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## A Day of Discovery

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# A Day of Discovery : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Friday April 20, 2018

## A Day of Discovery

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By Eric F. Spina

Is there any other university in the country that has as high a level of participation and engagement on a day reserved for celebration of student research and creative work?

As I walked into the RecPlex, I felt such a surge of creative energy as row after row of students mingled around their posters, learning and teaching, engaging and building community. I just knew that the answer is “no—no one does it better than UD.”

Welcome to “Day at the Stander” — an annual celebration of research, artistic endeavors, and academic achievements.

An astounding 1,200-plus students guided by more than 200 faculty mentors showcased their work in venues ranging from poster presentations to speeches on front porches in the student neighborhoods, and from live performances to panel discussions and multimedia displays.

One group created a powerful and poignant documentary on the Dayton region’s opioid epidemic that brought the crowd to its feet in the Science Center auditorium. Guitar students performed original pieces in a juried songwriting contest. Engineering majors showed off their design and programming skills by staging a sumo wrestling tournament with 44 robots. My wife, Karen, and I finished the day taking in the stunning Horvath juried student exhibition and learning about the “Facing Project” that connected our students with authentic voices in Dayton neighborhoods.

Beaming with pride, I wanted the world to know about the breadth and depth of the scholarly and creative work from every corner of campus on display and carefully described in a thick 282-page (!) program of abstracts.

So, I went [live on Facebook](#) and interviewed a handful of innovative, passionate students. In research that holds implications for those suffering from arrhythmia, electrical engineering major Sarah Miller told me about her analysis of the effectiveness of wearable heart-monitoring devices. Jamie Vieson, president of the Student Government Association who double majors in human rights and philosophy, chatted about her honors thesis that explores

the stigma of homelessness. Music therapy majors Tori Obermeier and Emily Robinson impressed me with how they're helping patients in group therapy heal through writing a song together from scratch.

Elsewhere in the RecPlex, student researchers talked about how the tiny fruit fly might hold the key for understanding how excessive sugar in the diet can lead to Alzheimer's disease. At another poster display, students in an interdisciplinary social science CAP course shared how the death of Dayton Flyer men's basketball player Steve McElvene inspired them to design a proposed public monument, "Fallen Flyers Memorial," envisioned for the Roesch Library lawn near the Mary statue and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. memorial.

I learned a powerful lesson at the Stander Symposium.

When faculty encourage students to think critically and creatively, imagine solutions together, and reach higher than they ever thought possible, the result is nothing short of remarkable.

That's an education that's transformative.