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Changing Face of Engineering

University of Dayton

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The National Center for Engineering Pathways to Innovation named five University of Dayton students University Innovation Fellows for their potential to change the face of engineering education.

Cameron Crasto, Suzanne Dorsey, Reid Fuente, Daniela Lopez and Devin Spatz are among the 155 students from 47 schools the center selected to work toward creating more opportunities for students at their schools to develop innovation, entrepreneurship and design thinking skills.

"These five represent some of the best innovative and entrepreneurial student minds we have on campus," said Ken Bloemer, director of the University of Dayton Visioneering Center and sponsor of the University of Dayton students. "I am confident they will make significant contributions to the national discussion of entrepreneurship in engineering education and to our efforts in that area at the University of Dayton.

The University of Dayton group would like to create a student-run incubator for advising students in the early stages of project development and create a database of innovators students can tap for partnerships. They also want to develop a new innovation and entrepreneurship course open to all first-year students. They hope these will create excitement for innovation and entrepreneurship among students. The University of Dayton group has outlined their specific goals and strategies at the related link.

"We believe that students can be so much more than just the customers of higher education," said Humera Fasihuddin, co-leader of the University Innovation Fellows program. "Fellows are acting as co-designers of the higher education experience, and they are actively collaborating with faculty and administrators to make lasting changes at their schools. They utilize their resourcefulness, creativity
and national network to make measurable gains, both in the number of resources and the students served by the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.”

The National Science Foundation funds the University Innovation Fellows program, which is directed by Stanford University and VentureWell. Overall, the program has trained 607 students from 143 schools.

In the last decade, the University of Dayton School of Engineering has strived to instill an entrepreneurial mindset in its students. The school is a member of the Kern Entrepreneurial Engineering Network (KEEN), which long has considered the University “best in class” in graduating engineers who are equipped with an entrepreneurial mindset and will transform the U.S. workforce.

The Kern Family Foundation, KEEN’s founding organization, is funding the University of Dayton students' participation in the fellows program.

The foundation presented the School of Engineering with the Best in Class Award at the 2013 KEEN Winter Conference. In 2014, KEEN awarded the School of Engineering a $1.2 million grant to initiate the largest faculty and curriculum development program in the history of the University of Dayton School of Engineering. Much of the funding is going toward developing activity-based, project-based and entrepreneurially minded classes to enhance the student experience. In 2012, the University was part of a three-year, $2.4 million award with Baylor University, the University of Detroit Mercy and Villanova University to develop ways to educate engineers to contribute to the entrepreneurial cultures of their companies.

And just last month, the Kern Family Foundation honored Eddy Rojas, dean of the University of Dayton School of Engineering, with its 2015 Outstanding Dean Award for his exemplary work within the Kern Entrepreneurial Engineering Network.

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