

7-2-2023

## Rising to the Occasion

Eric F. Spina  
*University of Dayton*, [efspina@udayton.edu](mailto:efspina@udayton.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president\\_blog\\_spina](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president_blog_spina)

---

### eCommons Citation

Spina, Eric F., "Rising to the Occasion" (2023). *President's Blog: From the Heart*. 351.  
[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president\\_blog\\_spina/351](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president_blog_spina/351)

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 [mschlange1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlange1@udayton.edu), [ecommons@udayton.edu](mailto:ecommons@udayton.edu).

# Rising to the Occasion

 [udayton.edu/blogs/president/2023/07/rising\\_to\\_the\\_occasion.php](https://udayton.edu/blogs/president/2023/07/rising_to_the_occasion.php)



Sunday July 2, 2023

By Eric F. Spina

(Eric Spina's [column](#) appears in the summer issue of the *University of Dayton Magazine*.)

Shortly after the sun rose on April 19 — a glorious spring day — senior Katie Bardine cheerfully offered golf cart rides to early risers from a campus parking lot to the [One Day, One Dayton](#) opening Mass in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception.

Just 12 hours later, she emceed a student basketball competition in RecPlex, where students watched the livestream of the public launch of [We Soar](#), the University of Dayton's first major fundraising campaign in more than two decades with an ambitious philanthropic goal of \$400 million.

In between, she presented not one, but two, research projects at the annual [Stander Symposium](#) that showcased the innovative thinking and creativity of more than 1,000 students — a new participation record.

I also spotted her during the noon hour on the Central Mall celebrating UD's giving day with entertainment, food and games, while encouraging her classmates to make a gift of any size to their favorite student organization or academic department. That effort paid off: the graduating class led all UD classes with 249 gifts, part of an extraordinary 700 gifts made from current students who know firsthand the transformative power of a Marianist education.

"UD has shown me what true pride means — and how magical, energetic and special this University is," says Katie about her all-in involvement. She's a fourth-generation Flyer who served as philanthropy chair for Students for University Advancement, a campus organization that seeds a culture of philanthropy among the student body.

As Justin Timberlake's catchy, feel-good tune "Can't Stop the Feeling!" pulsed throughout the Central Mall, I thought about how the lyrics matched the vibe of the day as it captured the student experience:

*"All through my city, all through my home  
We're flying up, no ceiling, when we in our zone  
I got that sunshine in my pocket, that good soul in my feet ..."*

This was a day like no other, and University of Dayton students rose to the occasion time and again, showing Flyer Nation how they soar. With the help of a cast of thousands on campus and across the country, students came out in large numbers and joyfully turned the day into a grand stage for celebrating the achievements and aspirations of our beloved UD.

On a stage in O'Leary Hall, business students participating in the Stander Symposium proudly talked about their hands-on experience managing nearly \$70 million of the University's endowment — the largest student-run fund in the nation. On a downtown Dayton sidewalk, the UD Pep band pumped up 300 guests arriving for the campaign launch at the historic Dayton Arcade, while The Common Good Players prepared to take the stage inside. The student troupe performed an original play inspired by Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* in the center of a replica of UD's student neighborhood, complete with welcoming porches and a tolling chapel bell.

The We Soar campaign is about elevating the dreams of the brightest students, regardless of their means to pay, and providing them with access to great minds in the classroom and hands-on learning in the city and around the globe. While the spirited involvement of students throughout the day didn't surprise me, their love for UD tugged at my heart.

When the performers took a break from striking the set for impromptu photos, I realized they didn't want the day to end. Neither did I. We took our time mugging for the camera.

These students didn't need a script for the night's finale. The joy written on their faces said it all: "We love this place. We care about its future. We are grateful for the alumni who support us."