



University of Dayton

Addressing reason and faith in a smaller world

BY NANCY OAKLEY

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Jesse Philips
Humanities Center



Since 1850, the University of Dayton has fueled the growth of the southwestern Ohio town that bears its name.

Whether in engineering, materials research, biology, early childhood education, physical therapy, law, or a multitude of opportunities, UD has educated minds, and in keeping with its Marianist Catholic tradition, hearts, as well.

Today, the university's ethos, "Lead. Learn. Serve.," is taking root in other countries and cultures. But as the school expands its presence internationally, it faces the challenge of sustaining the Catholic principles that shaped it. How can the institution blend globalization and faith in the 21st century?

The answer, according to Vice President for Mission and Rector, Father James Fitz, S.M., is healthy dialogue. Where else, Fitz asks, but at a faith-based university can one invite discussion on differences in faith and its place in intellectual thought and progress? Fitz points out that the Marianist mindset is conducive to addressing topics that in other environments might be touchy if not taboo, partly because of its philosophical beginnings.



With the opening of the University of Dayton China Institute, globalization is much more than just a topic of discussion.

“The Marianist tradition grew out of the French Revolution and a call to ‘Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,’” he explains. The order’s founder, a priest named William Joseph Chaminade, defied a constitutional order for the secularization of French society, or as Fitz puts it, “an attempt to separate faith and reason.” Chaminade would establish the Marianist concept while in exile, but the revolution’s ideal of fraternity would stick.

“We apply the term ‘fraternity’ to mean ‘community,’” Fitz says. “Building community on campus, being a place where people are welcomed. Having a spirit in residence communities, in solidarity with others. How we treat one another, live with one another, is important.” Especially in a place with more than 1,500 students from 40 countries, and growing international programs.

Creating such an atmosphere of respect and civility starts in the classroom. At UD, every student will take the Common Academic Program: religion and philosophy, communica-

tions and English, history and social sciences, and arts and natural sciences. Cross-boundary courses (team-taught by professors in different disciplines) are key to this integrated learning. All of these contribute to our understanding of what it means to be human.

The idea, Fitz says, is that learning about the human condition can bolster leadership and service. Hence, the university’s many clubs reach out to the larger Dayton community in various ways, whether assisting a soup kitchen or working on a project addressing trafficking of women in the state of Ohio.

UD students will be further engaged as Catholic organizations around the world celebrate the Year of Faith (October 11, 2012–November 2013), a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, in which church leaders addressed the role of Catholic traditions in a modern world.

The Medium is the Message

For Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS, D.

Min, discussion of faith is, quite literally, a full-time job — and one that takes her to every corner of the globe, including southeast Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. As director of the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives, she oversees UD’s long-distance Catholic education programs for Marianist communities in the U.S. and abroad. In addition to worldwide travel, Zukowski’s responsibilities extend to cyberspace, a natural home for the early adopter. “I was in cable TV in the 1970s, when no one thought it had a future,” she laughs. No one except the forward-looking University of Dayton, which began producing programs for the Catholic Bishops of America with Zukowski as host. This stint lasted throughout the ’80s and early ’90s, when UD began considering another medium for outreach: the Internet.

In 1995, the university formed the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF). “We started with one course and one diocese — Cincinnati,” Zukowski recalls. By 2000, the university wondered if there was a future in this new method of learning. Twelve years, 60 dioceses, and 175 people in 40 countries later, the answer is a resounding “yes.” Partnering with the dioceses, VLCFF designs courses and certificate programs to meet the communities’ needs. There are courses for people who want to teach religion in their ministry, for teachers in Catholic schools, courses in scripture and spirituality, another in social justice, and among the most popular, a curriculum for newcomers to Catholicism (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, or RCIA) who want to learn more about their faith.

“Anyone, anywhere, can take our courses,” says Zukowski. And they continue to gain popularity: VLCFF’s latest partners include the Vicariate of Southern Arabia, the Archdiocese of Westminster, UK, and the Archdiocese of Adelaide, Australia. “Next year we’re expecting between 8,000 and 10,000 students,” Zukowski estimates. “In 2000, we had maybe 50.”

As if bringing students to the content of new media isn’t enough, Zukowski also brings the skills of new media to students. For 18 years, she has added her energies to the Caribbean School for Catholic Communication. Working with the Diocese of Port of Spain, Trinidad, Tobago, the school sends students to an intensive, three-year program on all facets of media: journalism, radio, television, the Internet, and social media. “The students come to UD, go



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—Father James Fitz, vice president for mission and rector

back to their home base and use what they’ve learned, and return for assessment,” explains Zukowski, adding that the coursework helps them become not only spiritual leaders but also leaders in communication.

The Next Frontier

This past August, the school celebrated the grand opening of the University of Dayton China Institute (UDCI), a new research facility in China’s Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP). Just 75 miles from Shanghai, the massive, 111-square-mile complex is a joint venture

From above: Davis Center for Portfolio Management, where students have the opportunity to manage more than \$14 million of the school’s endowment; Chapel of the Immaculate Conception



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Top-Notch

- University of Dayton is ranked as a top-tier university nationally and one of the best Catholic universities (*U.S. News & World Report*).
- UD is considered one of “the Best A+ schools for B students” (*U.S. News & World Report*).
- UD is in the Top 20 among student entrepreneur programs (*The Princeton Review, Entrepreneur*).
- The legal-writing program at UD’s School of Law places 21st (*U.S. News & World Report*).
- Ranked 10th in the category “These Students Love These Colleges” and 16th for having the happiest students (2013 edition of *The Best 377 Colleges*, published by *The Princeton Review*).



