

University of Dayton Fall Faculty Meeting
Paul H. Benson, Interim Provost
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Embodying UD in a Time of Transition

Section One: Our journeys, our questions

At our opening convocation this fall for our new first-year students, International Studies and Human Rights Studies major Anamaria Karrels and Dr. Dan Fouke from the Department of Philosophy offered academic challenges to the UD Class of 2019. Each of them described ways in which their respective experiences at UD, as a student and a faculty member, occasioned profound journeys of exploration and discovery that they would not have anticipated when they began study and work here. For Anamaria, UD's first recipient of the prestigious Thomas Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship, this involved the power of her international experiences; for Dan Fouke, this involved a reorientation of his scholarship and teaching from 17th and 18th century European philosophy to environmental philosophy and community-engaged research and learning in Dayton's neighborhoods. Anamaria's and Dan's remarks spoke to our first-year students' natural questions about who they are, where they will head, and who they will become, questions naturally infused with a desire to achieve a sense of belonging and meaningful contribution in our university community, as well as to attain their own educational goals.

Likewise, many of the new members of our faculty whom we welcome and honor this afternoon entertain similar questions about where their UD journeys will take them, what difference they will make in the lives of their students and colleagues and in the wider world of their academic fields, who they will become, both professionally and personally, in and through their UD experience. I am beginning my thirty-first year on the UD faculty, and these are questions I continue to ponder for myself. I will suggest this afternoon that these are also important questions for all of us collectively and for the University as a whole to

continue to examine. Questions about who we are, where we are headed, who we will become should be ever present in the life of a vibrant university; but these questions are especially salient for us in the current moment. And these questions elicit a particularly important call this year for faculty and staff agency and leadership throughout the University . . . or so I shall suggest.

In last year's opening faculty meeting, I quipped about being provost in-the-meanwhile, provost for-the-time-being, in virtue of my interim status. I remain the provost of the-in-between and possibly may be so for some time, an irony it is difficult to entertain without smiling. Yet this very feature of my own position serves as a valuable reminder that we are always in-the-meanwhile, stretched between the unalterable past and the not-yet-existent future, confronted with the task of discovering or defining who we are, what we aim to become, and what of value we might contribute. In some important respects, all of us are, at the beginning of each new academic year, new faculty members. We are, in our 166th year, a new university, in the sense that we are a university with the capacity to reflect anew on who the University of Dayton is, where the University of Dayton should head, what of value UD can distinctively contribute, and to pursue this reflection in light of our university's rich history, mission, and educational values. We also ponder these questions because of our deep care for this institution, for one another, and for our students, a care inspired by our Marianist colleagues.

Section Two: Common themes and academic priorities

We have done significant work over the past three years to articulate in fresh ways that remain responsive to our institutional mission who we are and where we are headed. It would be worthwhile to pause briefly to take stock of these articulations of institutional purpose.

In 2013, a task force on mission and identity co-chaired by the Ferree Professor of Social Justice and Past University President Bro. Ray Fitz and by Paul Vanderburgh,

Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs, issued a wide-ranging report,¹ following two years of work, that identified five important themes for understanding the distinctive character and fundamental aims of the University of Dayton. These so-called “common themes” are: 1) excelling in integrated learning and scholarship; 2) searching for truth grounded in faith and reason; 3) educating for practical wisdom; 4) building community across diversity; and 5) partnering for the common good. These common themes have deep roots in the oft-cited 1999 document, *Characteristics of Marianist Universities*, which sought to describe five essential pillars of Marianist education across the three Marianist universities in the U.S.

These five common themes remind us of some features of our work and aims as a comprehensive university that, while not unique, do set us apart from many of our peer institutions. For instance, they point to a dual commitment to quality teaching and also to influential, socially responsible research, scholarship, and artistic production. They remind us that, at UD, the enterprises of research and teaching are, more often than not, closely intertwined, not merely in our use of time but also in the ways in which we conceptualize the core elements of our work. We are, for the most part, teacher-scholars.

In addition, the five common themes remind us that the University was founded as a community that welcomes the calls and claims of faith in our search for knowledge, even as we also recognize that we are not—nor do we seek to be—a community that only has room for a single creed or faith tradition. The common themes evince the University’s commitment to engage the human community and the world as it is so that we might wisely and faithfully transform them for social justice, for mutual well-being and flourishing. That is to say, while we are a scholarly community that embraces and engages the plurality of ways in which human beings conceive of purpose and meaning in their lives, we are also a university that, among other things, understands learning and scholarship as being allied to

¹ *Common Themes in the Mission and Identity of the University of Dayton*, Winter 2013.

a normative mission, namely, educating for justice, peace and reconciliation, building community among people, and modelling creative, adaptive change through which all may find greater purpose and fulfillment.

