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One Relationship at a Time

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One Relationship at a Time

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Wednesday January 3, 2024

By Eric F. Spina

Two centuries ago while in exile during the French Revolution, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade brought together an eclectic group — men and women, religious and laity — into a new religious movement. Together, they drew their inspiration from Mary, mother of Jesus, and fostered community, one relationship at a time.

It strikes me that the campaign cabinet for UD's We Soar campaign fits a similar mold of community building. And their work, too, is for a deeper cause.

A small group of alumni, whose graduation years span more than half a century, have come together as volunteers to lead the We Soar campaign by nurturing alumni and friend relationships one at a time. Their goal is to ensure that we provide the best possible education for today and tomorrow's students as the core of our beloved Catholic, Marianist University.

Like our Marianist founders, they're driven by both mission and faith in what's possible through the power of community building. They believe ardently in the transformative power of a UD education because they experienced it in their own lives.

Father Chaminade, who saw the value of creating unity through difference, welcomed priests, brothers, merchants, teachers and even chimney sweeps into the formation of the Society of Mary. The composition of UD's campaign cabinet is also diverse and unified. From around the country, a group of executives, parents, Reunion Weekend co-chairs, trustees, advisory council members, alumni board representatives, a Marianist, volunteers and student mentors are focused on 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 Dayton and around the globe.

Chaired by Deb Tobias '73, a UD trustee and retired technology executive, the campaign cabinet includes vice chairs Tom Barker '76, Katie Herr '94, Mike Herr '90, Father Marty Solma, S.M. '91, and Bill Stankey '80, as well as many other selfless, giving alumni. As we strive to top the campaign's historic \$400 million goal, this group has done extraordinary work and deserves the thanks and deep appreciation of all of Flyer Nation.

Working closely with our advancement team, these individuals are laser-focused on helping UD dramatically increase participation and engagement by securing 19,250 Front Porch Society members (supporters who give gifts of any amount for at least three years in a row) and recruiting 2,800 new volunteer leaders. These newly engaged supporters and volunteers will form the bedrock for future campaigns. They will become part of a virtuous circle of alumni who pay it forward, paving the way for new generations of servant-leaders to make their mark in the world.

That's heroic — and visionary. I firmly believe this campaign will enjoy extraordinary success and position UD for a promising future, largely because of the campaign cabinet's tireless work of building relationships, one at a time.

After all, that's the Marianist way.

(This piece originally appeared in the winter issue of the University of Dayton Magazine.)