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## At Home

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# At Home : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Monday June 28, 2021

## At Home

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By Eric F. Spina

It never gets old. And never will.

The view of the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception as I arrive to campus in the quiet early morning is beautiful: whether shrouded in fog, covered in snow, or reflecting early daybreak. It is inspiring: I am part of a faith-filled institution with an important mission. It is meaningful: it is the heart of the place that I have come to call home.

Karen and I will celebrate five years at the University of Dayton on Thursday. And I do mean \*celebrate\* because these past five years have been the most meaningful, rewarding, and enjoyable period of my professional life (save for the challenges that so many have had to overcome during the pandemic). You graciously welcomed us into the Flyer family, helped us learn about the history of this extraordinary Catholic and Marianist university, and demonstrated with your actions the values that have long shaped UD's quality, impact, and reputation.

The members of the Society of Mary and the Marianist Educational Associates helped us appreciate the Marianist charism and modeled for us how it animates learning, teaching, research, and engagement at UD. We have internalized the values that UD holds dear.

Across the country, alumni from every generation shared stories with us that made clear that a UD education is a passport to a fulfilling personal and professional life, a life of making a difference for others.

From faculty and staff on campus, we learned that the focus at UD is more than ensuring that our students land jobs and acceptances to graduate school when they graduate. They help students find their vocations that draw on their passion, faith, and skills. Every day they create an environment that nurtures and supports students to become the best versions of themselves — and become beacons of light in the world.

And the students? Well, the students have welcomed us warmly — in their homes in the student neighborhood, into the Red Scare student section at basketball games, and in other ways large and small across campus. They have shown us how Flyers build the spirit of community.

We've experienced great days worthy of celebration — commencement, big athletic victories on the court and the field, announcements of major gifts to support student learning — and difficult days in which we shared our sorrow and strengthened our commitment to one another after the death of a student or colleague, a bias incident, or the start of the pandemic.

On those memorable days as well as the quieter days in between, I have been so happy to be “home” at UD. Even during this challenging period, there's no where else I would rather be. Over these five years, I've come to understand the remarkable nature of the University of Dayton — and its place in the world.

So, thank you. Thank you for welcoming Karen and me into the UD community, for teaching us how to be Flyers, and for inspiring us with the difference you each make every day in the world around you. We are blessed to call ourselves Flyers Forever!