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Recommended Citation

"Making the Sale" (2011). *News Releases*. 952.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/952

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Making the Sale

03.31.2011 | Business Fiore Talarico, a 1974 University of Dayton graduate, knows how to make the sale.

During his multifaceted career, Talarico, a retired Houston businessman, has bought and sold close to 40 companies in industries ranging from pharmaceutical research to pizza. He's worked as a venture capitalist, a fundraiser for John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign and an adviser for a national security think tank.

Regardless of the industry, Talarico says that the selling process begins long before one lands a position with a company or makes a deal.

"If you want to get a job, how do you do that? You have to know how to sell yourself," he says.

Now he's helping other Flyers become just as adept at the art of selling. Talarico is giving the University of Dayton a \$1 million gift over a five-year period to support the Center for Professional Selling, launched in May 2010. As the call for sales training across disciplines continues to rise from employers and students alike, the School of Business Administration wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to meet that growing demand. The center is one of about 40 at colleges and universities nationwide.

And because of Talarico's contribution — a gift that School of Business Administration Dean Matthew Shank describes as "transformational" — the center will take a large step toward accomplishing significant goals that will help University of Dayton students become more competitive in the job market and workplace.

"Selling is important for people from all walks of life," Talarico said. "This will help more than just future business leaders — all kids can benefit from selling. We want kids at the University of Dayton to be a step ahead."

Talarico's gift will help fund equipment needs for the center, provide support for students participating each year in the National Collegiate Sales Competition and be used to help promote the center.

Shank said the center is currently securing corporate partnerships designed to provide internship and full-time job placement opportunities for students. So far, it has secured two — Total Quality Logistics Inc. and Reynolds and Reynolds have signed on as partners — but the center hopes to have between eight and 10 partners in the near future.

The gift is three years in the making. Shank first mentioned the idea of the center to Talarico when the two were enjoying pizza, pool and a Dayton Flyers basketball game three years ago.

Talarico was sold.

"He expressed an interest in sales and stressed its importance for all students," Shank said. "He's an advocate for having students understand the role of sales in their career goals."

Talarico should know. He's come a long way from that day in late 1970 when he boarded a bus in Allendale, N.J., with two suitcases in hand. "All that I had," he said.

He undertook a two-day journey to Dayton, and the bus dropped him off downtown. He asked some friendly locals for help, and they directed him to the University of Dayton campus, telling him to look for the Big Boy statue near the entrance.

Big Boy is long gone, but Talarico's fond memories of his time at the University of Dayton remain. Today, Talarico actively works to recruit students in the Houston area to the University and invites them to alumni gatherings he hosts at his home and at sporting events. His ongoing enthusiasm even convinced his nephew, Andrew McClain, to transfer to the University. And now his son, Jared, plans to make the move.

Selling the University of Dayton might be Talarico's most fulfilling endeavor.

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