

Funding Enables SWEEP Program To Flourish

Established in 1998 as a collaborative effort between Madonna University and the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the Southwest Educational Empowerment Project (SWEEP) focuses on women, primarily Latinas, who wish to begin or resume their college studies. Classes are offered onsite in Southwest Detroit.

The program, made possible with the support of many community organizations, now enrolls over 40 students, offering courses leading to bachelor's degrees in social work, early childhood education and general studies. In addition to academic course work, English-as-a-second language training is made available along with childcare services, tutoring, transportation, and mentoring opportunities.

"SWEEP prepares these women to contribute to the well being of their community and serve as leaders and decision makers," said Ernest I. Nolan, Ph.D., vice president for academic administration. "Madonna University is committed to an educational presence in Southwest Detroit and the project continues to gain significant momentum."

The University has recently received two generous gifts which will ensure the program's future. The Thompson-McCully Foundation awarded \$240,000 for SWEEP to establish a tuition and fees fund to assist students who have financial difficulty meeting their expenses for study. In addition, the Whitney Fund is providing \$50,000 to support the personnel-related costs to stabilize and expand the program.

Nolan, who was instrumental in obtaining these grants, further stated, "We had reached a critical point where the budget established to initiate this program was no longer enough. With support from the Thompson-McCully Foundation and the Whitney Fund, this innovative and community based project will continue, providing new opportunities for a vibrant, growing, and ever changing segment of our population."

Madonna University, located at Levan Road and I-96, is among the nation's largest Catholic Franciscan universities. Founded in 1947 by the Felician Sisters of Livonia, Madonna University offers more than 50 career-oriented undergraduate majors and 20 master's degree programs in the diverse areas of business, clinical psychology, criminal justice, education, health services, hospice education, nursing and MTESOL.