



# **Faith, Family and Service Among UDM Students**

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**By**

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**Faith, Family and Service**

**Among UDM Students**

by Joshua Eby

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## **Abstract**

Service is an important facet of my life and the lives of many students at UDM. In this thesis, I wanted to study the connections for students between their faith and family backgrounds and their attitudes and participation in service. To do this, I interviewed several of my friends and created a survey about these topics which I distributed to UDM students online via the “All Students and Graduate Students” email listserv. I received 261 valid responses, and I analyzed the survey data with the software SPSS to look for statistical correlations in the data.

I learned that building relationships with clients was key to good service-learning outcomes among students. In addition, I found that if students take an increased number of service-learning classes, then they will have better perceptions of service and gain greater awareness of social justice issues. I also gained useful suggestions from students on how to improve the service-learning process. Student’s motivation to serve appears to come primarily from wanting to contribute to and connect with their communities.

I found some of the primary reasons why students participate in service to be that they had participated in it before UDM, and that they enjoyed it and made it a priority. I observed that students who enjoy service also prioritize it, and vice-versa. I also learned that students feeling that that are making a difference is important to their prioritization and enjoyment of service; this makes sense in light of students viewing service primarily as a method of engaging with their communities.

I learned that prayer and scripture-reading help to explain why students enjoy service at UDM. In some of my statistical analysis, I found that faith variables used together with service variables proved more valuable in explaining variations in the data. This, along with prayer and

scripture being important for good service outcomes, helps to give us a picture of the ways in which faith and service interact with one another.

I also found that students became more or less devoted to their religious practices in college, and that they became even more polarized in this behavior in graduate school. I found little statistical data to support the idea that parental involvement spurs students on to participate in service later in life, though parents having a good attitude about service did prove to be important for explaining why those students who did service with their parents enjoy service. This data can be used as is to gain a picture of the complex relationships between faith, family, and service, to improve the service-learning process, and as a jumping-off point to do further survey and statistical analysis on service-learning students at UDM and other schools.



## **Introduction**

When I began my research, I had a number of questions about the connections between faith and service, about the influence of UDM on students' attitudes toward faith and service, and about parent and family influence on their attitudes toward faith and service. The following are some of the key questions that motivated my research.

### **Key Questions: What Do I Want to Know?**

#### **Faith and Service Questions**

- ◆ What are the connections between faith and service for UDM students?
- ◆ What impact do religious practices have on a student's involvement in and attitude about service?
- ◆ What factors influence students enjoying doing service and making it a priority?

#### **UDM Influence Questions**

- ◆ What impact does UDM have on students' faith?
- ◆ What is the impact of service-learning classes on a student's faith and service involvement?
- ◆ What can be done to improve service-learning at UDM, both from people's suggestions and data analysis of attitudes that lend themselves to service prioritization/enjoyment?

#### **Other Questions**

- ◆ What impact do parents have on a student's involvement in and attitude about service?
- ◆ Do students actually value service as much as they say they do?

## **Personal Importance**

The subject of this survey is important to me because of my relationship with Jesus Christ. My purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. This purpose is practically lived out in loving service to others, and this is the reason I plan to become a missionary physician to Africa after my medical training in the States. Jesus' radical service to humanity in humbling himself by serving and dying for us has driven me to give my life to him and seek to serve other people as he does. This is the main reason I am personally interested in service and also interested in the reasons for why people of different faith and family backgrounds would share my interest.

# **I. Materials and Methods**

## **General Methodology**

In the development of the topic and in the pursuit of information for this thesis, I decided to use an experimental approach that would show me the details of how students' faith and family background influenced their involvement in service. To do this, I used interviews and an online survey to gain information from UDM students about their faith and service involvement, and I used this data for statistical analysis to draw conclusions about these interactions. Under the encouragement of my thesis director, I decided to focus primarily on developing new ideas about the interaction between faith and service from the survey data results rather than focus on analysis and comparison of this data with outside source material. I did this so that I could make progress on understanding how UDM influences the faith and service development of its students, and hopefully gain relevant information from students to help bolster and improve the process of service-learning.

## **Interviews**

During my junior year while developing the concept for my honors thesis, I knew that I wanted to do a survey project that analyzed several different variables in conjunction with service, but I was not sure how to design a survey to get this information. As a preliminary task, I decided to interview several of my friends from different faith backgrounds in order to give some direction to the survey development. Some general information about them is shown below in Table 1.

