

# <sup>357</sup>UDM School of Law only school in nation to receive ABA Public Interest Award

The University of Detroit Mercy School of Law has been recognized by the American Bar Association (ABA) Student Law Division as the top university in the country for providing public interest opportunities for its students.

The ABA recently presented the University with the Judy M. Weightman Memorial Public Interest Award, given annually to a law school or individual in recognition of their outstanding community service projects, public interest programming and strong commitment to helping others in need. Joshua Moore, president of UDM's chapter of the Student Bar Association, nominated UDM's law school for the award and drafted the award application along with fellow student Kim Saks.

Programs and initiatives such as the Urban Law Clinic, Immigration Law Clinic, and the Mobile Law Office have helped bring UDM to the forefront of public interest.

The Urban Law Clinic exposes students to the practice of law while providing services to indigent local residents, primarily in the city of Detroit. The clinic also offers elder law services, which provide students with opportunities to represent senior citizens in a variety of legal matters.

The Immigration Law Clinic serves clients who seek protection against political, religious or other forms of persecution in their home countries. Students help prepare applications for asylum and advocate on their clients' behalf under faculty supervision.

Students participating in the Mobile Law Office work with pro bono lawyers to travel to community centers throughout Detroit, where they can provide immediate legal assistance.

UDM's School of Law also offers fellowships to students who want to spend their summers serving the public good.

The Emily George, RSM Public Interest Law Fellowships were first offered in 2003 to provide students with an opportunity to work for the benefit of the community, while earning a stipend and gaining valuable legal skills that help them prepare for legal careers.

Funds for the fellowship are raised every spring at the Public Interest Law Fellowships Auction. Students compete via application and interview for one of the fellowships.

The Weightman award was created in honor of Judy Weightman, a professor at the University of Hawaii William S. Richardson School of Law. Weightman was also active in her community, and received repeated recognition for her work, including the Dean Henry Ramsey Jr. award from the American Bar Association Student Law Division. Weightman passed away in 1998 after a long battle with cancer.

Past recipients of the Weightman award have included Indiana University-Perdue, Penn State Dickinson, University of Miami, University of Michigan, Northeastern Law School and CUNY School of Law.