

# Four years, two pieces of paper — two years later

In Autumn 2013, *UD Magazine* reported on a radical experiment in higher education — that UD would reveal the full four-year cost of college and provide families with a promise that their tuition costs would remain constant through a student's four years. In that story, "Four Years, Two Pieces of Paper," University officials said they believed the level-tuition, no-fee approach would help families to make informed decisions.

Results suggest they were right.

Families are borrowing less, said Jason Reinoehl, interim vice president for enrollment management and marketing. "In two years, the cumulative student loan burden has decreased \$6.5 million, and our first-to-second-year retention rate has increased 4 percentage points to



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91 percent," he said. "The debt reduction and increase in retention have been most significant for our lower-income families. It strikes right at the heart of what we want to achieve from a mission standpoint."

Retention is also at an all-time high among underrepresented students. Among first-

year undergraduate students who matriculated in 2014, the Hispanic student retention rate was 92.2 percent, and the African-American student retention rate was 92.9 percent.

Reinoehl said he believes the University's tuition plan will continue to set it apart in the market. Pointing to a sample

financial aid prospectus that outlines costs and opportunities in an understandable way, he noted, "What families get in one piece is peace of mind and transparency. We're the nation's leading university with this approach."

It's an approach that's gaining momentum. Ohio University started its level tuition program last fall, and Miami University announced it will begin a tuition guarantee program next fall.

To further differentiate itself from the marketplace, UD is looking to add value to a UD education, Reinoehl said. For example, students now have the opportunity to study abroad at no additional cost. They can also be paired with Flyers in their desired professions to gain career advice through the Alumni Mentoring Program.

## Keeping the peace

### *UD program teaches conflict resolution to Dayton grade-school students*

Life is full of conflicts. Knowing how to handle them is key to peace. It's something Fidela Tuyisange knows well.

As a seventh-grader at Dayton elementary school Mary Queen of Peace, Tuyisange was part of the Peacemakers program. Since 2007, UD's Urban Child Development Resource Center has overseen the program, which teaches leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills and engages students in service projects.

Now a first-year biology student at UD, Tuyisange says her time in the program helped shape her grade-school years — as well as who she is today.

#### **Q: How did you first get involved with Peacemakers?**

A: There were a lot of conflicts at my school. Kids got into fights almost every day. I wanted to do something to help everyone get along. When I heard about the Peacemakers program, I thought it would be a great way to do that.

#### **Q: What kinds of activities did the program use?**

A: We met every day, either during or after school, and talked about different ways to resolve conflicts. Kids would come in and talk about their situation, and we would try to help them resolve it. If people were being

bullied, we would have both people come in and talk. It was always cool to see the other person's reaction; usually they would end up leaving as friends.

#### **Q: How do you think the program affected your school overall?**

A: The kids in Peacemakers were the kids everyone looked up to. Everyone wanted to be involved when they saw what we were doing.

#### **Q: What skills did you take away from the program?**

A: I learned good ways to communicate and solve confrontations without being loud or pushy. The program opened up a lot of doors for me; at first, I was so shy, but it helped me come out of my comfort zone, work as a team and speak up about things I felt strongly about. We also went on a couple of field trips in Peacemakers, one of which was to UD. It's crazy to think back to that time, knowing I would eventually be here years later.

And years later, the program continues to teach students how to be better neighbors — more than 300 to date.

—Jessica Barga