This understanding of who we are as a Catholic and Marianist university informed work over the past Spring Term on an updated and more tightly crafted strategic plan for the period of the presidential transition, 2015-17 (Dan Curran's final year as president and the first year of the new president's term). This work, carried out in consultation with the Academic Senate, the Educational Leadership Council, and the Board of Trustees, took the five primary goals of the University's 2006 strategic plan and focused and updated the actionable initiatives and tactics that give substance to those goals.²

While this plan remains an expansive document, like the comprehensive 2006 strategic plan, the Office of the Provost has identified seven university-wide priorities for academic affairs that should guide our work and shape many of our financial commitments over the coming years. The first priority is to increase our faculty by 50 new lines, primarily in tenure-line positions, by August, 2019. If searches for these positions are conducted wisely, they will improve the quality of teaching, academic advising, and mentoring of students, sustain active faculty involvement in curricular and pedagogical development and renewal, and enhance UD's educational value and reputation. While our full-time faculty has grown by 18% since 2005, from 446 to 526, our total full-time undergraduate enrollment has grown even more quickly, by 19.3%, even as expectations for faculty work with students in advising, experiential learning, global and intercultural education, and research also have risen. Adding 50 new faculty lines will enable us to reduce our student-faculty ratio by one full point and also will increase our capacity to take on the other major academic priorities that have been identified.

² The complete text of the newly updated strategic plan may be found at:
<https://www.udayton.edu/president/_resources/img/transitional-strategic-plan.pdf>

I am pleased to report that 13 new faculty lines were added for the current academic year. 25.5% of our newly hired faculty occupy new faculty positions, and 32% of our new tenure-track hires are in new faculty lines. An additional 10 new faculty lines have been approved for searches this year, in addition to 32 searches to fill existing faculty lines. Of the 10 new lines approved for searches, 90% are in tenure-line positions, and one is a conversion of an existing lecturer position. We have made an excellent start toward reaching our faculty-expansion goal by 2019.

I am grateful to all of you who have invested so much time in the work of our faculty search committees. I know that this is time-consuming work squeezed into already busy schedules, sometimes at inconvenient times of the year. Yet few tasks are more important than departments' work on faculty searches. This work builds the foundation for who and what UD will become. This work is also especially important for progress in extending the diversity of our faculty across multiple dimensions. While I am pleased that 55% of this year's new faculty hires are women and 18.4% of the new faculty who declared their race or ethnicity are non-white, we must continue to make concerted efforts to diversify our faculty demographically, culturally, and intellectually. I am eager to support such efforts.

A second leading academic priority reflects the work of three successive faculty and staff task forces since 2012: we will aim to advance high-impact experiential learning, mentored by faculty and staff, as a signature element of a UD undergraduate education. We are beginning this term the process of adding two central resource persons for experiential learning in Associate Provost Deb Bickford's area, along with a new faculty fellow position in the Learning Teaching Center, to strengthen coordination, reduce logistical strains, and improve the quality and consistency of faculty development for forms of experiential learning as diverse as internships, coops, community-engaged learning, and undergraduate research. Within a university culture for experiential learning that will remain decentralized, fundamentally under the direction of departments and programs, professional schools and the College, we will invest in additional staffing and operational

funding in order to realize more consistent standards for the mentoring of experiential learning and to coordinate and assess more effectively the educational outcomes of students' learning outside the traditional classroom.

Third, due to substantial decline of our overall graduate enrollments—a 15% decline in graduate student credit hours since 2009-10 alone, due to increasing competition faced by some of our longstanding graduate programs, especially the MBA, and in light of the growing demand nationwide for master's level degrees, it is a very high priority for us to develop new graduate and professional programs and to strengthen some of our most successful existing graduate programs, both for the sake of securing enrollment and to continue to elevate our academic reputation. The addition of very successful Physical Therapy and Physician Assistant programs, as well as strong growth in some master's programs in STEM disciplines, has not been sufficient to offset the overall deficit in our graduate enrollment. With this fall's record for full-time undergraduate enrollment of over 8,200 students and accompanying strains on student housing, it is clear that future opportunities for enrollment growth will lie primarily in the graduate arena. UD's capability to create graduate programs whose curricula cross departmental lines and potentially reach across unit boundaries should enable us to explore valuable opportunities for graduate program creation that also can support new investments in faculty and, in some cases, advance related research initiatives.

