



# IMPACT OF *GIVING*



**GIVING**  
*for* **TOMORROW**

SPRING  
2024

# DEAR SUPPORTERS OF DETROIT MERCY,

As I write this, an early spring seems to be taking hold, I am reminded of my own years as a student at University of Detroit.

The McNichols Campus was always alive with students who took time out from the many events of the winter semester to welcome the changing of the seasons by studying outside, playing frisbee, or just to enjoy walking to class in shorts. Those times, this campus, will always have a special place in my heart.

I'm not alone. University of Detroit, Mercy College of Detroit and University of Detroit Mercy have inspired warm feelings in alumni for many decades.

Alumni return to campus often, sharing their time by talking to a class or mentoring students in their field. They serve on advisory boards for the various colleges and schools and attend many events we sponsor for alumni and their families.

Many, inspired by their feelings of gratitude to the University, give back monetarily, helping students with scholarships, co-curricular activities, equipment for our student-athletes and more.

Some alumni help us stretch and redefine our definition of education by understanding it is not just in the classroom that learning takes place.

This issue of Impact of Giving tells of a few forward-looking steps we are taking today to ensure our education is evolving so tomorrow's Titans will benefit from a curriculum that is vibrant and alive. That is an important part of this University's longevity.

We send Impact of Giving twice a year not just to let you know about what others are giving to University of Detroit Mercy, but in the hopes these stories may inspire you to think about the ways you might consider giving and helping University of Detroit Mercy grow into tomorrow. We know that when people with diverse ideas come together, great things happen. If you have an idea, let us know. We want always to be moving forward.

With gratitude,



**Dennis Carlesso '90, '97**

Interim Vice President for University Advancement  
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# HAVING CONVERSATIONS AS A COMMUNITY



Bob Bruttell '01 has taught History of Social Ethics in University of Detroit Mercy's Religious Studies department for 22 years as an adjunct faculty member. His classroom, he says, is a place for discussion of important issues on how people today can live together as human beings.

It is a topic that has interested him for a long time and one he feels needs to be discussed in meaningful ways.

A substantial gift to the University from Bruttell and his wife, Judy, will create the Robert A. and Judith A. Bruttell Religion & Social Ethics Expendable Program Fund, a gift that he hopes keeps those conversations going long into the future.

The funds will be used for an annual event series run by the Religious Studies department that will include lectures, workshops, panel discussion and opportunities for students to immerse themselves in the study of social ethics at conferences, field trips, seminars and tours of important sites.

It is an idea that has been brewing for a long time, long before Bruttell came to know University of Detroit Mercy as a graduate student.

"My career was 47 years owning and managing construction companies," he said. But in the late '80s he said he had a classic "midlife experience."

"I felt I could go on successfully running construction companies, but that's not all of me," he said. A former seminary student, Bruttell felt a yearning to study theology. Detroit Mercy did not offer a theology degree, but they did offer a master's degree in Religious Studies, so he enrolled.

What he found was a place alive with the types of discussions he wanted to have, many of them led by Professor George Pickering. The two became good friends.

Together they formed the Center for Religion and Community Values, a co-curricular program that brought in speakers, hosted ethical discussions and put out a yearly newsletter about these issues.

After Bruttell earned his master's degree, Pickering asked whether he would like to teach at the University. Twenty-two years later, Bruttell still enjoys teaching.

The Center faded away many years ago, but Bruttell never forgot it. This gift is a way of reviving that lively learning environment.

"I have an interest in social ethics and what people make of religious values and how we can live together as a society," Bruttell said. "We tell people they should be all that they can be, but the problem with that is that if you are only focused on yourself, you are not paying attention to what your role is in the bigger picture. You need a commitment to social values."

He continued: "I care deeply about the world my grandchildren will grow up in. I care a lot about what the world will look like after I'm gone. So, I thought that if I was going to do something to make a difference, this University is the place I believe could make some impact on social ethics and the community."

The gift creates a program that is also an extension of the work he does with the InterFaith Leadership Council of Metropolitan Detroit, an organization that came together in the aftermath of 9/11 to nurture interfaith connection, conciliation and education. Bruttell has worked with the organization since its beginning, serving on its leadership team.

And this work is also close to the heart of Judy, his wife of 42 years. A ceramic and graphic artist (he used to be her art fair roadie), she works with younger students at Christ the King Catholic School in Detroit, teaching art and helping the school find funding.

"She is really concerned about younger students," Bruttell said. "Together we want to impact the world young people will come into, the ethical world in which they will thrive."

Bruttell hopes this program will help shape the conversation concerning ethics.

"I think we are at a critical crossroads that, for me, feels like the one we were at in the 1960s," he said. "Then, we were fighting a war that hardly anyone would say was the right thing to be doing, we were struggling with Jim Crow laws and segregation. In many ways separating from one another is the default. What we need to do is to regain a sense that what is best in living together is listening to all voices. I hope to be the person who catalyzes this discussion the way George Pickering did for me. That's what I want other students to get — conversations about thinking and applying social values. It's critical to learning how to live together."

# A SPACE FOR CREATIVITY TO FLOURISH



Steve McShane '66 has had a lengthy career as an inventor and entrepreneur with business interests across the globe.

His recent gift to the College of Engineering & Science will create a space he hopes will encourage students to learn and create with an eye toward entrepreneurship as well.

Born and raised in a working-class family on the east side of Detroit, McShane grew fascinated by electronics, especially his ham radio. When it came time to choose a college, the choice was University of Detroit, hands down.

"I was encouraged to apply to U of D because of their reputation and their co-op program, which was going to help me pay the expenses," he said. "And I was raised Catholic, so it seemed natural."

