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Alumni Voices

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Alumni Voices

*Merida Allen and Lawrence Burnley (facilitators);
Daria Graham (moderator); Angela Heath, Darius Beckham,
Lisa Rich-Milan, Marcus Smith (panelists)*

Introductions

Lawrence Burnley: It's really a blessing to be in this space with you. I am Dr. Lawrence Burnley, vice president for diversity and inclusion at the University of Dayton, and I am blessed to co-chair this Alumni Voices session of the 2021 Symposium on Race with my esteemed colleague, Merida Allen, associate dean of students and executive director of Multi-Ethnic Education and Engagement Center. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Julius Amin, who is the chair of the 2121 Symposium on Race planning committee. He is a professor of history here at the University of Dayton and it is a blessing to have you here today.

The goal of the Symposium on Race 2021 is to study the history of race relations at the University; to understand a sense of trends and attitudes; and to outline potential steps towards building a more inclusive campus community. The symposium is designed to educate and inform and bring to the forefront conversations on race. Speakers include faculty, staff, students, and alumni which are the focus of our time this afternoon. Attendees come from all over campus and from the larger community. We hope this panel will be thought provoking and encourage you to be involved in the struggle against racism on college campuses here at the University and beyond in the larger community. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you our distinguished panel.

First, I will introduce our moderator, Dr. Daria Graham. She's a frequent Flyer—class of '92, '01, and '18. Dr. Graham is the immediate

past associate dean of students and executive director of the Multi-Ethnic Education and Engagement Center. She currently serves as the associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students at California State University, San Bernardino. Welcome back, Dr. Graham.

We're blessed to have with us, Ms. Angela Heath. Angela is also a frequent Flyer, Class of '78 and Class of 1980. Ms. Heath is a nationally recognized, award-winning businesswoman, author, and lecturer.

Darius Beckham is a native of Dayton and is a member of the class of 2019. I'm honored to be one of his mentors and it's good to have him back. Darius continues to share his gifts here in the Dayton region. He recently worked in Mayor Nan Whaley's office as a legislative aide but is also currently working with the city of Dayton Department of Planning and Community Development. Welcome back, Darius Beckham.

We also welcome back to campus Ms. Lisa Rich-Milan, who is a 1985 business administration graduate. She has a distinguished career as an executive in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology.

And finally, we welcome back Dr. Marcus Smith, also a frequent Flyer, Class of '08 and '10. He received his degrees in engineering here at the University of Dayton and is serving as a chief diversity officer with 10 years' experience working with scientists and engineers to both the government and tech world.

Thank you so much for bringing your lens and voice to this experience. With that, I'm going to hand it off to our moderator, Dr. Daria Graham. Thank you.

Discussion

Daria Graham: Thank you, Dr. Burnley. Thank you, Merida, and thank you all. I'm excited to be here and to be able to connect with my fellow alumni. Thank you, Dr. Amin, for the contributions that you continue to give to the campus and setting up these spaces to hear from voices that are maybe on the margin but shifting the center to make sure that we are recognizing that these voices are essential to the current experience of the University of Dayton students but also to the structure of the University.

Panelists' experience as students

Daria Graham: The first question that has been given to the panelists is the request to talk about your experience as an African American



Daria Graham

student at the University of Dayton. What were some of the enduring and impactful memories of your experience at UD? And if you wouldn't mind sharing some examples because we know there's power in the story; this shifting the center and the dominant narrative is in the power of the story, and the story aligns with many of our different cultures.

Darius Beckham: Good afternoon, everybody. Just a slight correction in Dr. Burnley's welcome. I was with the mayor's office for the last 18 months, but I'm now with the Hall Hunger Initiative as project manager. UD was only two years ago for me. I can point to several experiences that were really pivotal for me, especially as a young Black man on campus. Upon coming to the University of Dayton, it was a bit of a culture shock. My high school was fairly diverse. When I got to the University of Dayton, I remember the Black student population being around 3%. It was really amazing to see the campus become more diverse, to see Black student population grow through my four years. But at the beginning, it was an adjustment for me. I think in terms of what experiences truly made a huge difference and just made me extremely proud to be a Flyer is that while the Black student population at that time was smaller than it is today, we were mighty. You know, just the freedom and liberty that we had to program and organize and work with the administrators, particularly the Office of Multicultural Affairs, as it was called at the time. I had the pleasure of being Black Student Union president for a few years. We were really able to make some amazing inroads just for the Black student population. And you know the Office of the President worked with us at every point. Dr. Burnley can attest to this; so can Dr. Graham and Dr. Morgan a bit. You know, we ended up actually building a relationship with the

ASALH Conference, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, where the Black Student Union was attending that conference annually after a certain point. Those things made a huge difference in how we experience the campus. There was opportunity after opportunity to really dig in to being an African American on campus and find ways and be collaborators with the administration in terms of finding ways that we can enrich the Black student experience. That's what I was really encouraged by during my time there. I never felt as though it wasn't my university. And I'll especially say about the Office of Multicultural Affairs [now known as MEC]: There was no other place on campus, in my opinion, that really made you feel so at home—just the camaraderie, the relationships, the richness of culture, and freedom to be Black students without filter or hesitation. The Office of Multicultural Affairs really created that and allowed us to go back out into campus and re-create those spaces.

Daria Graham: I appreciate you, Darius. What we know is even though it was just two years ago, time changes swiftly when you're talking about higher education. And even though I've only been gone for seven months, I know that there are things that have changed at the University of Dayton. So although you say it's only been two years, we recognize how much change has happened during your tenure, but probably post as well.

The next I'd ask is actually the same question so actually we'll do a bookend: Angela Heath, class of '78.

Angela Heath: Happy to be here. I haven't been to the campus in probably seven years or so, so this is kind of fun. I always felt like UD was my home, and I'm not sure that it had anything to do with the University itself or the administration. We were a very small group of people back then. And BATU, Black Action Through Unity, was the core—absolutely that was the core for us. That's where we went for encouragement; that's where we went when our money was running low; that's where we went for peer mentoring; that's where we went. And I can remember very clearly being a freshman, and one of the very first things that happened when I came on campus is I ran into an African American woman, and she said, "Are you going to go to BATU tonight?" I had no idea what it was, and she said, "Oh you've got to be there." So I go, and it was just like a welcome reception, get to know

each other. And we were able to sign up for upperclass mentors at that time, and that made all the difference because those mentors sort of took us under their wings and told us what to expect. And I have to say, back then, the University was very separate. Back then, it was primarily Black and white; there weren't a lot of different nationalities there. But you would rarely see Black and white studying together—Black and white doing fun activities together. It was a very separate university, and I don't believe that there was anything from the administration that made it that way. I think we just sort of gravitated where we felt comfortable. And so it was that union of the other African Americans and the African American adults who were on campus that made the place feel whole. So that's like a really important thing. We have to make sure we always have some kind of welcoming into the University as a whole, but also into that experience.