**Table 1. Interview Participants.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Lina</b>	<b>Jose</b>	<b>Evan</b>	<b>Anna</b>	<b>Kaylan</b>	<b>Kaitlin</b>
<b>Class</b>	Senior	Junior	Senior	Senior	Graduate	Senior
<b>Religion</b>	Muslim	Unaffiliated	Atheist	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic

The interviews took an average of approximately 30 minutes and were conducted in December of my junior year. The focus of the interviews was similar to the focus of the final survey, with the exception that the interviews also included information specific to the city of Detroit, inquiring as to the student's history with Detroit and family background as it related to Detroit. Though I am very interested in the city of Detroit and how students relate to it, the topic of the city proved to be beyond the scope of the survey and what I was hoping to learn in my most pressing questions. Quotes and stories from these interviews appear throughout this thesis in order to illustrate connections to correlations found in the survey data.

### **Survey Development/Gathering: SurveyMonkey**

After transcribing the interviews, I moved on to development of the survey I would use to understand the connection between faith/family background and students' involvement in service during their college years. The primary questions I wanted to answer can be seen in the introduction section to this thesis, with the basic goal of finding correlations between students' involvement in service and specific motivations or experiences in their faith and family backgrounds. The initial survey draft had about 80 questions; through a series of revisions, this was cut down to 32 questions with some questions containing multiple subquestions. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A. The survey was uploaded to the online survey instrument called SurveyMonkey, a website which allows people to design surveys and collect

responses online, then download the data into an appropriate software program for analysis. I collected the responses to my survey during the month of January 2013. I received 269 responses, 8 of which were from non-UDM students (an automatic disqualification), leaving a total of 261 responses for analysis. Throughout the survey, “N” will be used to represent the number of respondents in a given category; hence for general survey analysis (not subsets of the population),  $N = 261$ .

### **Data Analysis: SPSS**

Once the survey was closed, I analyzed the data with the computer analysis software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), looking for information and trends between variables using the following analytical tools.

- ◆ Frequencies: These are simply the number of respondents who responded a certain way to a certain question. Though frequencies do not provide us with any information as to which variables correlate with one another, they do give us a good general sense of what a population looks like in terms of a certain variable and allow us to get a sense of the relative importance of certain variables.
- ◆ Confidence Intervals: The confidence we can place in a given subset of data is based on the inverse square root of the number of respondents in that category. The confidence intervals for the total subset analysis is  $1/\sqrt{261} = \pm 6.19\%$ . This means that we can assume that the true values for the correlations for the total population lie within 6.19% of the value reported here.

- ◆ Means Comparisons: These averages allow us to compare how important certain variables with rankings are relative to one another; this is important in “ranking” categories like “faith development” where the possible answer choices for certain variables like “time spent with family” are “Very Important/Somewhat Important/Mildly Important/Not Important.” Means comparisons let us see how relatively important certain variables are to explaining a general process like faith development by seeing what their average value is between 1 and 4, 1 being the most important.
- ◆ Bivariate Correlations: These individual equations allow us to see the specific correlations between only two variables at a time, giving us an opportunity to see how strongly two isolated variables interact with one another in a given population. The Pearson Correlation is a description of linearity equivalent to  $R$  in the  $R^2$  description of linearity; thus this value is squared to find how linearly a given independent variable describes a given dependent variable.  $R^2$  and significance values are further explained in the “Linear Regression” section below.
- ◆ Linear Regression Equations: This is the primary tool I used in data analysis, as it allows us to build a linear model of multiple independent variables to describe a single dependent variable while taking into account the influence of the independent variables on each other. The numbers used to describe this model are  $R^2$ , which describes the linearity of the line produced by the independent variables. An  $R^2$  value of 0.4 indicates that the independent variables explain 40% of the variation in the dependent variable. For the purposes of this thesis, an  $R^2$  value greater than or equal to 0.2 is considered statistically significant. The t-value indicates how well a given independent variable correlates with the dependent variable; for the purposes of this thesis, a t-value greater

than or equal to 2 is considered statistically significant. The significance value gives us an indication of how likely it is that the indicated correlation is due to random chance or error; the significance value must be less than or equal to 0.05 to be considered statistically significant (indicating that there is less than a 5% chance that the correlation is due to random chance).

