-phase renovation of the University of Dayton Arena.

As I look outward, nothing is more important to our future than private support for scholarships. At my installation address last April, I challenged the University of Dayton community to stay true to our historic mission. We want to be known as a welcoming university, one that is accessible to talented students who can benefit from our unique brand of Catholic, Marianist education and can contribute meaningfully to our community.

We cannot become a university only for the wealthy. That would not be true to the spirit of the Marianists or to so many of our alumni from humble means. We count on alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations for philanthropic support to ensure that a UD diploma remains within reach of middle- and low-income students.

In a recent interview with [The Wall Street Journal](#) and an op-ed in the [Dayton Daily News](#), I argue that we need to open the doors widely and welcome more talented students from diverse backgrounds. That’s the mission of the American Talent Initiative, a coalition of nearly 100 presidents from schools with the highest graduation rates in the country, including the University of Dayton. We are committed to recruiting, admitting and supporting highly qualified young people who might not have a shot at a college degree without a concerted effort to lower the barriers.

This spring, I’m traveling to LA and Philadelphia — and numerous cities in between — to meet with alumni and ask them to imagine with me what would happen if the financial barriers for all students who could benefit from a UD education vanished.

With greater scholarship support, we could provide the world with more innovators, scholars, and day-one-ready learners prepared to make an immediate difference.

To all those who have helped open the doors to thousands of the most promising, dedicated students, you have a University’s heartfelt thanks.

This is *our* UD, and we need to open the doors widely, sharing our gift with others.