

7-20-2023

## Leading the 'We Soar' Cheer

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., "Leading the 'We Soar' Cheer" (2023). *President's Blog: From the Heart*. 352.  
[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president\\_blog\\_spina/352](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/president_blog_spina/352)

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).

# Leading the 'We Soar' Cheer

 [udayton.edu/blogs/president/2023/07/leading\\_the\\_we\\_soar\\_cheer.php](https://udayton.edu/blogs/president/2023/07/leading_the_we_soar_cheer.php)



Thursday July 20, 2023

By Eric F. Spina

Deborah Flanagan Tobias '73 seems to be everywhere these days with a smile, a big hello, and unbridled enthusiasm for her alma mater's future.

In January, she pumped up the Board of Trustees with a pep talk about setting our sights sky-high in the historic "We Soar" comprehensive campaign, a \$400 million fundraising effort that will make a UD education accessible to more talented students from every ZIP code and support their success while they are on campus. Deb and her fellow trustees chuckled when I flashed a photo of her getting "LOWD" with students in the Red Scare section at a Flyers game.

Without a doubt, Deb has become one of UD's biggest cheerleaders. It is impossible not to feed off her deep love for her alma mater.

In February, she handed out symbolic dominos to our most engaged alumni volunteers at our first Volunteer Summit on campus. "My time at UD was some of the greatest of my youth," she said, before making an energetic pitch for increased alumni support and engagement

during the campaign. “We need to create a domino effect nationwide. When one piece is put into motion, there’s a second, then a cumulative effect. One domino can’t do it alone.”

During “One Day, One Dayton” on April 19, I spotted her in the Central Mall swaying to the catchy refrain, “I got that sunshine in my pocket, that good soul in my feet,” from the Justin Timberlake tune, “Can’t Stop the Feeling!” You couldn’t miss her among the largely student crowd with her blue Flyers jacket, complete with red pants and matching sneakers.

In the afternoon, she and her husband, Randy, met with the “Tobias Leaders,” a few of the more than 100 students who have studied abroad because of the couple’s generosity.

Later that night Deb joined me on stage at the Dayton Arcade before 300 supporters (and hundreds more tuning in from alumni communities from around the country) as we publicly launched the “We Soar” campaign, which she chairs. When we announced that we had already raised \$325 million, we pumped our fists in the air and yelled, “We soar!” to the roar of the crowd.

During their May meeting, UD’s trustees gave her a standing ovation when I announced Deb and Randy’s transformative campaign gift. The couple committed \$5 million to bolster the Deborah Flanagan Tobias Leaders Endowment, largely to provide UD Pell-eligible students with study-abroad opportunities. This generous gift supports two strategic prongs of the campaign — affordability and life-changing hands-on learning.

In June, Deb was back at it again. After being inducted as “Golden Flyers,” she and campaign cabinet member Kathy Tamer ’73 gave a passionate presentation during Reunion Weekend about building a financially thriving UD for the future.

Back in the day, when she worked as a drive-time DJ for UD’s WVUD radio station, her confident, warm voice could be heard across campus and throughout the Dayton region.

Today, it’s heard loudly throughout Flyer Nation: “We will soar!”