### **Miscellaneous**

In order to perform the above analysis, several variables had to be recoded in order to make them describe the data linearly. For example, when describing how involved in their faith they were since coming to UDM, students were given the options of “more”, “less” or “about the same” when “about the same” should have been in the middle to describe the data on a linear scale. These and other question data sets were altered (recoded in the SPSS program) to give the most linear possible correlations in the data analysis.

One thing that I personally have learned through the experience of gathering and analyzing this data on UDM students is that data analysis in the social sciences is different from data analysis in the physical sciences. Whereas in chemistry experiments we are able to isolate a single independent and dependent variable, the social sciences are far more complex because they analyze complex human interactions. Human beings are complex creatures, and the different variables being analyzed in any sociological survey often interact in complex ways which affect the linearity of the data. Thus,  $R^2$  values which describe the linearity of a conceptual model explaining the interaction of multiple variables will often be lower in the social

sciences than in the physical sciences. This does not mean that the data is “worse”, but rather describes a more complex phenomenon.



## II. Frequencies Descriptions of UDM Student Population

In Figures 1-3 below, we can see a general picture of the surveyed population of UDM students as a whole in terms of religion, race, and class. We can see that among survey respondents, about 80% are Catholic or Protestant, about 70% are White/Caucasian, and that the classes were about evenly represented.

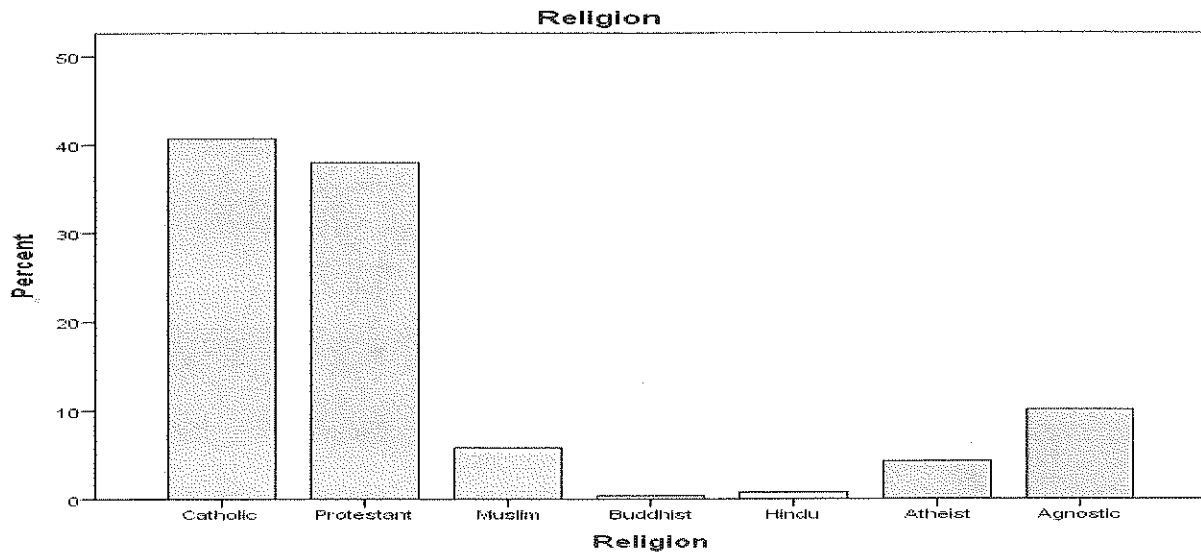


Figure 1: Religious Affiliation of UDM Students.