A couple of the things that I remember that kind of struck me as odd. I came from a high school where I was one of five African Americans to graduate. So when I got to the University of Dayton, I had never been around so many intelligent African American people. But I found that when it was time for study groups in most of my classes, I was the only one or one of maybe two or three. So we didn't have within my major—I was in sociology and urban planning—a group of African Americans that I could pal around with and get notes from and study with. And I was not getting an invitation from my counterparts. So that piece of it felt very lonely. And because there were not so many African Americans represented on the administration side, it felt like being able to get real counseling within your major wasn't as accessible. And I spoke to a couple of alumni during that time to kind of wager, “Was my experience unique, or was that the experience that we all shared?” And it did appear that way—that we didn't have the resources for study. And I remember one time I went to my counselor—I was a junior, and I wanted to make sure I was going to graduate on time because one more semester was not an option, and you know, I thought it was a fine discourse. But then I learned from a white counterpart who had that same counselor that she was actually getting information that I was not getting. So my experience with UD was made rich by the community that I was in. The separatism actually didn't matter because I didn't know what I was losing out on. You don't know what you don't know. So I didn't know about the

richness that was happening all around me that I didn't get a chance to participate in. But I don't think any of us felt alone because that Black Action Through Unity system was so strong that we all felt supported. But the truth of the matter was: We didn't know it, but we were not getting the full experience.

Daria Graham: I appreciate that. One of the things I'm most proud of as a former BATU member myself is: If you look at the history, Black Action Through Unity was actually created before the office. BATU and other Black students appealed to the University, and the Center for Afro-American Affairs was created in 1970.¹ The African and Afro-American Studies Program,² which started in 1970, also offered courses. So it's interesting and so appropriate that now 51 years later, you have the Multi-Ethnic Education and Engagement Office that is partnering with Dr. Morgan on this call, and we're going back to incorporating education in the center. But yes, it was Black students coming together. And it's interesting that even Darius mentioned it: It was Black students coming together, supporting each other. That's my story too—Veronica Moore's pulling me into BATU. That's where you got the resources, and through student activism, we have this formal area that continues to grow today, so thank you for making those connections for us through your memories.

I want to offer the same space for Lisa Rich-Milan, Class of 1985.

¹ "Mr. Roderick McDavis Appointed Coordinator of the African and Afro-American Studies Program" (1970). News Releases. 3736.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/3736

² The African and Afro-American Studies Program began in January 1970. Excerpt from the 1971-72 Undergraduate Bulletin: "The Program of African and Afro-American Studies (AAS) offers courses as well as an undergraduate minor in Black Studies. The program is administered by the Assistant Provost. ... The purpose of the African and Afro-American Studies Program at the University of Dayton is to provide all students with a more accurate and relevant picture of themselves and their progenitors and to develop operational methods for abating the social and human problems on the contemporary American scene. The African and Afro-American Studies Program proposes to give Blacks the intellectual tools necessary to effect change in a technocracy without severing them from their distinctive Black consciousness. African and Afro-American Studies, using the Black experience as its base, provides for the development and transmission of ideas and information vital to the Black community in its efforts to gain self-determination and self-definition." Available at
<https://ecommons.udayton.edu/bulletin/58/>

Lisa Rich-Milan: Daria, thank you very much, and Angela you did a nice job pulling all of that, together because my walk is very similar to your walk as well. My background is as a CEO and chief executive officer for pharma and biotech. I have 25-plus years of that. Let me talk about how the University of Dayton not only created the leader that you see today, but also was very instrumental in me and who I am today. I'm glad to see that in the back of Daria's screenshot is BATU because Black Action Through Unity was crucial when I came on board. I actually grew up going to Catholic schools. My school from elementary all the way to high school was Catholic, and it was predominantly non-diverse. I was one of very few African Americans that attended that school but had a great education behind me. I was strong in math and science. When I came to the University, I chose not to go with engineering. I chose to go through the business side. I thought I wanted to be an accountant. Believe it or not, I did two years of that after I graduated. But when I first stepped foot on University of Dayton, I was very comfortable in the University because I had been there several times with my parents. We walked the campus; we walked the buildings; we walked everything about the campus. What I was not comfortable with was the faculty and who would be my teachers. What is the process of when you are having challenges as a student and you need to go through tutoring or you need help, what do you need to do? The very first day that I came on campus, I was greeted by an African American student. She just happened to see me unloading my car with my family and, and she was laughing. She'll still tell the story today because she's actually my best friend. She'd say, "All I could see was pink coming out of that car. I knew whatever room you were going to, it's going to be all pink." So, she came up and introduced herself to me, and then from that point we both said, "Hey, do you know that there's a meeting at the BATU lounge?" Now, we didn't know what the BATU lounge was. We knew that it dealt with the Black students that were coming on campus. But the fact that it was there for a student that was new to a university to be able to connect with other fellow student bodies of the same background and to get to know teachers, that was critical to my success. So the first day after getting everything put in the room, it wasn't even unpacked, there was a meeting where we had to go to the BATU lounge, and at the BATU lounge, we

met faculty; we met upperclassmen. And the upperclassmen really wrapped their arms around us—it was really a very tight knit community.