In addition to the University investments in faculty, assistantships, facilities, and operations that are considered when proposed budgets are evaluated for any new graduate program, I began last year a seed grant program for the College and the professional schools to obtain, on a competitive basis, initial funding to explore new interdisciplinary graduate or research initiatives. Most units received a portion of that funding. For instance, these funds currently support exploration of a graduate initiative in the School of Education and Health Sciences to better prepare future faculty to teach in health sciences programs. These funds also support the creation of an Energy Informatics Center in the School of

Engineering and the expansion of a research initiative conceived by Dr. Shawn Swavey in the Department of Chemistry in Supramolecular Applied Research and Technology (or SMART) that involves faculty in at least three departments across the College and the School of Engineering. The call for a second round of such grants was announced to the deans last week. In addition, new investments in staffing and operating funding to support faculty development in e-learning are being made, primarily with an eye toward facilitating new on-line or blended format graduate course work. Digitally-based course formats and pedagogies are increasingly important for meeting students' needs in professionally oriented graduate programs.

The other four leading priorities for academic affairs that emerge from the updated strategic plan are: expansion of programming for post-tenure professional faculty development, especially related to Catholic and Marianist mission and to support faculty advancement in rank; expansion of student participation in opportunities for global and intercultural learning, especially through semester-long education abroad; continued improvement in recruitment, retention, and persistence to graduation of domestic minority students; and implementation of systems of strategic and operational assessment that equip us to manage expenses more efficiently and recoup funds for investment in strategic initiatives. In particular, we aim to increase participation in education abroad and intercultural immersions by 25% in three years through enhanced collaboration among the Center for International Programs, Enrollment Management, and Student Development. You will hear very soon about a new initiative to promote Fall Term education abroad, accompanied by a new intercultural leadership program that gives students preferred housing upon their return to UD and also aids them in reflecting upon the integration of their international experience with their course of study.

After recruiting two of our historically largest incoming classes of African-American and Latino/a students for 2014 and 2015, following a dramatic decline in 2013, we now aim to improve sophomore-to-senior retention rates for these student populations so that they

will track closely the retention rates of UD's white majority student population. Evidence over the past year suggests that we have made an excellent start at progressing toward that goal, as we have reached an all-time high in first-to-second-year retention of 91% and also have seen significant improvements in second-to-third year student retention, along with decreases in the amount of student borrowing across all bands of family household income, primarily due to UD's four-year tuition pricing guarantee.

These objectives are being supported by our recently established assistant dean position in student success and a newly created position that will bridge the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Offices of Learning Resources in the LTC. As you already should be aware, we have also invested in new software to create, through the Student Success Network, more effectively communicated and well-coordinated early warnings about students facing academic or other difficulties. Please make full use of the Student Success Network to assist our students in staying on track to timely graduation. In the wake of Jack Ling's retirement in July as Executive Director for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, we have elevated this role to an Associate Vice President position that will include membership on Provost's Council. A national search for this position will be co-chaired by Amy Anderson in the CIP and Associate Dean Thaddeus Hoffmeister in the School of Law. In response to open forums that Associate Provost Carolyn Roecker Phelps hosted last week to seek input for this search, I have decided to make this position a direct report to the Provost. We are also exploring whether to invest in a national search firm to aid in recruitment for this position.

Finally, expanded recruitment of diverse student populations, including students from a wider range of socioeconomic backgrounds, will be aided by a new collaboration with Sinclair Community College, scheduled to begin next fall, that will create a dual Sinclair/UD admission status for selected Sinclair students, on-site UD advising support for those students, and clearly articulated degree pathways into programs in the College and the schools of Business, Education, and Engineering.

Section Three: Other on-going academic initiatives

Our office continues to work closely with the deans and vice presidents on a number of other, on-going academic initiatives. I only have time to touch briefly upon a few of these. Following the forums I facilitated in April and May to discuss research opportunities and obstacles with faculty and Research Institute staff, Vice President for Research John Leland and I are working to strengthen support and oversight structures for faculty research and to incent greater collaboration among faculty and the Research Institute. Please take the opportunity to attend some of the talks that will be presented by a selection of some of our most active faculty and staff researchers next Thursday at the day-long STARS Symposium in the Science Center auditorium.