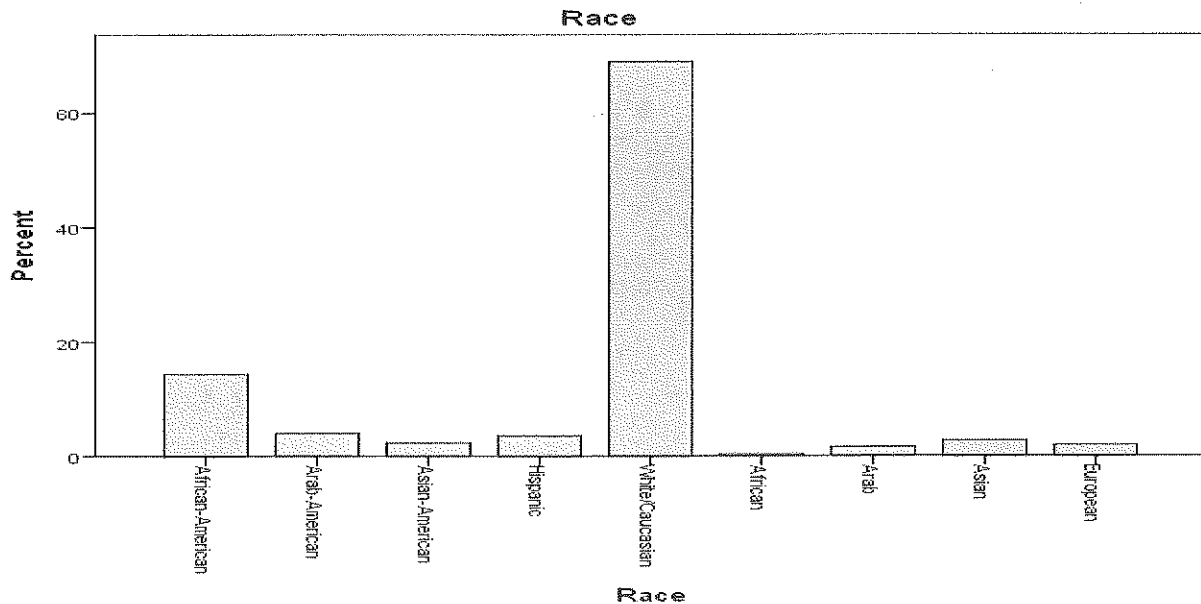
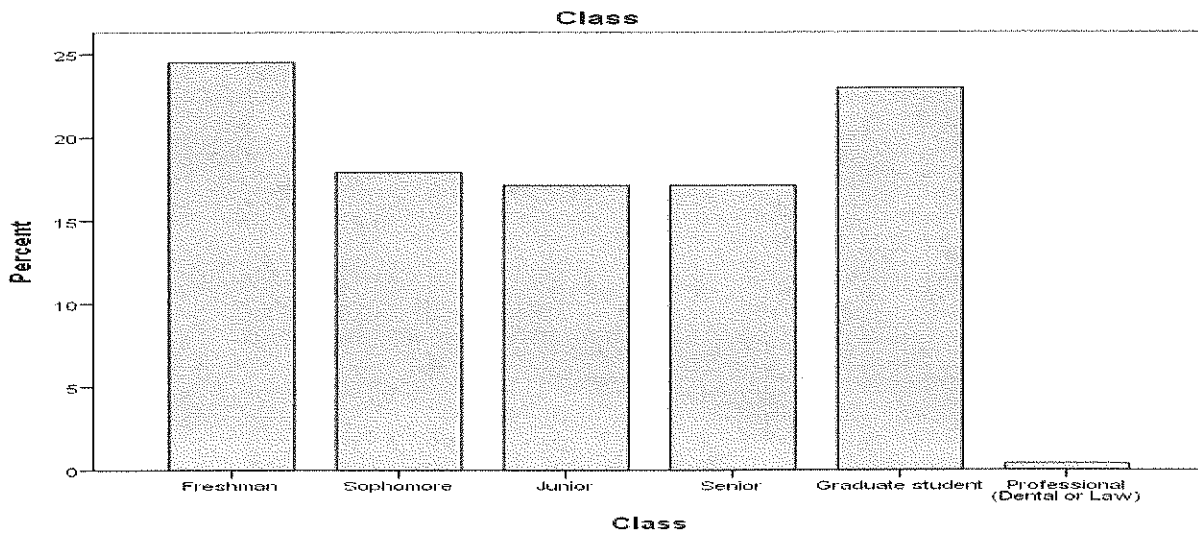


