

10-1-2018

Here Comes the Sun...

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eCommons Citation

Spina, Eric F., "Here Comes the Sun..." (2018). *President's Blog: From the Heart*. 130.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president_blog_spina/130

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- [Blogs at UD](#)
- [President's Blog: From the Heart](#)
- [Here Comes the Sun...](#)



Monday October 1, 2018

Here Comes the Sun...

By Eric F. Spina

When I climbed up on the roof of Fitz Hall this spring to observe the installation of solar panels, I caught a glimpse of a bright future.

This month, 4,026 solar arrays on the roof of Fitz Hall and the lawn of Curran Place will begin delivering nearly 10 percent of the annual power consumption of two of the biggest buildings on campus — a tangible and highly visible illustration of our responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation and reduce our carbon footprint.

Beyond that, they will serve as valuable teaching tools for our eco-minded students, who are leading the charge for the University of Dayton to become a national leader in sustainability.

And it's happening. This spring, we earned our first gold STARS rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education for our programs and curricular initiatives, and *Sierra* magazine ranked UD among the "Top 20 Coolest Schools" in the nation for "mastering the art and science of campus sustainability."

To say there's some energy behind the sustainability movement on campus is an understatement. UD students today are willing to tackle the most challenging problems on the planet. And the faculty and inaugural Executive Director Dr. Ben McCall in the Hanley Sustainability Institute, along with our sustainability guru Steve Kendig, are willing to help them — from installing a green roof on Kennedy Union to working an urban farm in East Dayton to developing an "Energy GPA" program that "grades" students' monthly use of energy in University houses to encourage conservation.

When I see the solar arrays spanning the expansive lawn of Curran Place, I envision a new outdoor lab for students from all disciplines. By next spring native Ohio wildflowers will create a colorful backdrop for biology students studying pollination and examining insect life. Attractive and informative signs designed by art and design students will tell our solar story to visitors. One of the 36 rows of solar panels will serve as a testbed for graduate engineers in our clean and renewable energy program.

Elsewhere on campus, the 162 solar cells on the south side of the newly opened Adèle Center will provide more than a quarter of the LEED-certified building's energy during the academic year and, during the summers, surplus power through the campus grid to other buildings. In the student neighborhood, we've outfitted the roofs of seven houses on Stonemill, Kiefaber, and Evanston with solar panels.

We're taking steps to become more sustainable and responsible, one ray of sun at a time.