So they began to bond with us, and I mean I couldn't even walk out of the student union without someone greeting me saying, "Hey, do you know where you're going? Do you have any questions? How can I help you?" So that was the bond that was formed on day one because there was a foundation, and as long as there is a foundation or commonality that you are introduced to at the University from day one and it continues and is consistent throughout the years that you're at the University, then you really can make it through any challenges that you have. So when it came to "OK, what are the classes that are really good in business administration that I could take? What will focus me in the area of accounting and finance?" at that time, Dr. [Thomas] Wright was the head professor of economics. He was unbelievable as a faculty member and a mentor to African American students. His daughter, Vicki Wright, was a student at the University of Dayton. She lived off campus, but she oftentimes was on campus as well. So those connections are critical. There came a point my junior year where I needed to make some decisions around a preceptorship. Now the University of Dayton at that time did not talk about preceptorships. I know from my perspective, as a business major or an accounting major, I had to go seek that on my own, and it was because of the questions that I would ask my peer group and the upperclassmen that were in that same major that helped me to know where to go to the career development center to begin looking at potential preceptorships. "Do I want a preceptorship that's based in Dayton Ohio? Or, do I want one that's outside of the state?" At that time, I do wish that the University of Dayton had been a little bit stronger with this. I did do an accounting and finance preceptorship my junior year, but that could have been much stronger as I went through my journey. That close-knit relationship of the foundation of the BATU and the upperclassmen and the faculty that came through made us want to stay. The classes and the curriculum that I went through was outstanding. That is one thing that the University does do. University of Dayton trains you well for what you need.

Daria Graham: Thank you for that. I'm hoping that attendees will notice this thread of relationships, which is one of the things that I thought about with my experience—that community, which we talk

about a lot at UD, actually manifested in the relationships with faculty, relationships with the dining service ladies that told me, “I’ve seen you too many times today, and I’m telling your daddy you’re not going to class.” It was those relationships that manifested that got me to graduation. I appreciate that, and I hear that similarly through these, through our stories, our narratives. Dr. Smith, I invite you now as a fellow frequent Flyer to share your story as well.

Marcus Smith: I’m going to echo a lot of what the other panel members already said. It’s been about 13 years since I finished undergrad now. I was in the School of Engineering majoring in electrical and computer engineering. Coming from my primary education, I was in more diverse schools within the city of Dayton, and when I came to the University of Dayton, it was a huge culture shock being a part of this predominantly white environment—and even more so within my major. When you walked into Kettering Labs back in ’08, there were very few people of color in my major. Additionally, when you sit down in your classes, there was little to no minority representation within my faculty. Up to that point in time, I had thoroughly enjoyed school, and I saw myself as a fairly above average performer academically, so it always lingered in the back of my mind whether or not I would pursue professorship and academia, but seeing that there was a lack of representation there made me question whether this was something that was truly attainable. After that, being that I was in the School of Engineering, the curriculum was fairly challenging, and my first year, it was a very steep learning curve—so much so that I fell behind quite a bit. It was at that time that I really wished there were others within my program like myself that I could have kind of leaned on or just had a mentor to lean on to help me navigate the transition into college. It took me a little while to climb over the learning curve to hit a plateau or just stable ground to finish my way through college. In spite of all this, though, one of the things that I will echo again, similar to the other panelists, was that in spite of the lack of minority representation, I really did find a sense of community within organizations, such as BATU, Black Action Through Unity, as well as the NSBE organization, National Society of Black Engineers. Even my senior year I recall, we had a NSBE house, similar to the BATU house on campus within the student community, and we were one of the first universities across the country

to have a NSBE house, so we got featured in the NSBE magazine at that time. A lot of my lot lifelong friends come from these organizations. I still talk to many of them, to this day, even every day.

Daria Graham: Thank you. I think you'd be proud to know that there is still a NSBE house. That was a pivotal moment for the history of the University, and students continue to benefit from what your year brought to the to the University, so thank you for that for that legacy.

I want to shift this now, keeping in mind that real social justice work means that we need to challenge institutions. I saw a quote that said, "You can't have systemic change without systemic answers." We can't put it on individuals. It takes more than individuals for systemic change. It takes change at the highest level. So I'd like for you all, in what you've learned recently about new initiatives at the University, what recommendations do you give to the University?

Lisa Rich-Milan: One of the things that I neglected to say, is what was very strong back when we attended University of Dayton, were the Divine Nine—the African American sororities and fraternities that existed on campus. So I'm going to give you two scenarios, as I address your second question. I graduated from University of Dayton and got disconnected from UD as an alumna. There wasn't a lot of outreach, and when we did have reunions that came back, they were not as inclusive, or we had the president of the University in front of us asking for money when there wasn't any ownership or inclusion of the diversity and the different groups that came out of the University of Dayton. And it was a missed opportunity because they had sitting in the room people that could have contributed. And then I will speak from an employer perspective. I had the opportunity to come back and be the CEO of CompuNet Clinical Labs based out of Moraine, Ohio, and in Dayton, Ohio. And I actually tried to reconnect with the University of Dayton as an employer, No. 1, to build out programs for preceptorships, but we also needed talent in our lab that we had difficulty finding in the marketplace. We were even going to support some sort of curriculum that could build the skill sets that we needed for someone graduating in our medical field. And there was difficulty in getting that done. And so that sort of made me step back, to disconnect from the University of Dayton even more, not only from that alumni perspective, but then also from the employer perspective. What has gotten me back, which is what I really like and

what I'm seeing that is definitely needed for this University, is that you have to understand the different cultures—not just African American, but any culture that is coming into the University and Dayton. There are variations and differences in every culture that enters into the front door of your University. And each one of those, whether it's Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, female, male, whatever, there is a different belief system and a different way in which they operate, and there's a different way in which they learn. So you have to understand, as a University, it's one thing to recruit a student; it's another to retain them and see them to graduation. So the programs you put in place to support the different cultures that you are bringing into the University of Dayton is what an employer, like myself, would be interested in looking at, because our world is diverse. In pharmaceuticals and biotech, we have leadership that is diverse that represents all cultures because our world is culturally different. So we expect the University to be in that format as well. What I've seen change over the last year or two, is that I was invited to several of UD's Commitment to Inclusive Excellence and had a chance to view your strategic planning around this. To me, words are one thing, but to see a full-blown strategic plan that has been built out and strategically being implemented and shows programs and dates and times and metrics of the results that we're seeing within your university to truly help these students learn and be successful in your environment is what an employer looks for. What has impressed me and has brought me back as an alumna and as a student of color, but also as an employer, is the strategic business plan that you now have in place and the movement and the structures that you're putting in place, showing me that you actually care. You're putting your putting action behind your words, whereas I didn't see the action behind the words before.

