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OPEN MINDS, OPEN ARMS, OPEN HEARTS

By Giulia Pink

I went away to college grudgingly. I had graduated from a small high school in a town with one stoplight, and I had plans to attend the community college before transferring (if I had to).

I cried through all of my application letters and trudged to the back of the line at each college campus visit. My mother signed me up for visit day at University of Detroit Mercy's (UDM), the university I was adamant I would not attend simply because she had gone there. That all changed when I stepped foot on campus.

Though fenced off from the outside, everyone I met embraced the school's close location to Detroit. I was engrossed with the clock tower that housed a family of falcons and broke from the tour group for a bit to explore the nearly hidden staircases in the library. After three years studying English at the university, I have left behind the child who loved a small town and have become an involved campus leader with a passion for the city of Detroit.

My decision to major in the liberal arts has allowed for my intellectual and ethical growth. Unlike science and math, where there is only one right answer, the liberal arts are just that: liberal. There is no one right way to look at or approach something. My mind has opened so much through UDM's classes, particularly how I view the world through a minority perspective. Studying literature would be impossible without entering into someone else's worldview for a period of time – I think that's why liberal arts majors are often so involved in social justice.

The Jesuit influence on education at UDM provides students with opportunities to immerse themselves in social justice activities – something I've been able to continue through my participation in campus organizations such as residence life, Greek life, and the honors program. Through my service experiences at UDM, I've built relationships I'd

never have forged otherwise. I still keep in contact with the two young women I was paired with in Conversation Partners, a volunteer program that connected foreign exchange students with American students. Those women are now working at law firms in China. I've done things I didn't think possible. I helped to tear down the foundation of an abandoned house for Blight Busters in Detroit with a group of freshmen and faculty. I moved cinder blocks and lumber last summer for Habitat for Humanity with fellow Greek life members. These experiences would not have been possible without the Jesuit belief that the entire world is our home.

Despite the constancy of the belief in the prestige of math and science, I have found liberal arts to be challenging and rewarding in ways that connect to the Detroit community around me, letting me apply my learning to my new home. To incoming freshmen unsure of what to study, I tell them: Major in liberal arts, but only if you are curious and want to discover incredible things about yourself and those around you. Major in liberal arts, but only if you want your opinions to be heard and for class discussions to resonate long after you leave the room. Major in liberal arts, but only if you have passion.

UDM's mission envelops Jesuit thinking and encompasses the liberal arts' sense of understanding by integrating students with the urban setting around them. It holds high standards for its students and aims to encourage them to gain deeper intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social development. This development will allow us to acknowledge that our privilege on campus can extend outside of the gate if we take it with us with open minds, arms, and hearts. ■

Giulia Pink is a senior English major at the University of Detroit Mercy where she works as resident advisor and a consultant in the Writing Center. She also volunteers as a student editor of their creative arts publication and does outreach to the community.