A view from inside UMSL's student center

The University of Missouri-St. Louis and St. Louis University have landed on a top 25 list of colleges that make the "best neighbors."

"Saviors of our Cities: Survey of Best College and University Civic Partnerships" is the second study put out by Evan Dobelle, president of Westfield State College in Massachusetts. The list is based on the results of a questionnaire and on-site interviews that tried to gauge the positive economic, social and cultural impact that universities have on the metropolitan areas in which they reside.

The survey was released today, when Dobelle was scheduled to present the findings at the 15th annual conference of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities.

UMSL is in a three-way tie for #14 with the University of Missouri-Kansas City and the University of Houston. The survey pointed to UMSL's social service and community health efforts through several university centers such as the Center for Trauma Recovery, Sue Shear Institute for Women in Public Life, and the Children's Advocacy Services of Greater St. Louis.

“All provide community-wide support and establish UMSL as one of the most important community service providers in any metropolitan area in the country," the report said.

SLU landed at the #22 spot.

“St. Louis University reflects the best of the Jesuit devotion to the inner city poor. Foregoing an opportunity to move to a suburban location, the university chose to remain and help revitalize downtown St. Louis,” the reports said.

The survey singled out SLU’s Micah Program in which students with an interest in community service live together and do various projects in the community. It also noted SLU’s Doerr Center for Social Justice Education and Research, which focuses on the urban poor.

Washington University was among the 100 institutions listed on the honor roll.

The University of Pennsylvania and the University of Southern California tied for the #1 spot. The University of Dayton and the University of Pittsburgh tied for #2.

The report notes that it is meant to highlight programs, not to exclude any. It also did not include schools in more traditional "college towns" which is probably why schools like Mizzou did not make the list.

The list used some of the following criteria:

- real dollars invested
- catalyst effect on others
- presence felt through payroll, research and purchasing power
- faculty and student involvement in community service
• effect on local student access and affordability to attend college through K-12 partnerships

The 2009 list is an updated report from a similar survey in 2006. Neither SLU nor UMSL made the top 25 list in the inaugural survey.

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