Daria Graham: I appreciate you mentioning that. I know that one of the examples that the University has put into place is a new position in the school of business. Dr. Castel Sweet is the director of community engagement and diversity, equity and inclusion. She sits on the staff of the school of Business Administration, and I know that there's also a center for diversity and inclusion in the School of Engineering. Are there other places in the University that could benefit from having a real focus on diversity and inclusion that is connected to the Office of Diversity Inclusion with Dr. Burnley and also connected with the Multi-Ethnic

Education and Engagement Center with Merida, so that it is institutionalized? This reminds us of the example where it's already happening in some places, such as the Multi-Ethnic Business Leaders program and the Multi-Ethnic Engineers program. So doing more things like that to institutionalize the commitment to diversity.

Darius, any recommendations to the University?

Darius Beckham: Sure, much like Ms. Lisa Rich-Milan, I think it would be wise and beneficial for the University to continue going down that path of not just leveraging our Black and brown and minority alumni for where we are now but creating that two-way opportunity for alumni to come back and get involved, as well as African American students and others to see what the University of Dayton has created in terms of the opportunities that we took advantage of after graduation, but also to extend those same opportunities to students who are there now. I was a political science and sociology major when I was an undergrad, and while I'm one of those strange people that enjoy learning about politics and government, there were not African Americans teaching those classes. And while I still did perfectly fine, it would have been really amazing for someone like me, as one of the few Black students in those classes, to hear perspectives on those things whether it was forms of government, whether it was current politics, whether it was legislation, coming from somebody who looks like me. I had an opportunity to look over the University's Anti-Racist Action Plan and I'm extremely proud of it. I think everything in the plan is pivotal for what UD can be and will be moving forward. But I'd like to tell, just a quick story on how connecting with alumni from an institutional, systematic way was beneficial for me, but it was something that I had to do on my own. And if we can incorporate those types of communications, they will go a long way in benefiting students. I actually went on the Dayton to DC trip my junior year—it's something that's offered in the political science department. I had no interest in working on Capitol Hill; I had no interest in moving to DC and working on the federal level. My passion and my interest was at the local level—coming back home to the city of Dayton and really trying to be someone that is about progress and change here in the city. I wanted to take advantage of that opportunity to go on that trip, but when I was there, we were not introduced to African American alumni in DC. And it's interesting because I remember being at the

African American alumni reunion on campus and a gentleman by the name of Rashad Young was there. And I had read his bio; I had heard some things about him here and there, but Daria, I believe it was yourself, somebody mentioned to me that he was now the city manager of the District of Columbia under Mayor Bowser. And I thought, how in the world am I just now hearing about this guy my junior year. That blew my mind. And when I was in DC for the trip, he wasn't on that. It could have been due to a schedule, but quite honestly, I'm not sure it was because the alumni that we were meeting were all at the federal level, and Rashad is a city manager. So when I was in DC, I went out of my way to call him, to message him on every social media platform I could find. He bought me breakfast, and he sat down and gave me great advice, and he is honestly part of my story and will always be, in addition to everyone that invested in me at the University of Dayton. The advice Rashad gave me when I was there was advice that I took, and it helped me make a decision that really helped to put me where I am now. So things like that are really key. And then the last two things I'll say—just increasing diversity. Of course, we had the Office of Multicultural Affairs; we had BATU; but we also want to go to class and be taught, here and there, by people that look like us. And then two, of course, increasing Black students on campus and just overall diversity. I can attest that when I was there, I think the Black student population rose a couple percentage points. While that seems small, it was huge for us. It was really amazing to just see so many more Black students in the incoming classes.

Daria Graham: So increasing diversity of faculty, increasing the number of Black students, but also intentional strategies to connect Black students with alumni, particularly in their areas of interest. I know that I saw Anita in the room here, who is in alumni services, and I know that they're working on building upon an alumni mentoring program. And I'm looking at Carlos in my window too, and he's nodding his head—Anita Brothers and Carlos Stewart and Amanda Rupp. I know that has already been in conversation, and I hear that it is not just a desire but essential—and the central recommendation from Black alumni.

Angela Heath: Yes, I wanted to piggyback on what Darius was mentioning and also what you guys are working on right now. We've got a great gift that we're using right now: We've got technology to connect

us. Why not use this platform to bring students and specific majors together with alumni, and why not use this platform to give students a realistic understanding of where we can do with our majors. One of my concerns is always to make sure that students are prepared for what the future holds. I've seen too many young people come out of school, wondering, "What in the heck am I going to do?" because jobs are not as plentiful. So I looked at the University career center and the entrepreneurship center, and the first thing I noticed is that there were very few people of color in photographs. I mean that's a very minimal thing, and I know the University does a good job of showing diversity on the front page. But as you go deeper into the website, you've got to show diversity throughout. Now in order to show that, of course, you have to have that. But this is another important thing that sometimes I think we overlook. Affinity groups are great, but what we're really after, not just at the University, but the country as a whole, is a cultural shift. So here's my story: When I was a senior at UD, I took a class in gerontology. I didn't know what it was, but it sounded like it would be easy, so I took the class, and I met a white professor, Professor Baldwin, and I became his work-study assistant. He decided that I was brilliant enough for him to spend his time to pour into. And I almost forgot this, but he poured into me, and he said, "Hey, Miami University has some full scholarships in this field." I was like, "This is the study of aging. I'm not interested in aging. I'm going to build houses in Atlanta." And he talked to me long enough, and he mentored me enough that I said, "OK, well, I'll apply," and I got a full scholarship in an area that was—OK, it was like, "What am I going to do with this?" but it was free education, and I don't turn to free education. So that is exactly what we want in society. We don't want just affinity groups. It is great to have BATU—but what we want is for the University as a whole, for the society as a whole, to be sensitive, so that there are more white professors who reach out to more than just people who perhaps look like them and say, "Hey, here's the opportunity; take a look at it. Let me talk to you after class," and, "You know, there's something about you that seems to be special," or, "I see you're struggling." One of the other things I would encourage the University to use this platform for has to do with entrepreneurship. I would love to be able to see some of the alumni who have started businesses be able to mentor into some of the students. My 10 cents'

worth of crystal ball gazing suggests that as we go into the future, this whole concept of micro business is where we're going. Corporations after COVID-19 are looking at their bottom line, and they're saying, "Hey, let me hire some contractors."

