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## Welcome to the Family!

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# Welcome to the Family!

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Tuesday July 17, 2018

By Eric F. Spina

The Class of 2022 is already showing up and making its mark in a big way.

As I looked out over a sea of 200 hopeful faces at a New Student Welcome gathering for students from Dayton, Columbus, and Cincinnati in the RecPlex on Sunday, July 15, I caught a glimpse of the most diverse and academically qualified class in our history.

It's diverse in multiple ways — socio-economically, ethnically, racially, geographically and includes a healthy proportion of first-generation students. We have hit an all-time record for academic quality, measured not just by standardized test scores and high school grade point averages but also by the leadership, service, and entrepreneurial spirit that they have already demonstrated. Truly, the potential of this group to make a difference in the classroom and beyond is extraordinary.

And this class is not just excellent; it's also big, expected to clock in as the second largest first-year class of all time.

What's drawing these talented students — many with multiple college acceptance letters — to UD?

"I love the feel the campus gave me. It feels like home," said David Vogt, a mechanical engineering major from Hebron, Kentucky, who immediately made his decision after visiting campus for an "Explore Engineering" program last year.

Chloe Crabb, who considered Northwestern University and UCLA, decided to "travel down the road" from her Dayton home because "the students are very welcoming." She received one of our new Flyer Promise scholarships as part of our partnership with Chaminade Julianne High School that's aimed at enrolling more high-achieving students from key partners.

The oldest in her family, Kaili Lewis, of Tipp City, Ohio, fondly remembers a summer volleyball camp on campus that she attended during seventh grade. "I always thought it was a cool environment, and it would be good for me," she said, as her three younger brothers munched on cookies.

David, Chloe, Kaili, and other incoming students listened to senior Danielle Ruffolo urge them to courageously leave their comfort zone. "The UD community," she said, "is a safe place to learn, explore, fail, and be who you are."

With parents of the incoming students listening carefully to each word, Dani's parents, Rick and Tina Ruffolo, shared their experiences as students, alumni and parents. "You always will be treated as an individual. The school truly wants you to write your UD story," said Rick, who served as the Student Government Association president as a student.

With just a few words, Rick summed up what I hope will be the experience of the Class of 2022. "It's home, like a family. It's Catholic in words, deeds, and spirit. Finally," he told the students, "it's a community."

This informal gathering, which we will duplicate in Cleveland and Chicago on July 29, along with similar events in cities across the country, is not part of our formal student orientation program. It's a taste of Marianist hospitality, a way for students and their families to experience a warm welcome to UD, their new home.

I was moved by Dani's from-the-heart words of advice to her new classmates:

"Take a chance. Show up. Believe in yourself," she said. "You picked an awesome school."

Welcome to the family, Class of 2022!