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## Homecoming

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# Homecoming : University of Dayton, Ohio

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 [udayton.edu/blogs/president/2019/05/homecoming\\_for\\_dan.php](http://udayton.edu/blogs/president/2019/05/homecoming_for_dan.php)



Friday May 3, 2019

## Homecoming

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By Eric F. Spina

When I walked into Daniel J. Curran Place for the building's long-awaited dedication and blessing, the realization hit me full force.

This property — with its grand facade adorned with Dr. Dan's name, a prairie taking root under the solar arrays on the massive front lawn, and Appalachian redbud trees blooming along the lagoon in Old River Park — is a metaphor for new life.

No longer a vacant former corporate headquarters near the banks of the Great Miami River, Curran Place has been transformed over the past decade into a vibrant home for research, education, and faith formation.

Its vibe matches the optimistic nature — and resilience — of Dan, my predecessor, who spent a touch-and-go seven weeks in intensive care and months more rehabilitating from liver transplant surgery just a year ago.

Dan's homecoming — marked by the presence of his family, four former chairs of the board of trustees, president emeritus Brother Ray Fitz, S.M., and a grateful UD community, was one of the most joyful (and tearful) gatherings I've attended over my three years as president. Dan's renewed health is such a blessing, and was truly felt by the more than 150 people who gathered to honor him.

Mary Boosalis, president and CEO of Premier Health and chair-elect of the board of trustees, summed up the celebratory mood in the Riverview Café best: "We've etched your name on a building, but it is your spirit and courage that will always be etched in our hearts."

Visibly emotional, Dan spoke of the power of the hundreds of cards and letters from the UD community that filled his hospital room. "That was the one variable, with my family, that pulled me through. I can't thank you enough for that and this honor."

Early in his presidency, Dan realized that our-world class Research Institute needed a world-class face. Over the nine years that UDRI has consolidated its research activities in Curran Place, it has grown dramatically — from 400 to 630 employees, with research teams grouped together to create synergy and fuel innovation. UDRI will likely perform a remarkable, record-setting \$170 million or so in sponsored research this fiscal year, the fifth consecutive year of double-digit revenue growth.

"The creativity and hard work of many people have gone into these accomplishments, but it's hard to believe that the levels we have achieved would have been possible without this building — this home for UDRI," said John Leland, vice president for research and executive director of UDRI.

Curran Place, nestled against the backdrop of the woods and lagoon of Old River Park, also has proven to be the ideal venue for an alumni center, graduate classes, and the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives, whose outreach through online faith-formation classes touches 7,000 adults in 27 countries.

"This is a wonderful place to engage in great conversations for the Catholic Church," said Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS, director of the institute. "In this peaceful setting, we're embraced by the grandeur of nature and the wonder of God's beauty."

Curran Place is a place of wonder, a place that sparks the imagination of what could be. A place filled with new life.