Daria Graham: Thank you for that. One of the things that really comes to mind, as you all are sharing is we also have to figure out how to let alumni know what the University is doing. I know that each of us as panelists got the strategic plan and an update on the anti-racist statement. But there are so many opportunities. I'll give you an example. When I moved to California, I went and signed up as an alumna—I hadn't realized I hadn't really done that—and I got a link to participate in the mentoring program. I thought, "If I don't do this, then I'm not being what I would have asked others to be. So we met two weeks ago, and we went from talking about careers to my edges and hair. It was a beautiful conversation. It was only supposed to be a half-hour. My daughter joined us, and it was an hour and 15 minutes. But that mentoring program was there for a while, and I didn't participate. So how do we beef up and really strengthen getting out the fact that there's a navigation program? That the new director position in MEC is going to have a direct connection to alumni services and advancement? How do we make sure the folks know that there is a direct scholarship—that there's going to be three by the end of the academic year—that solely focus on giving resources to our students of color, particularly our Black students? How do we make sure folks are joining the Flyer Connection program? How do you even know that it's happening? The Black Alumni Town Hall—are we making sure that that all of us are signed up and participating in the fall? We have so many opportunities that we need to make sure are getting out there, so that we have space to really focus on new initiatives that our alumni are speaking to right now. It's really essential in creating pathways. I hear Angela saying there's got to be pathways in the academic curriculum, and Darius saying I not only want to see my reflection during class, but connect with alumni to get to resources. It goes to what Lisa was saying, as well—how are we making them institutionalized and formal and not just by word of mouth, not because Daria told Darius, but because they're actually situated and then marketed and publicized. Dr. Smith, do you want to add to that?

Marcus Smith: I will echo a lot of the sentiment shared by the other panel members. First of all, I commend the University for the steps that they have taken and this action plan that they have put together. Some of the things that I picked out within there—implementing an aggressive strategy to increase diversity and equity among faculty, staff and administrators—was one of the things that I mentioned within my experience in terms of my first year. Seeing that lack of representation really had an impact on me. So that would be beneficial. I know that a number of universities have workshops or just postdoctoral fellowships in which they are building a bridge to becoming a faculty member, so I would highly encourage the University to consider a similar program. Additionally, in the action plan you all mentioned, strengthening the relationship between the University and your Black alumni or alumni of color and maybe creating or, if it exists, building up a program where our Black alumni can mentor current students. If it exists, I just hadn't seen it, and maybe the marketing just needs to be better. I saw that you have a program called PEERS—the program to engage and exchange resources for students—which is amazing, but if you had a layered mentoring program so that you could bring graduate students as well as alumni into that, I think it would be extremely beneficial. And then the last thing that I jotted down was to work with the Dayton African American community. Being a local native to Dayton, one of the programs that was amazing when I was a kid here in Dayton, Ohio was the NYSP, National Youth Sports Program. And I don't know where it went—it was a federally funded program—

Daria Graham: I was an administrator for NYSP!

Marcus Smith: Yes! It was nationally funded, but I think in the early 2000s, the funding got cut for that program. I feel like that program was a huge bridge to the African American community, and that is something that the University should really consider bringing back. I thought it was extremely beneficial.

Daria Graham: Thank you for bringing up NYSP because not until this moment, did I think about how NYSP countered some of our concerns. It's a great example of the opposite of Christmas on Campus. Many of us have had concerns about the “adoption” language that has since been sundowned—this visual of students of color, Black kids particularly, coming on campus and the University in its predominantly

white state doing for kids and then sending them home. But NYSP, many Black kids were coming, learning about the University, participating in the sports camp, and really having an enriched experience, where it wasn't the University bestowing upon them, but rather giving them a place. I never thought about NYSP as the opposite of that kind of visual of Christmas on Campus—what a great suggestion.

So before we open the time up for questions from our attendees, I just want to kind of put together what I'm hearing, as far as recommendations to the University. One being, if it already exists, then there needs to be a way to communicate it. Oftentimes we get into this place where, when we get suggestions, we immediately want to say, "Well, this is what we're doing." Well, if you're doing it, and people don't know about it, and it's not just one or two people but it's a population, there is a breakdown in communication. There are a lot of initiatives that it sounds like many don't know about. But then there's also this piece where we have to move our ideas to action. The idea around pathways, pipelines for our students, particularly with our alumni—it's not enough to just be in the idea phase. It is time we have to come from idea to action and to do it right. So we appreciate those suggestions.

Lisa Rich-Milan: Daria, if I can add one more thing to that: What I didn't hear is that there's three reasons why students go to college. No. 1 is to get a good education. No. 2, you build relationships during that experience. No. 3 is to be at the ready to go to market to get a job. I mean that's the reason why our students go to college. So the one piece that I haven't heard that I don't want to get lost is to make sure that we are teaching—however that is, through alumni, through the faculty, through other students—how do I network? What are the tools that I use? What are the career paths that this degree is going to give me, and then what is it and where is it that I need to go in order to get those experiences? And how do I get connected? Because oftentimes I talk to students who are either referred to me or they come from colleges, and they're familiar with the background, so they want to talk to me. But when you ask them, "What is it that you want to do? Tell me what your background is. Let me see if you have your resume together, and tell me what it is you want to do," oftentimes they'll say, "Well I'm not sure. I thought I wanted to do this; now I'm thinking about that." We have to be very purposeful in

helping our students know what it is they want to do and where they want to do or what their options are. Who would have ever thought that someone going into budget accounting would have ended up going into sales, who would have then ended up becoming a CEO of multiple companies. That pathway was never in my line of sight when I was at UD, but the foundation of the finance piece made that so. So go back to the fundamentals of why your students are here in the first place. It is to get a good education, to build relationships, and to get a good job when they graduate. How are we preparing students to know the direction ahead?

Daria Graham: OK, I want to ask an additional one. What do you wish had been part of your curriculum? I heard you say, Lisa, you were really prepared well as a University of Dayton student, but I'm asking the panelists—is there something that you wish had been added to your coursework?

Marcus Smith: When I was starting off as a freshman, the program that I was in, electrical and computer engineering, was a very course intense program. I think in order to graduate in four years, you were required to take 18 credit hours a semester until you were done. So that was quite the course load. It was a very large load, so I guess I'm not saying that something needs to be added; something needed to be taken away. Because again, I ended up staying a fifth year, because within my first two years, I dropped a course or two, and that immediately set me behind a semester. So if we could build more modular programs with less course work in order to have students be done within four years' time here, that would be my only suggestion.

