

12-11-2020

The 'Aha' Moment

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., "The 'Aha' Moment" (2020). *President's Blog: From the Heart*. 243.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president_blog_spina/243

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 mschlengen1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

The 'Aha' Moment : University of Dayton, Ohio

 udayton.edu/blogs/president/2020/12/the_aha_moment.php



Friday December 11, 2020

The 'Aha' Moment

By Eric F. Spina

Imagine a reusable, self-disinfecting N-95 mask that not only filters viruses but also kills pathogens.

Or a software platform that can help the University's facilities management staff control temperature and humidity in a residence hall based on how many students are in each room at any given time.

Or how about the production of more effective antibiotics or the creative use of artificial intelligence to diagnose a rotator cuff tear or other orthopedic injuries?

Some of the most inventive minds on campus are taking steps to launch start-up companies and move their technologies to market. It's all thanks to a new University of Dayton initiative called, appropriately enough, [Propel Dayton](#) that UDRI's Matt Willenbrink is spearheading.

Faculty, UDRI researchers, and local entrepreneurs are increasingly finding their way to and partnering with the Office of Technology and Entrepreneurial Partnerships, which Matt leads. This is Dayton's version of "Shark Tank."

"To give you a benchmark, historically we have been spinning out a company once every three years. We'll probably do 10 in this first year," said Matt, whose office is using a gift from an anonymous donor to help entrepreneurs develop business plans and explore commercial opportunities.

This is the kind of initiative that we had in mind when I asked our campus community to capitalize on one of UD's historic strengths, our entrepreneurial spirit, during my inaugural address three years ago. Quite simply, we cannot expect to drive innovation, applied creativity, and entrepreneurship if we do not exhibit these qualities as an institution.

And if we're going to encourage faculty and staff to tap into their inner entrepreneurs, we need to develop the policies, practices, and incentives to allow them to do just that.

"How do you grow your business and feed your family?" asks Kevin Klawon, a research engineer in UDRI's sensor and software systems division and founder of New Dawn Labs LLC. "This allows us the flexibility to try to commercialize our technology while still keeping our day jobs."

Kevin calls his company "the plumber of bits and bytes." With the help of colleagues and students, he's created a product that allows businesses to interconnect disparate systems and devices. He's currently piloting the technology in Virginia W. Kettering Residence Hall.

Through the start-up company Advanced and Innovative Multifunctional Materials LLC, Luis Estevez in the Research Institute and Kenya Crosson in civil and environmental engineering have sought funding for proof-of-concept testing of a safer face mask that uses anti-microbial technology.

Coupled with the launch of the Greater West Dayton Incubator earlier this year and the long-awaited opening of the first phase of the downtown Dayton Arcade in early 2021, Propel Dayton is building upon UD's rich entrepreneurial history.

Our Marianist founders transformed a farm into a school. That was quite a bold move.

Today, we're focused on creating an entrepreneurial culture that will transform our University and the Dayton region. We're harnessing innovation and creativity in new ways, instilling an entrepreneurial spirit in our faculty, researchers, and students, and building our local economy through new business ventures.

That's a bold move, too.

