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LOCAL COMMENT

Local universities' mission includes students and city

December 4, 2007

BY THE REV. GERARD L. STOCKHAUSEN

The mission of each university should include three main components: to educate students, to provide research in academic areas of competence, and to offer service to others.

So I was pleased to read in the Detroit Free Press that the University of Michigan is considering coursework, internships and partnering with area community groups in the city of Detroit ("U-M might tap Detroit as living classroom," Nov. 30).

The revitalization of Detroit and its neighborhoods is crucial to the success of the city and to all of Michigan. However, Detroit's urban universities, such as the University of Detroit Mercy, Marygrove College and Wayne State University, have been actively involved in such outreach for decades.

Community involvement at the university level provides students not only hands-on learning that complements their classroom and laboratory experiences, but also increased connections to their community and a stronger awareness of social issues. All universities need to help students better understand their role in society and how their studies and actions can impact people.

For 130 years, UDM's mission has focused on offering students a quality education with a strong commitment to community service. Today, more than ever, UDM remains committed to the city of Detroit through its community outreach and partnerships with local agencies and organizations.

A variety of our courses incorporate service-learning in classes, resulting in course-related, direct services to the poor and marginalized in our community. Last year, about 1,200 UDM students volunteered with more than 140 community service agencies in Detroit.

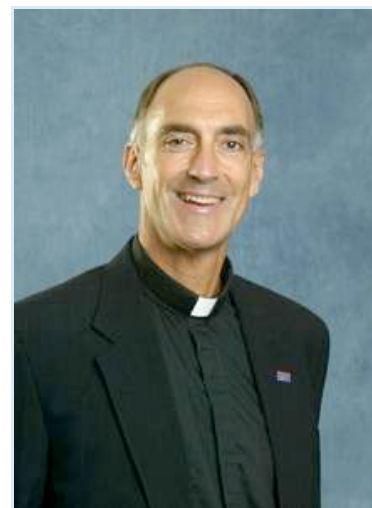
Each school and college at UDM has strong service components for students. At our School of Dentistry clinics, faculty and students treat approximately 15,000 patients, totaling 85,000 treatment visits, at low or no cost. Through our School of Nursing, the McAuley Health Center serves nearly 2,800 underserved and uninsured Detroiters annually. The School of Law assisted more than 1,000 clients through its urban, immigration, veteran law clinics and the Mobile Law Office.

The School of Architecture's Detroit Collaborative Design Center provided design services at minimal cost to a variety of nonprofit groups and communities, including the neighborhoods of Woodbridge, Clayton, Sullivan and Corktown.

In addition, approximately 400 UDM students each year participate in

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The Rev. Gerard Stockhausen

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co-op experiences with area businesses and nonprofit organizations, while many more assist at agencies and clinics as part of their practicum experiences.

As chair of the Board of Directors of University Commons, an organization in northwest Detroit composed of neighborhood associations, Livernois Avenue businesses, Marygrove College and UDM, I am excited to see the improvements that have resulted from our efforts.

Each university has an opportunity to become a collaborative member of Detroit's resurgence. It is important that every institution take advantage of them to enhance students' education and prepare them to become involved members and leaders of their communities.

THE REV. GERARD L. STOCKHAUSEN, SJ, PhD, is president of University of Detroit Mercy, Michigan's largest Catholic university. Write to him in care of the Free Press Editorial Page, 615 W. Lafayette, Detroit, MI 48226 or at oped@freepress.com. Visit the UDM Community Outreach Web site at: www.udmercy.edu/live/community-outreach/index.htm.

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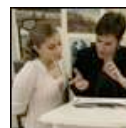
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