Eight of UD’s 15 sports programs made the post-season, 26 Flyers were first-team all-conference, and six earned All-America honors.

The school also opened the Cronin Athletics Center in 2011–12. The \$2.4 million renovation project benefitted every sports program and includes a state-of-the-art training room. The center is the latest part of a major facility upgrade for athletics. In the last ten years, UD has invested \$35 million in its athletics facilities, with \$29 million coming from private donations and corporate support.

The crown jewel of those facilities is the University of Dayton Arena, home to the men’s and women’s basketball teams and to the NCAA’s “First Four.” The arena, which has hosted more NCAA men’s basketball tournament games than any other venue, helped make history when President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron became the first heads of state to attend an NCAA tournament game.

“UD Arena is a very special place,” men’s basketball coach Archie Miller says. Miller, whose team has made the post-season the last five years, played in the ACC and has coached in the Pac-10 and the Big 10. “I’ve been to just about every big-time college basketball building in the country, and our arena stacks up with any of them.”

When we bring a recruit to the arena, there’s a moment where people just stop and look around. They don’t say anything.

—Jim Jabir, women’s basketball coach

Left: Flyer basketball is the hottest ticket in town; below: the new Caldwell Street apartments blend with the student neighborhood that surrounds campus

between China and Singapore and home to one-third of the world’s *Fortune* 500 companies. Since its start in 1994, SIP has seen several universities from around the world establish a presence there; the University of Dayton was the first U.S. institution to join them.

As Assistant Provost and Executive Director Weiping Wang notes, the grand opening is part of the university’s overall vision for the future of education. “I’ve been working with my colleagues at UD to build UDCI as a platform to integrate global education into a UD experience,” she says.

It was a natural step for UD. Its President, Daniel J. Curran, had cultivated professional ties to China after teaching at the University of Nanjing 25 years ago. And then, of course, there is UD’s century-old School of Engineering, whose multiple degree programs and inventors such as Nobel Prize winner Charles Pederson helped build a sterling reputation.

One of the school’s standouts is its innovation center, in which multi-disciplinary teams of students partner with companies such as

BMW and GE to develop or modify products. Why not replicate the model in China? The advantages of having an innovation lab, says Tony Saliba, dean of the School of Engineering, are “diversity of thoughts collaborating with researchers from various universities in China, and working with American and international companies in SIP to solve problems that are unique to Chinese markets.”

International expansion also feeds Saliba’s vision for tomorrow’s engineers. “It’s critical to integrate as part of our education not only the development of technical, innovation, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills but also the global and cultural education that would allow our students to compete at the global level,” he says.

That’s not to say UDCI is committed solely to research. A six-week academic program slated for summer 2013 will include courses in project management, innovative design, and entrepreneurship. As for the Marianist ethos, Wang cites service-learning opportunities for students, in-service training in theology and philosophy, and outreach to local communities

PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) BY MATTHEW LESTER/PHOTOGRAPHY; BY LARRY BURGESS; BY PERFECT PERSPECTIVE AERIALS

and Catholic churches, among other examples.

It’s a phenomenon that Saliba experienced firsthand when he arrived on UD’s campus from Lebanon at age 18 with little English speaking skills. “The faculty at UD and the Marianist brothers and priests provided me not only with a wonderful education, but they nurtured and mentored me,” he recalls. “It was then that I truly experienced the American spirit of selfless giving and servant leadership.” A spirit, Saliba believes, that UD’s international students will carry back to their home countries along with the realization “that we are all children of the same human family.”

Three Cheers for the Red and Blue!

The university’s commitment to excellence is also evident in athletics, where Flyer student-athletes are as good as anyone at combining competitive and academic achievements.

In 2011–12 alone, four teams — women’s soccer, volleyball, and basketball, and men’s baseball — won Atlantic 10 titles and represented the A-10 in the NCAA tournament.





Clockwise from below: women's soccer celebrating another Atlantic 10 title; 90 percent of students live on campus; digging the scene at a volleyball game



It's one of those hallowed sports venues, as women's basketball coach Jim Jabir notes in the Flyers' 2011 annual report: "When we come here with a recruit, there's a moment where people just stop and look around. They don't say anything. Then we talk about the history and all the things that have been done here."

Part of that history is the "Flyer Faithful," UD's legendary fan base. So enthusiastic are these red-and-blue-clad fans that Dayton has ranked in the top 35 in attendance in each of the arena's 42 years, and CBS has named Flyers men's basketball the country's "most underrated atmosphere."

University Vice President and Director of Athletics Tim Wabler knows the primary reason for the Flyers' success.

"Clearly the key to everything is people," says Wabler. "We have an excellent group of coaches who not only recruit the

type of motivated young people you find on our teams, but inspire them to play at a championship level. Behind them are some of the best fans any team could ask for. Without all of this, what we accomplished last year and what we will accomplish in the future would not be possible."

Together with competitive success and academic excellence, another high standard that the Flyers willingly adhere to is the Marianist tradition of service — as in some 2,000 combined hours volunteered by the school's athletes each year.

Many of the teams, such as men's and women's soccer, hold youth clinics. And the women's volleyball team again showed its strength with a "Spike-Out Bullying" event that included exhibition matches for elementary school students and educating them about bullying. "Word got out, and now other schools are running their own anti-bullying events at their matches," says volleyball coach Kelly Sheffield.

The event — or perhaps even more so, its influence — is yet another example of the University of Dayton's Marianist vision: to create a community of dignity and respect, not only within its confines but beyond.

For more information, visit udayton.edu.

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