Daria Graham: I appreciate that, and a reminder that hits different students in different ways, particularly if the scholarships complete at eight semesters.

Marcus Smith: Yeah and that was the other thing—my scholarship did finish at eight semesters. So I had to take out a full tuition loan in order to finish my fifth year of college.

Darius Beckham: I was just going to mention that for me personally, it would have been really helpful to just see more applicable coursework to the city of Dayton. I had the benefit of joining Dayton Civic Scholars, which was very hyper focused on volunteer opportunities and civic

involvement off campus. But I took a state and local government class where we didn't talk about the city itself. As we start to think about how we keep UD's student population in the city of Dayton, in terms of keeping talent in this community, those can play a significant role. Real-life application to the city of Dayton and its budget and the departments that do this and do that—those things should not have to necessarily wait until a master's program before you actually see and connect what you're learning to a decision that the Dayton City Commission just made. Those are things that I think will be really beneficial in the political science department, so that students are actually seeing how those type of decisions actually affect the neighborhoods right off campus and within the city. When I joined the mayor's office, there was a lot that I just didn't know in terms of how the city operates, and those things would have been helpful.

Lisa Rich-Milan: Darius, you bring up a great point. There are two organizations in Dayton—the Chamber of Commerce and Leadership Dayton. I'm a graduate of Leadership Dayton. They focus mainly on organizations and companies and leaders that are coming through that way. However, what an idea if the universities could connect with those two organizations and say, "What can you teach me?" or, "What can you do with students?" If you want to learn about Dayton and you want to keep your talent here, in some cases, getting connected to those two organizations.

Angela Heath: I had no clue what I was going to do with my life. I think a lot of students are that way. I had no guidance. I didn't come from a family that could guide me. I was the first one to go to college in my family. My career counselor provided just the basics—this is what you need to do to graduate. What can I do with this associate degree, this bachelor's degree? The entrepreneurial space—what I see a lot is the schools are pushing primarily tech entrepreneurship, which is great. But for real, most entrepreneurs are in small businesses. So in real life, I believe students need to understand how what they're doing at UD can translate into solo partnership, small business, micro-sized business. I'm going to keep pushing that.

Daria Graham: We have two questions from two students, one is Matthew Bond, and one is from Amira Fitzpatrick. The one from Matthew Bond is in our chat: As an African American, how does it make

you feel that the University of Dayton advocates and champions community and inclusion at the surface, but from your experiences and even from my own, it seems as though African Americans are often alienated from overall campus and academic life?

Angela Heath: I feel good about the fact that we're having this conversation. I think this is a step in the right direction for the University to say, "Let's talk about it. Let's examine some things we can do." But these are hard transitions, not just for UD, but for our society as a whole. So I think the first step is to be open, to hear some recommendations. They won't all fly, but some of them will, and some things will change, and some things are going to change slower than we would all like to see. But I commend the University for even having these conversations, and I feel good when these dialogues are presented in a way where people can be honest and true and try to move things forward.

Lisa Rich-Milan: Looking at Matthew's question in more detail, communication is a two-way street. There's ownership—not only on the University, but there's ownership on the students themselves. If there is something that you are not getting out of your experience at the University of Dayton, you have to identify who it is you can go talk to, first of all to tell them, "Here's my experience so far. What resources do I have?" or, "What can I do to get more engaged or get more connected?" or, "What can the University do to build programs to make sure that I'm not a lost student?" But I think as students you've got to come forward, and as a University, you have got to hear and understand what your students are saying and build those programs to address them. If you're not, this is all in vain.

Darius Beckham: I so very much appreciate what Ms. Lisa Rich-Milan just said because that was exactly my experience. As a freshman, I looked around, and I said there were things that I wanted to see, and we immediately started having those conversations—whether it was Office of Multicultural Affairs staff or Dr. Spina himself, who was there for the majority of my four years. And the changes were made. I mean, of course, I'm not going to pat myself on the back or anything, but I was a bit of a unique student in the sense that I was able to lead from the forefront of BATU as president for the two years that I was there to really organizationally advocate for some of these things. And I recognize that not every student is about to have an organization behind

them or an executive board that is also on the same page as them. However, BATU is still there. And those are the organizations that exist that can collectively advocate for what you need. And that's what was being said: If you're experiencing something, then the chances are other students are too, and there are strategic and very conscious ways of having those changes made at an institutional level. One of the major success stories I can attest to: My first meeting on the BATU board, when I had a leadership position, was, "What do you all want to see? What has been your experience on campus? What are some of the issues that you guys think are present?" And that room was packed out. It was standing room only, and one thing we heard over and over and over again was students feeling culturally isolated. Students having to deal with microaggressions. Students feeling alone in certain campus experiences. Just based on folks in that room not understanding them. It took all of them—and it took about two to three years, but we took that information, and we immediately approached Dr. Spina; we worked with our adviser at the time, Dr. Graham. By the time I graduated, the University adopted a cultural module called U Diversity that every single incoming freshman has to take. And we thought, "You know, that was a win," because it was a way that we could institutionalize and systematically change the fact that students were not learning about diverse people. I mean I can't tell you how many students that I went to UD with that told me they went to all white high schools, or they did not have African American friends, or they had not been in organizations or classes or student groups with minorities. Coming to campus, for minorities, is a culture shock. I think for the majority of students, our white counterparts, it oftentimes is more of the same—and that is kind of conflicting in the sense that there was not, up until that time, a mechanism for making sure that the majority of students were sensitive to the minority of students. And I'm hopeful that it was a step in the right direction. It was something that we were really proud of.

