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Hold the Door for Each Other

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Hold the Door for Each Other

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Saturday August 20, 2022

By Eric F. Spina

("Always hold the door open for one another," University of Dayton President Eric F. Spina told the Class of 2026 at New Student Convocation on Aug. 20. "It's a lesson in building community. It's a sign of showing respect for one another. It's a symbol of love and acceptance." His full remarks are below.)

Good morning, Flyers! Welcome to the University of Dayton! *Your* University of Dayton.

Class of 2026, look around at the people in your lives joining you today. Through their love and support, they have helped develop you for this moment — the moment when you take that first step on a life-changing journey. Let's give a round of applause to thank those who have helped prepare you for your career at UD.

This is a day full of a range of emotions. As the father of two recent college graduates, I know so well the mixture of emotions you are feeling today — pride, happiness and, yes, a little nervousness about letting go. Trust me, it *does* get easier.

Now, a few words to you, our newest students.

You are starting a journey that will change your world, expand your horizons, and help you become the person you are meant to be: A caring, competent, and compassionate professional in the Marianist tradition. A servant-leader. A student for life, ready to adapt and change in a world that can seemingly change overnight.

Your class will graduate as community builders and changemakers and enter a global workplace that urgently needs your knowledge, idealism, energy, and optimism. Above all, it needs your faith — and commitment — that you will work together to design and build a world that's equitable for all.

That's your destiny. Your future — and, as importantly, the world's future — is yours for the shaping.

Why do I know the days that await hold such promise for your class?

Because I know the transformative power of a UD education. On our campus, you will live and learn together in community. Your professors will encourage you and mentor you — and dare you to dream big, to imagine what might be, and then work to achieve the extraordinary. You will grow in your own faith and in your respect for those of differing faiths and cultures. You will make friends that you will hold close in your hearts for the rest of your lives.

I want you to work hard over the next four years, but I encourage you to savor the moments outside the classroom, too. Find peace in watching breathtaking sunsets over Stuart Field. Pop into the chapel between classes and sit in reverent silence for a moment to pray and reflect. Discover new passions through involvement in student organizations or intramural teams. Attend campus musical performances, athletic contests, and academic lectures.

And always stop and hold a door open for a fellow Flyer.

Wait, hold a door open? Is that the best advice a university president can give to a new class?

At the University of Dayton, we hold doors open for one another — literally and metaphorically — because we are a community.

Remember how you felt UD's sense of community the first time you stepped foot on campus? Community is part of our DNA, and it's a way of life.

As you settle into life in your new home, you'll quickly discover you're part of a community that supports and challenges one another. In our Catholic, Marianist tradition, we value collaboration, prize diversity, and treasure the gifts of all — and call on you to do the same.

That's because this is *your* community, and we are always, always stronger together.

You'll find that our community is diverse in multiple ways. Many of you are first-generation students. Some come from small farming communities in Ohio. Others were brought up in big cities like Chicago and New York. Still others have left their home countries to study here. You will meet people of various races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, religions and political thought. You will make new kinds of friends and learn more from those relationships than you thought possible about the world beyond your home street. And nothing will prepare you better for the world you'll enter after graduation.

I ask you to face each day with an open mind and an open heart. Always respect the dignity of every member of our community, as defined by their identity, their background, and their beliefs. That sounds like such a basic concept, like God's commandment to love one another. Yet, in practice, sometimes we stumble. When we hurt one another — consciously or unconsciously — show humility, seek grace, work to repair the hurt, and recommit to making our community more inclusive and welcoming for all.

So, if you remember little else from what I've said today, always hold the door open for one another. It's a lesson in building community. It's a sign of showing respect for one another. It's a symbol of love and acceptance.

I'll close my remarks with this assurance to you and your loved ones: the future holds every possibility you hold in your hearts today. I cannot wait to see you reach high and achieve your dreams. May God bless you and keep you in his grace.

Welcome, Flyers! And now please welcome Kate Sidor, a senior music studies major, for a few words about how to make the most of your experience in the UD community.