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# Michigan loses law school to Florida

■ Founded by Thomas S. Monaghan, Ave Maria School of Law will move to campus near Naples.

BY MARISA SCHULTZ  
*The Detroit News*

Just seven years after enrolling its first class, Ave Maria School of Law will be closing in Ann Arbor and relocating to a newly developed Catholic-centered community near Naples, Fla., school officials announced Tuesday.

The law school will join Ave Maria University in the emerging town of Ave Maria, Fla., which is believed to be the first modern community created in conjunction with a university. Both Catholic schools were founded through the vision and financial backing of Domino's pizza mogul

Thomas S. Monaghan.

**Ann Arbor**

"The law school has achieved much success in Michigan

and I believe it will achieve even more in its new location," Monaghan said in a statement.

Leaders have been researching relocating the school for the last five years. The alumni association and faculty opposed to the move issued votes of no confidence for the law school dean last year.

"It's a bitter disappointment to all of us," said Jason Negri, who was part of the school's first graduating class in 2003 and is a practicing attorney in Michigan.

It's a blow for the state of Michigan as well as a sentimental loss, he said:

"The law school being started up in Florida will not be our Ave Maria," said Negri, noting professors are unlikely to follow. "They may have the same mission, but it won't have the same character as our school."

Founded in 1999, the school now has 380 students and 18 full-time faculty. Current faculty are guaranteed their job in Florida when the new campus welcomes students in fall 2009, said Eugene Milhizer, associate dean for academic affairs.

Although she and the other current law school students will have graduated when the new site opens, Amy Bosway believes the law school will flourish in Florida.

"I think it will enhance the value of my degree," said Bosway, 36, a first-year law school student from Florida. "There's so much potential down there. I think it's a really exciting opportunity."

The school received full accreditation from the American Bar Association in 2005. The law school is currently securing consent from the association for the move.

Currently, just 85 Michigan lawyers (less than one percent) are Ave Maria graduates, according to the Michigan State Bar Association.

The remaining law schools in Michigan are University of Michigan Law School, Wayne State University Law School, Michigan State University College of Law, Cooley Law School and University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.

You can reach Marisa Schultz at (313) 222-2310 or [mschultz@detnews.com](mailto:mschultz@detnews.com).