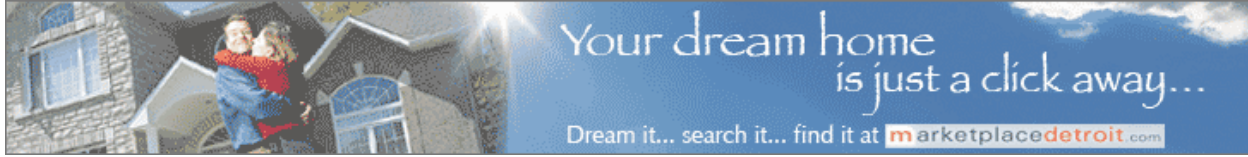


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Wayne E. Smith / The Detroit News

Henry Russell, a literature professor at Ave Maria College, is heading up the effort to create a new Catholic college in the area when Ave Maria closes.

## Group plans new Catholic college

It hopes to raise millions to replace Ave Maria in '08

Marisa Schultz / The Detroit News

In the wake of the planned closure of Ave Maria College in Ypsilanti this summer, efforts have intensified to open a new orthodox Catholic college by next year.

A recently formed foundation, largely comprising professors, priests and professionals, will hold a benefit dinner March 16 to help raise the \$6 million to \$10 million needed to establish the College of Saints Peter and Paul, a liberal arts school that would produce graduates who are eager to live out their Catholic faith.

Henry Russell, chairman of literature at the soon-to-be defunct Ave Maria College, said he and others at Ave Maria came to Michigan to

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create a small, Catholic college that pays close attention to the teachings of the church.

"When the college decided to pursue another vision, I decided to continue working on the same vision," said Russell, board president of Saints Peter and Paul Educational Foundation.

Ave Maria College, which had 229 students at its peak, was formed in 1998 with the financial backing of Domino's Pizza founder Thomas Monaghan. When plans to expand the college to Domino's Farms failed, Monaghan put more than \$200 million behind a grand plan to construct Ave Maria University near Naples, Fla.

Ann Arbor's Ave Maria School of Law, also supported by Monaghan, will join the university in the emerging town of Ave Maria, Fla., which is believed to be the first modern community created in conjunction with a university.

Unlike Ave Maria College, the College of Saints Peter and Paul would likely be funded through many small donations that would create "a broader sense of ownership to all the Catholics in Michigan," Russell said.

Foundation members have looked at more than 20 locations in the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Diocese of Lansing, Russell said. They hope to open the school by fall 2008 and grow to 425 students and 28 faculty.

The Archdiocese of Detroit welcomes the opportunity for a new Catholic college but will not finance it, said spokesman Ned McGrath. The college would be an independent organization, like University of Detroit Mercy, Madonna and Marygrove College, he said.

The College of Saints Peter and Paul would be unique to the state, Russell said. Faculty and students would be almost exclusively Catholic. Exceptions would be made for students still searching in their faith. While students will study economics and biology, they will be taught through the lens of the Catholic faith and the reasoning behind the faith, Russell said.

And while other Catholic colleges may focus on training students for professions and technical careers, the College of Saints Peter and Paul would center on a core, intense liberal arts foundation to prepare students for whatever profession they choose, Russell said. U-D Mercy is the state's largest, comprehensive Catholic college. It includes a law school and dental school.

"The University of Detroit Mercy does not look at this college as competition and wishes them well in their efforts," said spokesman Gary D. Lichtman. While Catholics make up about 45 percent of the student body, the university welcomes students and faculty of all faiths.

"This is a Catholic university, yes. And you are welcome if you are Buddhist and we treat your Buddhism as sacred," said Fr. John Staudenmaier, assistant to the president for mission and identity.

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#### Benefit dinner

**What:** Fundraiser for The College of Saints Peter and Paul

**Program:** Keynote speaker will be Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz

**When:** Friday, March 16 at the Inn at St. John's, 44045 Five Mile, Plymouth. Bishop's reception: 5:30 p.m.; Dinner: 6:30 p.m.

**Tickets:** \$40 or \$150 for private reception with bishop

**Reservations:** (248) 347-3649

**More info:** [sspeterandpaulfoundation.org](http://sspeterandpaulfoundation.org)

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