The Office of the Provost, the LTC, and many academic units continue to commit significant effort to developing, implementing, assessing, and improving new courses for the Common Academic Program. Now beginning its third year of formal implementation, CAP will have received by May, 2016 nearly \$1.2 million in funding that has gone largely to faculty grants and faculty development support. We are committing nearly \$200,000 this year alone for course development grants on sustainability, in collaboration with the Hanley Sustainability Institute, for grants to design and evaluate courses for the Faith Traditions CAP component, and for stipends for faculty members in the Humanities and University Libraries to implement a new model for assessment of the Humanities Commons component of CAP. We also are piloting two groups of *Habits of Inquiry and Reflection* Fellows this year in order to generate materials to aid faculty in developing curricula for the learning goals of Vocation and of Practical Wisdom. The Common Academic Program continues to be a top priority for distinguishing the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning that we offer as a Catholic and Marianist institution. When the Higher Learning Commission accreditation team visits campus in 2017, we will want to demonstrate the care we have taken in

deploying CAP thoughtfully and imaginatively and the intellectual challenge that the program offers for students and faculty alike.

I also am working closely with the deans to improve academic facilities for research and teaching, and to enhance conditions for students' experiential learning. We hired the acclaimed architectural firm EYP to work with Dean Jason Pierce and the College's science departments to consult on the creation of a master plan that will be capable of directing future phases of work to improve the Science Center. Dean Eddy Rojas and I have begun serious discussions about funding to support the next phase of renovation on the first floor of Kettering Labs, as recommended in the School of Engineering's year-long strategic planning process. Dean Kathy Webb also will begin working with her faculty and staff to plan the next phases of renovations for Roesch Library. Active fundraising continues for other high-priority academic facilities projects, including a new performing arts center and the renovation of Chaminade Hall.

One of the most exciting cross-unit planning processes on campus during the past year has been the collaboration of MIS/Operations Management/Decision Sciences, Computer Science, and Electrical and Computer Engineering, facilitated by Associate Provost and CIO Tom Skill, to build a plan for a new cybersecurity center in Miriam Hall space that formerly housed the University's data center. To be funded by a combination of external gifts and internal University funds, the cybersecurity center has garnered tremendous academic interest across multiple schools for its potential in teaching, research, and professional development, as well as eliciting significant interest from numerous corporate and governmental partners throughout our region.

Section Four: Campus climate and institutional values

Last year at this time I devoted most of my remarks to sharing data from the spring, 2014 academic climate survey and outlining some of the steps that the Provost's office, the academic deans, and UDRI were planning to take to address serious concerns reflected in

those data. The work of improving our workplace climate for faculty and staff continues, with particular attention to realizing more fully in University decision-making and planning processes the distinctively Marianist values of inclusive community-building, dialogue, mutual respect, and faith-filled mission that are such widely cherished ideals for our campus. As we did last year, members of the Provost's Council and I will continue to update you on the efforts we are making to instantiate our Marianist values as fully as possible in University structures and processes and in the quality of academic leadership. For today, I will simply say that, in my judgment, extensive and meaningful progress has been made over the past year on many fronts, both with respect to consultation on academic and educational initiatives, as well as with respect to many other issues of interest to faculty and staff, including the structure of health care benefits and the scope of the tuition remission benefit. We have not only worked harder to invite and attend to faculty and staff concerns; we also have made substantive adjustments in University policy and practice in response to many concerns.

For example, I believe that the quality of the two dean search processes we conducted last year, the dean reappointment evaluation process currently underway for the School of Business Administration, and the consistently active and substantive dialogue with administrators that has transpired over the past year through the Academic Senate and the Educational Leadership Council exhibit features of genuine consultation and collaborative deliberation that we all prize. I am particularly grateful to Senate President Carissa Krane and colleagues on ECAS and the ELC for their commitment to prioritize Marianist values as we considered new policies and examined multiple perspectives in the University community about important decisions ranging from the appointment and evaluation of senior administrators to the modification of class schedules or the revision of our nondiscrimination policies.

As we continue to make concerted efforts to strengthen at UD the environment of shared governance that has, historically, done so much to build the academic quality and

reputation of American higher education, we will evaluate our progress in part by conducting next spring another campus-wide administration of ModernThink's comprehensive climate survey. We will share much more information about that survey, both before and after its administration, in order to make this an occasion for meaningful reflection on the improvements we are making in realizing our core values through the quality of our daily practices, as well as for identifying dimensions of the university community that continue to warrant closer scrutiny.

The extensive, campus-wide consultation that the Enrollment Management and Marketing division is hosting next week, through forums facilitated by partners at Dartlet, LLC, will afford a valuable opportunity for every member of the UD community to voice views about our primary institutional strengths and values, character and aspirations, views about who we are and where we should head. These listening sessions will be especially valuable as we prepare for a presidential transition, begin the process of conceiving a new university strategic plan, and construct our self-study for the Higher Learning Commission accreditation visit.

