

# UDM's innovative changes pay off

University of Detroit Mercy is attracting prestigious law firms to interview its students thanks to new curricula and an innovative dean.

**M**ark Gordon is something like P.T. Barnum — talk to him for a few minutes, and you're ready to buy whatever he's selling.

Perhaps that is why some of the nation's most prestigious law firms are turning to Gordon's law school to do their recruiting. And newspapers like the

Wall Street Journal are lauding Gordon for turning an "obscure" institution like the **University of Detroit Mercy** into a job-hunting powerhouse.

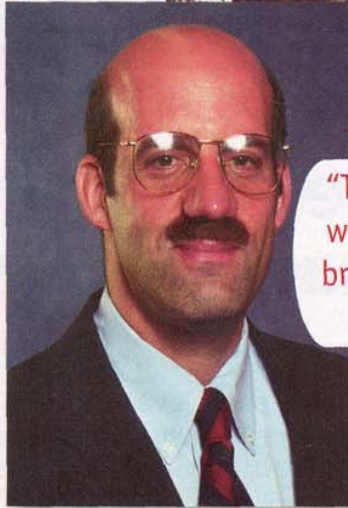
Over the past five years, the Dean has used his business contacts, gift of gab and grim determination to change UDM's law program from the typical three-year drill into a model for the rest of academia to follow.

"It's not just that he's a great guy," said Edward S. Davis, a member of Gordon's elite advisory board and of counsel with Hughes, Hubbard & Reed in New York. "It's the impact he's having on the whole school. He's changing things around."

UDM's most innovative change may be the new third year — a series of real-life courses known as the Law Firm program.

It requires students to take at least two courses in which they work on a simulated corporate transaction. Students work through the transaction as members of a law firm, focusing on areas such as litigation, labor, real estate, antitrust and intellectual property. UDM's newly established distinguished visiting professors teach the courses and act as the simulated firm's leadership, overseeing the student associates.

These professors — typically recently retired senior counsel at area law firms — as well as the dean's 60-plus member advisory board — developed the program



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— Mark Gordon, dean, Detroit Mercy

to update the law-school experience for the 21st century, Gordon said.

That is why many of the country's best

firms — names like Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP and Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP — are flying into Detroit to hire UDM students for summer internships and full-time jobs.

"The practice of law has gotten too disconnected with what is taught in law school," Gordon said. "We really have bridged that gap."

Gordon arrived at UDM in 2002 after building an impressive resume — a Bachelor's degree and Masters in International Affairs from Columbia College, and a JD from Harvard Law.

After graduation, he joined Hughes Hubbard & Reed, where he worked on

international banking and employee benefits issues. He then jumped into public service, joining the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. Three years later, he was back at Columbia as an associate professor.

Gordon became intrigued by academia, and he started to apply for openings for deans at public policy and law schools. UDM called him, and Gordon was thrilled. The law school's mediocre rankings among publications like U.S. News and World Report was a non-issue.

"I don't believe in the rankings," Gordon said.

For now, UDM is enjoying its word-of-mouth success. While overall law school applications are down, Gordon said the applicant pool is up 30 percent over the past three years.

"We have really created a distinct model of legal education here," Gordon said.