

10-5-2020

Demonstrating Respect During Challenging Times

Eric F. Spina
University of Dayton, efspina@udayton.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president_blog_spina

eCommons Citation

Spina, Eric F., "Demonstrating Respect During Challenging Times" (2020). *President's Blog: From the Heart*. 237.

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president_blog_spina/237

This Blog is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of the President at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in President's Blog: From the Heart by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact mschlange1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

Demonstrating Respect During Challenging Times

 udayton.edu/blogs/president/2020/10/demonstrating_respect_during_challenging_times.php



Monday October 5, 2020

By Eric F. Spina

With passions running high this election season, I ask University of Dayton students to commit to "engaging in discourse that's civil and meaningful" and "building the future we want for our communities and the nation." My letter to the student body:

Dear UD Students,

I write to you as a proud American and as the president of our University during an important moment in the history of our country. It is widely recognized that this is an important election at each of the local, state, and national levels, and it appears that the coming month or two will bring with it a great deal of divisiveness nationally.

I sincerely believe that the University of Dayton can be a model of working respectfully across differences in this era of increased public incivility. I encourage us all to set the bar high for how we will engage with each other during this political season — and beyond.

Even in the most spirited, passionate discussions, civility and an openness to listening to differing viewpoints are cherished traits on our campus. In the Marianist spirit, that means “staying at the table” when conflicts and tensions arise. The call of Pope Francis to a “culture of dialogue” calls us to active listening in an authentic, empathetic way — a way that builds bridges instead of burns them. We can disagree in ways that don’t denigrate or exclude others while holding firm in our own convictions. We are all made in the image of God and deserve the same level of respect and dignity.

And while it’s easy to live in an echo chamber, engaging only with those who hold our views, it’s important to seek out others with divergent beliefs to test the validity of our ideas and to see issues from a different angle. We can hold firm to our values while hearing differing perspectives on issues and candidates. This kind of engagement helps us discern our own positions and motivates us to work with others — even others of difference — toward building the future we want for our communities and our nation.

I recommend that you engage in some of the opportunities available here at UD, such as the [2020 Election Speaker Series](#) co-sponsored by the School of Law and Human Rights Center. In the [Center for Social Concern](#), you will find numerous ways to work for justice and serve the community. [UDayton Votes](#), a non-partisan, student-led initiative, helps students learn about the issues and register to vote. By becoming involved, you will emerge with your horizons expanded

Beyond having an open mind and truly weighing the electoral choices before us, please be sure to participate in the election by voting — there is no better exercise of our freedoms as Americans than to vote for the candidates of our choice. And while you are voting, make a commitment to yourself that your civic participation will go beyond voting every two or four years and include a true engagement in our community.

With passions running high, let’s commit ourselves as individuals and as a university community to engaging in discourse that’s civil and meaningful. Let’s model the behavior we want to see in the world: thoughtful, respectful, and empathetic. That’s the only way we can build community and work for the common good. It’s the only way we can create a better world.

God’s blessings upon you, your families, and our extraordinary country

Sincerely,

Eric F. Spina
President