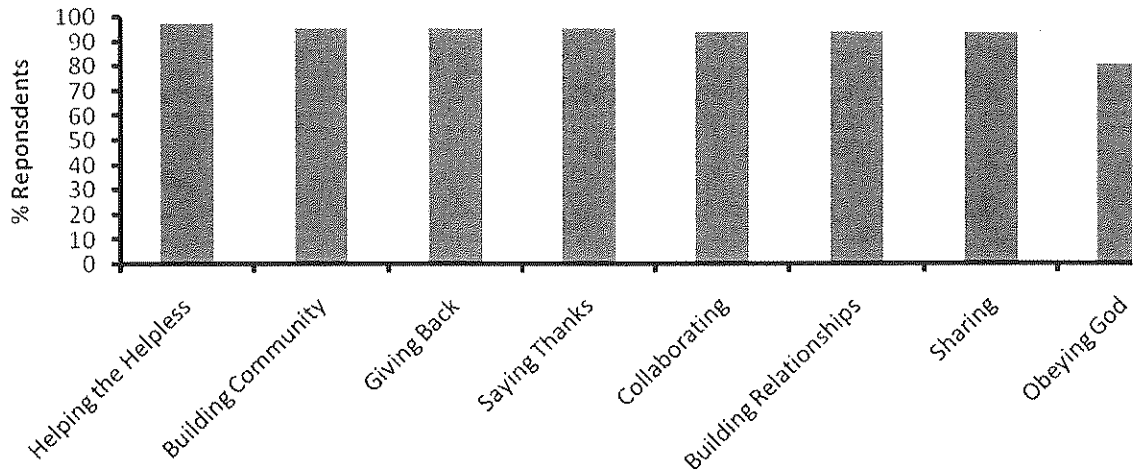
Figure 2: Race of UDM Students.



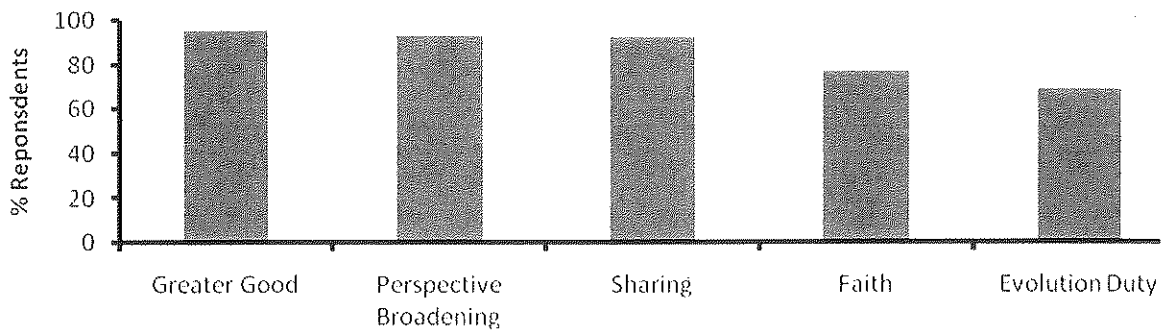
**Figure 3: Class of UDM Students.**

**Figures on Faith/Service Outlook among UDM Students**

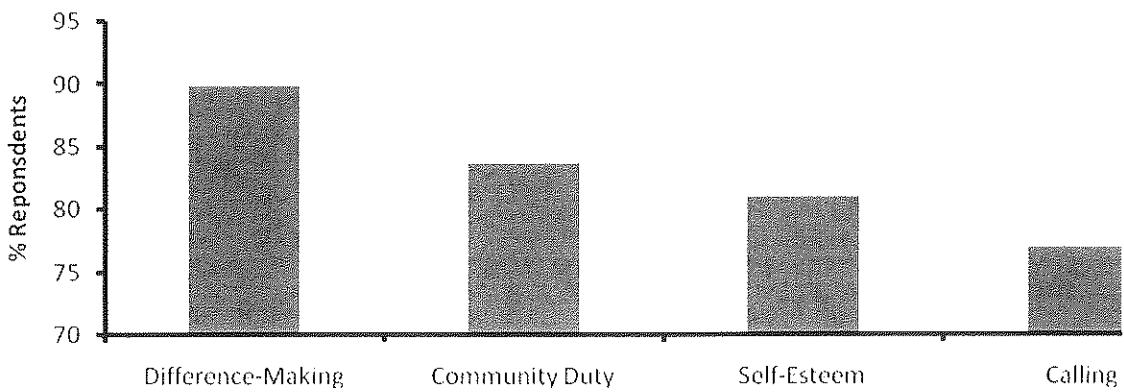
The following three graphs in Figures 4-6 demonstrate the different feelings students have about service in response to (1) what service is, (2) why people in general should serve, and (3) what motivates them personally to do service. These charts show the percentage of respondents that said the variable in questions was “Very Important” or “Somewhat Important” to their understanding of the described variable.



