

5-14-2022

For Everything There is a Season

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., "For Everything There is a Season" (2022). *President's Blog: From the Heart*. 309.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president_blog_spina/309

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 mschlangen1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

For Everything There is a Season

udayton.edu/blogs/president/2022/05/for_everything_there_is_a_season.php



Saturday May 14, 2022

By Eric F. Spina

(The University of Dayton celebrated the Class of 2020 with an outdoor ceremony at the Marycrest Amphitheater — two years after the pandemic cut their UD days short. Here are University of Dayton President Eric F. Spina's remarks.)

Good afternoon — and welcome home, Class of 2020! *Welcome home!* I've been waiting to say those joyful words for two years. They are especially meaningful to me because you are my very first class — we started together in fall 2016, wide-eyed and some combination of excited and scared. ...And now look at us six years and one pandemic later. WE LOVE UD!

And a warm welcome and a special thank you to your family members, loved ones, professors, and friends who have gathered today for this celebration. Please thank them for their love and support across your undergraduate years and in the challenges you have faced since March 2020 with a rousing round of applause!

Today is more than just a long-awaited, in-person ceremony on a gorgeous spring day in the heart of campus.

It's also a joyful reunion of classmates. It's an opportunity to thank a favorite professor who helped guide you on your UD journey. It's a moment to step back and savor all you've accomplished in the last two years. It's a day you've dreamed of, worried whether it would ever happen, and now will never forget. And neither will I!

"For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven" starts the familiar verse in the *Book of Ecclesiastes* from the Bible. Life moves in mysterious, unexpected ways, but it has brought us back together at this appointed time for your alma mater to recognize each of you individually and thank you for your contributions to our beloved UD.

The size of this crowd — more than 1,200 graduates and loved ones — speaks to the power of your experience here on this campus:

Where you lived and learned together in community.

Where your professors encouraged you, taught and mentored you, and dared you to dream big.

Where you grew in your own faith and in your respect for those of differing faiths and cultures.

Where you made friends who will always be a part of your lives.

Where you watched majestic sunsets from your front porches, became buddies with Dayton children and shared the wonder of Christmas on Campus together, ate sushi in VWK, made some very clever sheet signs to drape over your porches.

Where you spent late nights in Kettering Labs studying with friends, indulged in milk shakes at The Galley in the middle of winter, threw the Frisbee around Stuart Field after dark, and stepped out of your comfort zones to study abroad in places around the globe or tackle a challenging class or a seemingly impossible lab assignment.

I perused your digital class memory book, and the stories you share are touching, powerful — and ones you will always treasure.

Destiny Watson and three classmates dreamed, advocated, and pitched an idea that came to fruition after she graduated — the National Pan-Hellenic Council monuments in Kennedy Union Plaza. The nine granite pillars symbolize the contributions of Black fraternities and sororities on our campus. They make a bold statement: "You are part of the tapestry of our

community. You and your voices matter.” An entrepreneur at heart, Destiny is now founder and CEO of You Matter 2, a Chicago nonprofit organization that inspires and empowers youth to be world changers.

In an entry in the memory book, Chloe Voelker, a senior business analyst at Workday in Cincinnati, recalls “writing 10-page deliverables in three hours.” I dare say many of you also learned to work on deadline and juggle assignments during many a late night in Roesch Library.

Thomas Blevins, an estimator and project manager for Alliance Exterior Construction in Baltimore, writes that he will never forget “trading jokes with Obi Toppin while he warmed up in an empty gym three hours before 13,000 of my friends poured into the best atmosphere in college basketball.”

Who *can* forget cheering wildly for the #3 men’s basketball team in the country and dreaming of a national championship? Or showering the women in confetti when they won another A-10 basketball championship? Earlier in the academic year, before COVID curtailed competition, the volleyball team won the A-10 tournament title and participated in the NCAA tournament. Your senior year will always be a magical year in Dayton Flyer history.

Drew Whalen, a sales engineer at Loy Instrument in Indianapolis, calls UD “a small slice of heaven in the middle of Ohio.” I think Spencer Mack, a credit analyst in Columbus, best captures the spirit behind Drew’s words when he writes:

“To say there is one singular memory that I remember most fondly is impossible. Instead, I would like to describe the feeling that came with every day spent on Dayton’s wonderful campus. The feeling is home. The place where a true community of young people truly came together as one. Waking up each day was exciting in the sense of learning something new about the world and learning something new about ourselves. **College is the place where you find out who you are, but Dayton is the place where we find out who we can be.** Because life doesn’t stop once college is over. We continue to hold the values learned during our time and implement them into our current lives. We moved on to a new chapter in our lives, but we gained a new family and home. A family and home that gave us the greatest memories and a lifetime supply of community and friendship.”

And you, the Class of 2020, have indeed found out who you can be. You’re civil engineers, tax accountants, journalists, teachers, software engineers, social media managers, account executives, investment bankers, graphic designers.

Your class includes a cinematographer, a pilot in the Air Force, a podcaster, a platoon leader in the Army, a legislative aide, an English teacher in South Korea — and even a sci-fi fantasy novel writer and a production assistant who put in long hours during NBC’s Olympic coverage.

You've created start-ups and overseen complex engineering and design projects. A number of you have gone to grad school, law school, med school, or the seminary.

Some of you are married to other Flyers — and have even brought new Flyers into the world!

The world may have slowed down during the pandemic, but you found your stride at companies like P&G, GM, Credit Suisse, Lockheed Martin, Ford, Oracle, Goldman Sachs, Whirlpool, and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

In your communities, some of you have volunteered to work at food banks and animal shelters. One classmate coaches a middle school basketball team, while others advocate for social justice causes.

We're grateful that between 300 and 400 members of the Class of 2020 have stayed connected to UD as volunteers and donors. Many of you are part of Flyer Connection, our online platform for networking, career advice, and mentoring. Some have volunteered at admission events in your cities or picked up the phone to call prospective students to talk about your UD experience. You are our best ambassadors.

I urge you to stay engaged. The University of Dayton will always be an important part of you, and you will always be part of this special campus community. This will always be your home.

As your president — and as a representative of the UD faculty, staff, vowed religious, Board of Trustees, and all of Flyer Nation — I am so incredibly proud of all you've accomplished — and all you can be.

As we proudly say, "Once a Flyer, always a Flyer." You embody what it means to learn, lead, and serve. May your UD education be your North Star, always guiding you to work for the common good, to make a difference in the world.

Congratulations, Class of 2020! May God bless you and keep you in his grace.

(Photo by Brigham Fisher)