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Five Ways Universities Can Be Anchors in Their Communities

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

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Five Ways Universities Can Be Anchors in Their Communities

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Friday March 5, 2021

By Eric F. Spina

The city's name is in our name. Beyond this deep and meaningful bond, it's a reminder that we must work together to imagine and build our shared future.

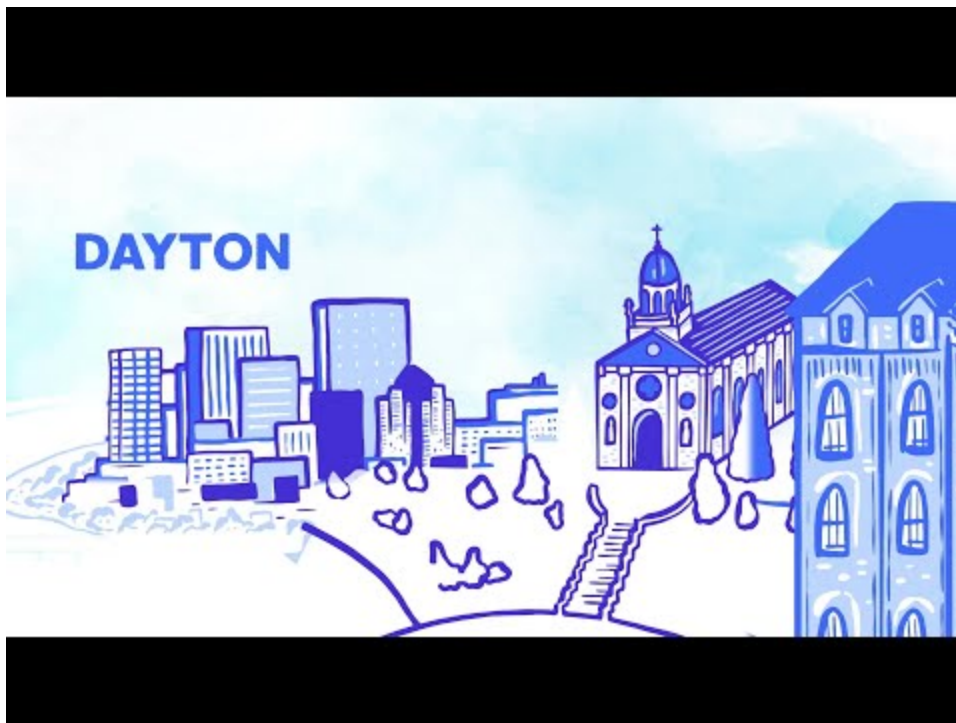
As a university that serves the public good, we have always had a special obligation to society, but we consider our engagement with the Dayton region as a sacred obligation, a commitment that reflects our mission as a Catholic, Marianist university. As in the best relationships, it's mutually beneficial.

From offering high ground and safety to refugees of the city's devastating 1913 flood to working closely today with community leaders to transform the mothballed downtown Dayton Arcade into a center of innovation, we are neighbors and partners.

From uniting with Premier Health to envision "Dayton's Imagination District" on a former fairgrounds to partnering with African American leaders in launching the Greater West Dayton Incubator for minority entrepreneurs, we are collaborators and visionaries.

From partnering with Sinclair Community College on initiatives that are lowering the cost of a bachelor's degree to preparing more in-demand nurses, we are dreamers and pragmatists.

We're privileged to be an anchor institution in Dayton, where our futures are inextricably linked.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/Wq65jZdTWZs>

How can universities go beyond cordial town-gown relations to becoming strong anchor institutions in their communities? Here are five strategies.

1. **Leave the Ivory Tower.** Connect faculty and students to a community's most pressing needs and be a true partner in addressing them, whether it's economic development or urban education reform. Our faculty and students learn extraordinary lessons by working side by side with community partners as equals in a shared quest for equitable, meaningful solutions. We've become a much stronger university because of our civic engagement.

2. **Invest more than just people.** Invest dollars in initiatives that are mutually beneficial. For instance, we became an anchor tenant and a driving force behind the restoration of the Dayton Arcade because we saw space for unparalleled student learning in a historic urban landmark that is bringing new life and energy to the heart of the city.
3. **Build community.** On our campus, we literally built a front porch for community collaboration. The 1401 S. Main academic and office facility is home to the Dayton Foundation, the Dayton Development Coalition and the University's Fitz Center for Leadership in Community. It's a national model for civic engagement — and a place where students are learning to be community builders.
4. **Drive economic development.** On land once dotted with NCR's manufacturing facilities, two Fortune 500 companies — GE Aviation and Emerson — established major research-and-development centers on our campus, leading to more local jobs, internships and co-ops for students, and research collaborations.
5. **Dream big, together.** Find a place at the table with neighbors, with a special focus on reducing power imbalances and ensuring inclusion. While our city is our home, it's a shared home where great ideas only take flight through imagination and collaboration.

For more on the University of Dayton as an anchor institution, visit [Our City. Our Home.](#)