Lawrence Burnley: If I can just weigh in really quickly, I really want to affirm Matthew's question. Darius, to your comment about student learning about peers, about diversity, equity, and inclusion. That's the question for faculty, staff, and administration as well. We are placing a lot of emphasis on building the workforce capacity, beginning with the senior level, to develop the kinds of intercultural competencies and

equity-minded leadership skills in order to effectively advance the goals and objectives that are embedded in the strategic plan—those that are in the Anti-Racism Action Plan. We realized, for instance, with the Flyer Promise scholarship and other initiatives the past five years to achieve greater racial and ethnic diversity at the undergraduate level, we've gone from probably 8% or 9% enrollment of underrepresented students each fall to about 16.5%. And when the Flyer Promise Scholarship was introduced to me, I was excited that there was investment and strategy being developed to impact the undergraduate population. But my question was, "Where's the correlating strategy and investment to impact faculty, staff, and administration demographics to achieve greater racial ethnic diversity in those spaces, along with addressing gender equity?" We now have those goals and objectives embedded there. We have now a position that's actually being searched for now, a new full-time equivalent for an associate director for workforce diversification. It's not enough to bring people into the space of the University, but how do we leverage that, and how do we develop the kinds of capacity to understand what these issues are? Even in terms of looking at ourselves in terms of identifying policies that are themselves racist, if you will, and that create the barriers and that form experiences that have been shared here. So thank you for that. Lisa Rich-Milan talked about student involvement, and we talked a lot about student agency to really push the envelope and really hold administration accountable. I remember Daria and two other students and myself went to a conference—Darius, do you remember the film about Black student activism in the '60s and '70s? You brought that back to campus. These positions that we hold, the fact that MEC exists, the position that I hold—administrators didn't wake up one day and say, "We ought to do this." This is because of student activism and student demands that said, "You know what? You are not delivering on your promise." Thank you for making that point.

Daria Graham: Dr. Burnley, I do want to say this to Matthew and the other students, which I think I'm at a better place to say now that I don't work there. Your question was, "How does it make you feel?" It sucks. It is not OK. There is no excuse for it, particularly when the University is using resources, and we have to believe the University has a good heart—that's what the mission and the values are based on—but when you have experienced something, you don't want to hear that. You want

to hear that the University is taking responsibility and making significant moves to have a response that mirrors the impact. And oftentimes the institution can't do it. Oftentimes what we're feeling at an individual level, an institution can't respond to. But I want you to know as a former student, as an alumna, as a former staff member, there's no excuse for it. But what I think you're hearing people say is that we recognize that it happens, and we are trying our best to use our resources, our networks whatever power or influence we have in our sphere of influence, to make change in the curriculum, to make change for the expectation of all students to go through an educational moment around diversity and inclusion. But I think the University still is struggling and still working toward, "How do we respond in a way that mirrors the impact?" That when students say, "This happened to me," they feel like they've been heard and that there's been a response to it. And I know that the faculty and staff here and, particularly, Dr. Spina—that is their goal. But it is so difficult. When I was going through it, when I was hearing the N-word, when I was being followed on campus, when I had those experiences, when I was mentoring Darius and he was in my office at the point of tears saying, "Something has to give," I want to acknowledge that feeling is not OK. So, I want to make sure we get to Amira.

Amira Fitzpatrick: I know, obviously the University has created our action list of anti-racist steps. My question to our alumni here is: If students were to take it into their own hands, maybe through BATU or another organization, what would you suggest we put on a list of demands for the school? Because there's a lot of schools, we've been talking about this throughout my time researching, there's a lot of schools that have a list of demands that were created by students. So if students were to do that through an organization, what would you suggest we include on that list?

Darius Beckham: Being two years removed and former BATU executive board member, I'm just going to walk through how we handled it. We would first start with gauging what students are still experiencing. Every meeting at the top of the year, we'd say, "How has your experience been? How can the University can grow and better support and enrich Black students experience on campus?" I would start there. I don't want to speak for the current student population, so I think working with those different organizations, whether it's BATU or other minority

student groups, gauging from that level what everyone else is experiencing and then kind of coalescing around some key things that you hear more than once. For us at that time, it was that students are tired of bearing the brunt of cultural ignorance, so we came together and tried to do something about that. I'm not sure what students might say if you would ask that question today. I imagine it might be some of the things that we heard when I was there, but then after you take that list, I would compare it to the University's commitment to anti-racism and try to see any gaps. Are there things that are not being considered in some of these next steps? Are there ways that we can build on that? And make sure everything that is for Black students and minority students is being directly communicated to them.

Daria Graham: I have another question: As a Latina student coming to the University, I faced tremendous cultural shock. Feeling as I was losing my culture and the knowledge of the Spanish language due to inability to find people to speak with, I was very close to transferring, and many of my friends transferred after freshman year because of this culture shock and alienation. What would you recommend to do to prevent future scenarios like this?

Angela Heath: Sometimes when you don't see the solution in front of your face, you have to create it. So if there is an opportunity to gather with other students who feel the same way, who are interested in Spanish language, culture—find the students and create a club, create a group, create something. Talk to whoever it is at the University who may even be able to provide some funding and offer some activities even for the larger population of students. My way of just dealing with things in life is: If it's important enough to you, create it, be a leader, do it yourself, and get support where you can.

Darius Beckham: And you know, just as you said, other students were experiencing that. Some transferred, as you were saying. But there's organizations—or could be organizations on campus—that can tackle some of those things. And just to be short, I think what I've found is even though some of those things sometimes fall on students to try to push for some of those changes, there's not one idea or one initiative or program or conference or anything that we wanted to do while I was there that when we came together and went to administration and said, “Can you fund this? Can you support this? Can we create some

institutional support around this?” where we turned away. It was always accepted. It was always implemented. It was always supported and built up. And it does suck, as Daria was saying, that we have to sometimes bring those things to the University. I think the general sentiment is, sometimes if administration doesn’t recognize the need or is not focused on the need, then, nothing changes, so if there are organizations or opportunities for you all to make your voice heard and have the University respond to that in a sensitive manner, then I would take advantage of that.

Daria Graham: I know it can be lonely first year as well, so as much as possible, please encourage folks to go to MEC. I’ve heard multiple folks on this call saying MEC or OMA or the Afro-American Center was why they stay connected. I believe that’s the same for our Latinx students, for Asian American students. If you can grab them by the arm, it’s going to be easier. But as much as you can, get those students connected. And we will take one last question from Trevor Collier.