He loved the school, which he said offered a good balance of technological and ethical education along with strong academics.

"It was often a struggle for me the first couple of years," he said. "I was working full time and in school full time."

It paid off, he said, and he was offered a job in a competitor of the company at which he did his engineering co-op. He earned an MBA from the University of Michigan and then was recruited by Motorola, doing something much more in his field of interest, and in five years was promoted to a national position.

After a short stint working with a power company, McShane had his eyes on something else.

"I was interested in experimenting with business challenges and the idea of establishing a business within a business," he said. In 1984, he founded Midtronic, originally as the exclusive parts distributor for Motorola's radio and electrical parts business.

He also acquired a piece of technology Motorola had that could passively test the charge of lead-acid batteries, something that had not been possible before.

"They had the technology, but they weren't commercializing it," he said. He built Midtronic around that technology, worked to improve and update it and within 10 years the new product became the standard in the auto industry.

Over the years he has developed other products and services — bringing him 10 U.S. patents — to the world's top automotive, telecommunications and electric power providers. At 81, he is still active with Midtronic, and is grateful for the career he has had.



He credits University of Detroit for his success, which is why he and Kathy, his wife of 46 years, made a substantial donation to help the College of Engineering & Science create The Steve & Kathy McShane Engineering Maker Space & Collaboratory. It will be in the space formerly known as the Annex directly next to the Engineering Building.

"The reason for my gift is gratitude for the success I've had, and University of Detroit played a role the technical expertise and the values that given me the fortitude to create a business," he said.

Dean of the College of Engineering & Science Katherine Snyder, '89, '93 said the maker space will be a hub where all students will be welcomed to work together and have the required machinery and tools in one space under expert guidance.

"We are so grateful for the support of the McShanes and other alumni who made it possible to transform the Engineering Annex into this inspirational space," Snyder said. "It will be a workshop for students from different disciplines to collaborate and share ideas as they work on projects, competition teams and product refinement with an eye toward commercialization."

McShane is inspired by the potential of the space and the impact it will have on students today and for years to come.

"This will give students a place to study and learn and make real-life applications of technology," he said. "They will be able to take ideas and create prototypes and products, which brings an entrepreneurial aspect to engineering. That's what's important, I think."

"I've been pretty lucky," he says of his career. This gift is, he says, a way of establishing a legacy at the place it all started.

"University of Detroit Mercy seems to be attracting young people like I was, from the city and suburbs, interested in technology," he said. "And I want this to be a place where they can create things that will add value to the world."





Gavin Rapuzzi as Mr. Darcy with the cast of Detroit Mercy Theatre Company's *Pride and Prejudice* (2023). *Photo credit: Jordan Ewert*

## A PLACE TO CALL HOME

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Being a student at University of Detroit Mercy has been such a blessing.

I feel I have grown so much in my time here. So many doors have opened and opportunities arisen.

As a member of the Detroit Mercy Theatre Company, I feel that my art has excelled beyond my wildest dreams. The one draw that I feel is holding me back is the lack of a theatre space on campus.

That's why the plans to create a black box theatre in the Student Union are so exciting for me, other theatre students and those who attend our productions.

Currently, we perform at the Marlene Boll Theatre at the YMCA in downtown Detroit. It's a lovely space, but we are only guests there. We have very limited access to it, usually

only getting to use the theatre the week before a show.

This situation causes a litany of issues, predominantly with transportation. Some students in the program can't drive and having to find a way to carpool is difficult. That goes as well for moving the set and props. It is often a very tedious and time-consuming task that takes multiple days to complete.

Most important, we really don't have the ability to truly immerse ourselves in the space itself. Our production is usually constructed entirely in the rehearsal room, which leads to issues, especially with learning the space. With learning the space. Trying to get used to last-minute set changes can be very difficult.

We really just don't have a place of our own to call home. It

gives a feeling of disconnectedness with the rest of the University. I have spoken with many students around campus and they say the biggest reason they don't attend DMTC productions is that they don't have a way to get downtown to see it.

A theatre on campus would give the theatre department a new identity, a new home. We would have so many more learning opportunities with a theatre space. There could be classes or workshops that could teach us how to run a theatre, better equipping us for the future workforce. I'm talking about aspects like lighting and sound, front of house and backstage management, all essential elements of technical theatre.

Additionally, by having a theatre on campus, actors would be more familiarized with the space. They could work to really hone their craft and improve their performances. It would also allow for more time spent rehearsing in the theatre before the show. I think that this black box theatre can really give our performing arts a name.

Many students on campus love the arts and, if made more accessible, they would come in droves. We would get more talented students wanting to come to the school as well. I see it as nothing but a net positive. I feel that by having a new theatre space on campus, the experiences and education of current and future students would grow exponentially.

One generous anonymous donor has made this dream come closer to reality with a \$2-million gift toward the approximately \$2.5-million project cost. We hope you would consider donating to help make it a reality.

We have an amazing theatre department right now, but I can see that, if given the proper resources, we will be able to make true masterpieces.

— **Gavin Rapuzzi, sophomore, theatre student**



Gavin Rapuzzi and Josiah Martelle learn scenic painting techniques in Stagecrafts class. *Photo credit: Alan Devlin*



Katherine Mutschler as Dr. Rosalind Franklin and Gavin Rapuzzi as Ray Gosling in Detroit Mercy Theatre Company's Photograph 51 (2024). *Photo credit: Sarah Rusk*

*To donate to this project, use the enclosed envelope or contact Anna Dietrich, director of development for the College of Liberal Arts & Education, at 313-993-1429.*



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