Section Five: How we embody UD

Even a casual survey of recent books on the current state of higher education in the U.S. confirms that we face a period of tremendous change in virtually all dimensions of university life. Consider Goldie Blumenstyk's *American Higher Education in Crisis?* (Oxford, 2014); Kevin Carey's *The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere* (Riverhead Books, 2015); Clayton Christensen and Henry Eyring's *The Innovative University: Changing the DNA of Higher Education from the Inside Out* (Jossey-Bass, 2011); Michael Kirst and Mitchell Stevens' *Remaking College: The Changing Ecology of Higher Education* (Stanford, 2015); and Jeffrey Selinger's *College (Un)Bound: The Future of Higher Education and What It Means for Students* (New Harvest, 2013)—all of which were

mentioned in the summer issue of the Association of Governing Boards' *Trusteeship* magazine, an issue bearing the disconcerting title, "Dealing with Disruption."

We also face significant change at UD, most evidently through a presidential transition, but also through notable transitions among our vice presidents and deans, major transitions on our faculty—where 8-10% of our faculty have been newly hired each year for the past five years—through significant changes in the composition and motivations of the student body, and through substantial changes in curriculum and the perceived purposes of a university degree, not to mention profound changes in the financing and legal regulation of higher education. As we contemplate the familiar Marianist dictum that we educate for adaptation and change, we are forced to acknowledge that our guiding educational values as a Catholic and Marianist, American comprehensive university call each of us to shape the distinctive character and future of UD. If we are to become the greatest university we can be, then each of us must contribute actively and thoughtfully to the processes of imagining, planning, creating, examining, and advancing the University of Dayton of the future. My colleagues and I on the Provost's Council have certain special responsibilities, in virtue of our roles, to carry out this work of envisioning the academic substance and quality of the next phase of UD's history. Likewise, each academic unit, each department and program, each university governing body, each member of our faculty and staff has special responsibilities to envision and strive to realize what we will become as a university, how we will make our greatest contributions to learning and scholarship.

I should emphasize that the challenge of envisioning UD's future in an era of profound change and adaptation is not primarily a matter of figuring out how we can become more like an elite private university or a highly selective public flagship university. Yes, we can learn important things from research universities such as Yale, Berkeley, and Chicago, and also from liberal arts colleges such as Amherst or Pomona or the College of the Holy Cross. But it would be a fundamental error to imagine that the most fruitful and academically powerful vision for UD can be pulled off the shelf, as it were, in an attempt

merely to replicate features of prestigious universities that are characterized partly by the degree of their exclusiveness and the extent of their wealth. As Michael Crow and William Dabars note in their important new book, *Designing the New American University* (Johns Hopkins, 2015), the “elite institutions that comprise the putative gold standard in American higher education . . . constitute a prototype that to a remarkable extent remains impervious to change, aloof from social needs, and, ironically, inaccessible to the majority of Americans with the talent and ability to learn . . .” (60). Different universities possess notably different gifts, capacities, and missions; they serve different student populations, attract different types of faculty, and are embedded in different regional, national, and international communities. Our job is to envision and seek strategically to realize the best University of Dayton we can conceive, and to do so while understanding and appreciating our distinctive purposes, history, academic character and culture. I am reminded, again, of our new class of first-year students. Their task is not to seek to become the generically best students they can be. Their UD journey should enable them to develop and grow *in their own ways*, in manners that make sense for their own life stories and for the particular callings and academic passions that they discover here.

In other words, the questions all members of the UD community face, individually and collectively, about who we are, where we are headed, and who we will become, are questions that demand more than shared governance—as important as that is. They are questions that demand more than appropriately rigorous academic expectations and challenging aspirations—as essential they are. These questions demand more than a meaningful sense of belonging to an inclusive, respectful, and egalitarian community—as rightly treasured such community is. These are questions that demand that we each take responsibility for our shared future and fate, that, as the Marianists say, we work as a *community in permanent mission*, a community of teacher-scholars who seek not only an internally respectful, transparent, welcoming, and accommodating workplace, but a community of teacher-scholars who also are ready to shoulder the claims and

accountabilities of leadership and service so as to facilitate the deepest possible educational transformation of our students and of our society for justice and the common good.

The next president will learn who the University of Dayton really is through the ways in which we exercise shared leadership, engage challenges, reach difficult decisions, support our students and one another, and design bold plans to advance our academic impact. The next president will learn who UD is by observing and experiencing *how we embody UD*. I look forward in this new academic year to working with you to realize and support the leadership of the entire UD community in serving our inspiring mission, in promoting our leading academic priorities, and in embodying the university we will become.

Thank you.