Trevor Collier: I’m the interim dean at the School of Business. I wanted to thank all the panelists for taking time to come speak to us today. I think it’s great to hear your perspectives, your experience, while you were students at UD. I learned a lot listening to you all today. I think it’s very interesting how many of you, the piece that you remember that was so helpful was BATU, and that’s something I’m not very familiar with, something I need to look into. But my question is at the unit level. I heard Dr. Smith talk about feeling sort of alone in the School of Engineering. And when I looked at the School of Engineering, they’ve got a Diversity in Engineering Center that has a Multi-Ethnic Engineers program and a Women Engineering program and has an International Engineering Student Engagement program, and I look at that as sort of like an ideal model—something that would be great to have in the business school. But if that wasn’t actually helping people, what could be done within the units to help our multi-ethnic students feel more comfortable and more a part of the community within these units?

Marcus Smith: I’m not sure if the center for diversity and inclusion was there when I was around, but I believe what was there was the Minority Engineering Program, which was something that I didn’t lean on to until later in my tenure at the University of Dayton. But I guess had I known about the resources that were available to me when I first

stepped foot on the campus, that would have alleviated a lot of the stress and pain that I endured just adjusting to the learning curve and getting adjusted to campus life and being in the School of Engineering.

Daria Graham: The Minority Engineering Program was under Laura's direction, and it's now a center with the other organizations all in that diversity center.

Lisa Rich-Milan: Is there anything on the business side, in the political science side? What exists today? Because what we were used to may be very different now. What is there for students to tap into? Is there a Latino group? And if they're not there, maybe that's where we need to start. I believe in surveys. Some will speak their minds in a BATU setting or a group setting, but some will speak more freely in a survey. And then also have what some of the recommendations are because I don't know what truly is at the disposal of a student as far as an organization. I know when I came in, I had to go online and kind of look at all the slew of organizations that did exist, but it didn't necessarily tell me what was diverse and what was not, and maybe that's what we need to tease out—what do we have and what is needed to help close the gap.

Daria Graham: I appreciate you asking that Lisa, because one of the things that I struggle with, Dr. Collier, is that your alumni program in the School of Business—I believe it's a Black alumni program, spearheaded by a current student. It's OK to have a student—it's important for students have those experiences—but students also need to go to class. So my recommendation is actually having that a formalized position. Dr. John Mittelstaedt [the late former dean of the School of Business Administration] started the Multi-Ethnic Business Leaders program, but it's run by a student. That's a great opportunity to have an official professional person staffed in that position.

TC: I agree wholeheartedly, and it's actually something we're working on right now. Dr. Sweet is already providing some leadership and guidance to that group, but you're right, it is currently run by a student, so there's a succession problem that if we can have one person who's going to be there continuously, I think that would be much improved.

Daria Graham: I'm looking at the squares and all of us are saying go—that's a great place to start. I want to capture one last question: What sorts of programs or platforms would you suggest to connect Black

alumni with students, so that we can build that relationship and networking, particularly for people who are passionate about social sciences, humanities, and the arts?” Which also kind of piggybacks on that question of what is there for students not in engineering or STEM. Suggestions?

Lisa Rich-Milan: So let me ask a little bit further with that question. Do they want to get connected earlier in their career of being a student or later, as they are developing to move into more of a career path. Those are two very different questions.

Amira Fitzpatrick: Both. I feel like there’s a lot of resources for STEM majors and Black people in the STEM fields, but I’m sociology and criminal justice, and I feel like there’s a lack of representation from Black alumni in the social sciences, but also in other fields like humanities, art, business. I’m wondering what a good way is for Black students to be able to connect to Black professionals in those fields. Also, what programs can we implement at UD to have those supporting networks while we’re at school here?

Lisa Rich-Milan: I think there’s there are two ways to do that. No. 1, I feel that there is a responsibility to have tools available and to help train students on how—that’s the networking piece. A great tool to use that everyone is aware of in the work environment is LinkedIn. There should be a networking pool already available with your alumni who have said, “I’m agreeable to have a student reach out to me,” and the students should be able to go to that directory with their major to begin that networking relationship. If these networking events are not encompassing all the students’ major curriculums, then then that networking event is not successful. So you’ve got to get your network tools in place so a student can actually go find what to do, where to go, and who could they reach out to. LinkedIn is a great tool because you can filter by university, majors, and careers, and you get people that potentially could help you. Also, University of Dayton has alumni chapters across the country. I think that is another place that we can help students like yourself get more exposed to leaders within your field.

Amira Fitzpatrick: I use LinkedIn quite a bit. I just am still finding it pretty challenging to find particularly Black alumni in things I’m interested in. Through Flyer Connection, I have a mentor, and she’s

wonderful, but she's a white mentor, so her experiences are very different in the professional field than a Black mentor's would be.

Lisa Rich-Milan: Do we have a roster of all our minority graduates?

Daria Graham: It sounds like a great suggestion. And Carlos is giving me the thumbs up. His role is to connect alumni with students, and what a great thing it would be to have a directory of sorts.

Now I would like to give us a snapshot of the resources that you could offer if MEC, Dr. Allen, or a student, or alumni services were to contact you. Is there a subject, a program, any kind of resource, you could offer current students?

Marcus Smith: I am an engineer, so I'm in the same community. I work locally at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base within Air Force Research Laboratory. I did my Ph.D. at Georgia Tech, so those interested in any of those, I am available for mentorship, as a resource, as help with resume building, whatever it may be.

Darius Beckham: If you're interested in any facet of local government, economic development, social services in general, I believe I can be helpful. I'm formerly a legislative aide to Mayor Whaley's office and met a ton of C-suite contacts there. Now I'm a project manager with the Hall Hunger Initiative, so we're focused on fighting food insecurity in Dayton. Really, anything that is related to social sciences, I'm sure I can connect you with the right people and make an introduction.

Lisa Rich-Milan: I'm in pharma biotech labs, which is also considered diagnostics and clinical trials, so we could explore strategic planning and thinking, sales, marketing, branding, finance, profit and loss statements, accounting for business, resume building, building your brand as a professional, operations, running a packaging line, quality, and regulatory affairs.

Angela Heath: I will be happy to help students with crafting their intros—their elevator pitch speeches. I do coaching around self-employment and micro-business entrepreneurship, so anybody thinking of side hustles and starting their own thing. I also help a lot of young people take their area of interest along with any other passions and create something new. It's all about using what you have and communicating it well.

Daria Graham: I can put my hands on 100 years' worth of alumni. I believe in the five degrees of separation so whatever you need, whatever field you're in, I think that the University of Dayton Black alumni are so connected that we could find you a resource in anything you need. Thank you all for your time.

