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Eastside Project feature in Conversations Spring 1994

Santa Clara University

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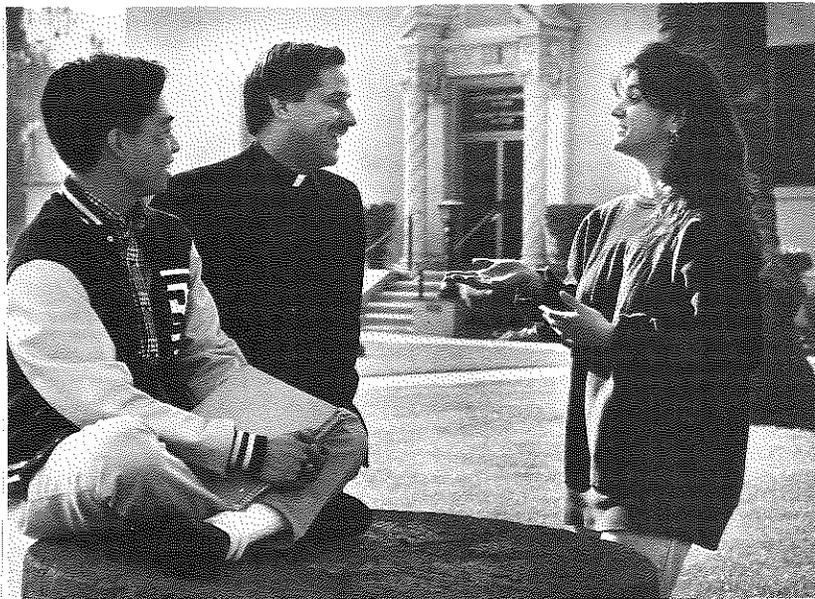
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Santa Clara University

Santa Clara, California

In an address on the Jesuit Ministry in higher education, Santa Clara University president Paul Locatelli SJ, said that there must be a way, appropriate to each institution, for students in all academic disciplines to be exposed to "the larger vision for which the Jesuit university exists."

metaphor as well as the designation of a diverse neighborhood of San Jose, whose Hispanic, Filipino, Vietnamese, Samoan, African-American, and white residents range from destitute and homeless to upper middle class. Students are placed in a variety of programs, including homeless



Santa Clara's Center for Applied Ethics attempts to clarify the role of ethics in individual and societal choices. The center's director, Rev. Thomas Shanks SJ (above) was formerly chair of the university's communication department.

As part of their program of study, more than 400 Santa Clara students each quarter integrate critical reflection and analysis with experiential learning in the school's Eastside Project. Course work is enriched by engagement in community programs that serve the poor and marginalized.

As participants in the Eastside Project, they have much to learn from interacting with people outside the protective walls of the academy. "Eastside" is a

shelters, senior centers and tutoring centers for English as a second language.

Each quarter, as many as 40 academic courses, 400 students, and 27 social service agencies are involved in the project; students spend at least two hours a week in direct, interactive contact with impoverished and marginalized people. The experience puts students through a "reflective process that links their field

experience with particular courses and with their lives," said Eastside Project Director William J. Wood SJ, who is the former executive director of the California Conference of Catholic Bishops and president of the Institute for Food and Development Policy and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference.

"Our purpose is to provide students with personal experiences of cultures other than their own so that their perceptions of the world will expand and become more accurate. To borrow a geographical metaphor, we are hoping to facilitate an intellectual earthquake, where cognitive and affective plates shift and realign to form a new conceptual terrain.

"Students are jarred, shaken out of their safe and comfortable stereotypes and categories. They are changed by what they experience," he said.

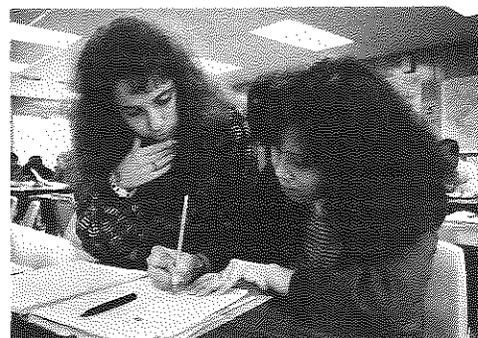
Students seem to be getting the message. "You need both what you learn in the classroom and in the real world to see the whole picture," said Dina Shiraki, who worked at the Julian Street Inn, a homeless shelter in San Jose, as part of an abnormal psychology class.

Added Tom Gemetti, who worked at the Montgomery Street Shelter in San Jose as part of a Christian ethics class, "I learned that the homeless are not faceless people, but have an identity similar to you and me."

Although the Eastside Project's focus is academic, its contribution to the Eastside community is significant. One of the Eastside Project's first co-curricular programs was to help undocumented workers apply for citizenship under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Students helped applicants fill out the complicated forms, which were then available only in English, and gather necessary documentation.

Since then students have worked at a variety of placements, including high schools, adult education programs, and day-care centers. Law students and faculty provide a legal clinic in a Day Worker Job Center for immigrants co-founded by former Eastside Project Director Dan Germann SJ.

A 1986 letter from then president William J. Rewak SJ introducing the Eastside Project stated: "This pro-



Through the Eastside Project Santa Clara students are involved in a wide range of community projects such as tutoring English as a second language.



As California's oldest university (and the only one with a historic Mission on its campus), Santa Clara has played a significant role in the state's history for 143 years.

ject does represent another effort on the part of the University to meet its responsibilities to underserved populations and ethnic minorities by offering an educational experience for both the University and the Eastside communities, for the underlying philosophy of the project is that the University and the minority communities can learn from one another."

Faculty support this approach, said Wood "They recognize that Santa Clara must do this precisely as a university, not as a social service agency, not as a church, and not as a political party, but as an institution of higher education, dedicated to excellence in teaching and research.

"The long-term goal is

to redirect the intellectual resources of the University to the service of justice and to enhance our work as a community of scholars. By linking with those who most directly experience the disorder of our social, political, and economic structures, we are able to learn about the demands that must be met for justice to be realized in our world," said Wood.