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Models of Servant-Leadership

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Models of Servant-Leadership

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Friday February 8, 2019

By Eric F. Spina

In one of the most joyful evenings on campus every year, we honor two outstanding servant-leaders who reflect our Catholic, Marianist mission in their daily lives. The 2019 Lackner Award honorees, Corinne Daprano and Bill Fischer, lead with integrity, humility, and caring hearts. Here are my remarks from the Feb. 8 celebration dinner.

Wow! What recipients! What love! What care! I feel *incredibly* blessed to be here.

The Lackner Awards are among the highest awards given at the University of Dayton for one very important reason.

Our character — indeed, our soul as a Catholic and Marianist university — both depend upon faculty and staff who live our values day in and day out, around big issues and small matters, in public settings and behind closed doors.

Few live that mission more deeply and intentionally and faithfully than tonight's two award recipients, Corinne Daprano and Bill Fischer.

They lead with humility. They lead with integrity. And they lead with our mission and our students at the forefront of all they do.

And they do **a lot**.

Both are hard, tireless, highly effective workers, willing to roll up their sleeves and fit yet one more meeting, one more conversation, one more task into their already-full days.

Both are among the most thoughtful individuals I've ever had the pleasure of working with on student and faculty issues. They're reflective, deliberative — and mindful of how their decisions will affect others.

Both care deeply about students. They're strong advocates for educating the “whole person” — the mind, the body, and the spirit — in the classrooms and the residence halls and through experiential learning. They are dedicated to helping University of Dayton students develop into the best possible versions of themselves.

Corinne: congratulations on this honor. Thank you for being like Mary, never hesitating to say “yes” to challenges and opportunities. I respect the highly effective leadership you exhibit as president of the Academic Senate, and I've certainly noticed since my first day on campus the high degree of respect your colleagues have for you. I admire the way you've built teamwork and morale as chair of the Department of Health and Sport Science. You are, simply, an extraordinary community builder.

Late last summer I asked each member of the President's Council to bring an artifact representing either a favorite part of their job or their philosophy of leadership to a retreat we held at Maria Stein.

Corinne brought a print that hangs in her office. Every day, she gazes up at a surging ocean wave and reads these words, “If you're not riding the wave of change, you're beneath it.”

I know Corinne has a competitive streak in her, so I can see her actually riding that wave — and it's a big wave. But that print she holds dear is a metaphor for the strong leadership it takes to navigate change. We're grateful to you, Corinne, for embracing Blessed William Joseph Chaminade's oft-repeated call, “New times call for new methods.” For always striving to make our university more resilient and stronger as we chart a course for the future. Thank you.

I work very closely with Bill Fischer on a daily basis on some of the most complex and important issues that the University faces, from tragic matters involving students to health and wellness to the holistic education of our students. I can attest that this is a richly deserved honor for Bill, not only for the positive impact that he has on our community, but for the selfless and caring way that he does a VERY difficult job.

Some of Bill's colleagues joke with him about his legal education and training, and I laud Bill's ability to assess complex and often dramatic situations pragmatically and dispassionately. But I know that there is much more than the cool, analytical side to Vice President Fischer. Bill has a deep love — and I choose that word carefully and intentionally — for the students on this campus. Students to whom he feels a moral duty to keep safe, to educate, to support in their personal development. This is a love consistent with the Marianist charism and the notion of “education in the family spirit,” and I know it is deeply felt.

This love and his passion for the Marianist charism inspired Bill's hard work and collaboration with others to develop the brilliant “Commitment to Community” document that serves as our framework for student life on campus: a philosophy that sets our expectations for living and learning in community, appreciating and valuing differences among individuals in our community, and respecting the dignity and humanity of oneself and others. Bill, I am honored to work with you so closely, and I am deeply grateful for your extraordinary efforts — too often unseen and underappreciated — on behalf of all UD students. You make us a better and more just University every day.

Thank you, Bill and Corinne, for being models of servant-leadership on our campus. You inspire me. You inspire us all. You inspire us by your generosity of spirit, your humility, and your unwavering passion for — and commitment to — the University of Dayton's mission. Thank you!