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Go Anywhere. Do Anything.

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

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Tuesday June 21, 2022

By Eric F. Spina

Seeing University of Dayton students discover their passions and push themselves to achieve their dreams is one of my greatest joys as president.

Correction. It is my greatest joy.

Nine students and recent graduates won competitive national fellowships to pursue advanced degrees, study internationally, or teach abroad next academic year. In addition, only a fraction of all Peace Corps applicants annually are selected to work side by side with local leaders on difference-making initiatives in countries around the world, and we can proudly claim two of them.

Count 'em: three Fulbright Scholars, four Gilman Scholars, UD's first Boren Scholar in a decade, a National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship, and two Peace Corps volunteer. This achievement is particularly impressive because the world has only

recently opened up after COVID postponed global travel. I credit the resolve and resilience of our students and the encouragement of their faculty mentors who saw their potential and guided them.

Elena Ramos '22 won a Fulbright Scholarship — the first Flyer Promise student to do so, but she certainly won't be the last. She leaves for São Paulo for orientation in mid-March for an English teaching assistantship. When she returns to her hometown of Boston, she'll work for Teach for America as an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher.

"At the University of Dayton I was challenged to the fullest, and it only pushed me to go harder and come out on top," said Elena, who credits faculty mentors for seeing her as a "diamond in the rough" and supporting her dreams. "Thank you for applying the pressure because this diamond is moving to Brazil!"

When classmate Natalie Eilerman '22 applied to serve in the Peace Corps, she said, "I will go anywhere and do anything."

That attitude paid off. "I got placed in my dream job as a youth development facilitator in the Dominican Republic," said Natalie, of Knoxville, Tennessee, who, like Elena, is proficient in Spanish. She expects to start her 27-month stint this fall, then pursue a master's degree in social work. Eventually she'd like to apply all she's learned to helping to alleviate the immigration crisis at the border by finding resources for refugees.

University of Dayton students can go anywhere and do anything — whether it's studying Arabic in Oman like Maria McCarty '23, teaching English in Spain like Fulbright Scholar Claire Coleman '22, or pursuing advanced degrees at some of the nation's top universities. UD is a place where students learn more than what's in textbooks. They learn that they can accomplish the extraordinary.

Godspeed, Flyers!