



Michigan | Campus Compact MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Marygrove College The Mumford Project



Photo by Jonathan Donnelly,
Mumford High School

Marygrove College is located in the City of Detroit, the heart of a metropolitan region that, while exhibiting the same rich expressions of culture that exist on the Marygrove Campus, is also home to some of the starkest urban challenges found in the country. Inspired by the values and beliefs of the founder and continuing sponsor of the college, the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Marygrove looks not to separate itself from the challenges that exist within their community, but rather chooses to view its location in Detroit as an opportunity to learn, serve and lead.

Marygrove engages nearly all departments in their effort to transform their surrounding community, and recently partnered with Mumford High School to explore how photography can be a vehicle for change. Thirteen students from Mumford High School, located just blocks away from Marygrove, took hundreds of pictures for this innovative project. Photos were sorted and edited for a ***Beyond Words Gallery*** hosted at the college. The Mumford

Project invited the local high schoolers into the college, and utilized college faculty as well as students to facilitate both a lesson in photography and an introduction to higher education.

Each student was provided with their own digital camera, access to photo editing equipment and were encouraged to take as many pictures as they wanted. In the end, the most fascinating component to the project was not this equipment, but in the images students choose to take with it.

"In our planning we imagined that students would document street life, the worn out buildings or decay that are so prevalent in their lives," explained Rose E. DeSloover, Dean of Visual and Performing Arts at Marygrove. "But in reviewing the images they took we saw a very different view. Their work overwhelmingly focuses on the beauty in design, pattern and texture. There was little interest in lingering on the negative aspects of the neighborhood."

Students choose to present beautiful images of their community that often go overlooked, and through the experience have become passionate about photography. This transformation did not come without challenges, however. The Mumford High School art teacher was laid off twice during the course of the project due to school budget cuts, and there were streets, identified by the students, that were considered unsafe for their collection of images. But in the end students emerged with a better understanding of themselves, their neighborhood, and of the arts.

"This project helps prove the intrinsic connection between creativity, urban development and change," explained DeSloover. "The Mumford students proved more than ready for the challenge, and we intend to host similar projects in the future." This project was funded by a grant from the McGregor Fund.