**Figure 4: “How important are the following in your understanding of ‘service?’”**



**Figure 5: “How important are the following for why people should serve?”**

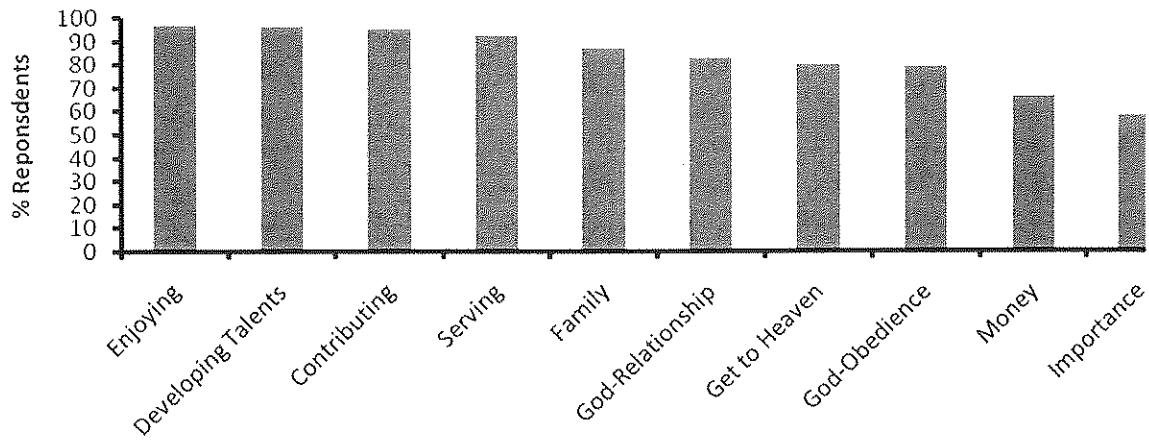


**Figure 6: “How important are the following in motivating you to do service?”**

If I had to sum up the top two answers in each category, I would say that UDM students serve in order to contribute to and connect with their community. Kaitlin spoke about how connecting with the community she was serving was important to her: “It was that common part that made it cool...we were having the experience in common with the people. While we’re not experiencing the same things as they, we have this common time together. So I think that the desire to serve comes from there, comes from seeing how those common interactions have contributed to my life.” This will prove to be important later on in the thesis when I discuss the impact of forming relationships with the people we serve on other aspects of service. Looking at the most common answers in Figures 4-6, we can see that if we combine the top two answers in each category, all except one of the six (“Perspective Broadening” in Figure 5) relates to contributing to a community. This shows us that UDM students generally understand service to be defined by contributing to and connecting with a community. We can also see that, based on Figure 6, community ethic is what motivates them personally to get involved in service, making a difference and acting on their duty to community.

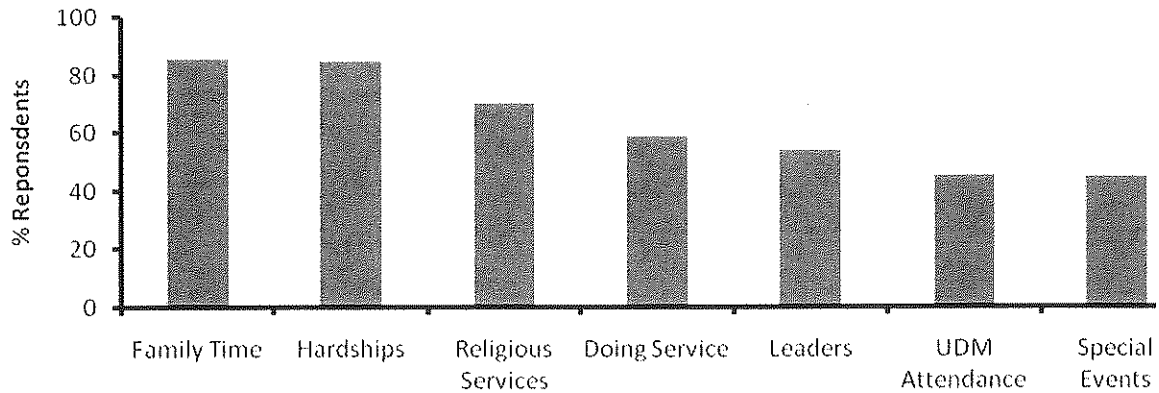
Figure 7 below shows how students perceive their purpose in life. We can see that the general trend is that career- or religion-oriented answers (the final five on the graph) are not as important to students as enjoying their lives and contributing to their communities. This fits well with students doing service in part for the community connection, with the addition of enjoyment and developing talents to the model, though contributing and serving are close behind. This synthesis (or tension) between enjoying service and prioritizing it as a community duty will be expanded on later in the thesis, and these motivations will be compared in their linear regression equations as well as their relative importance in motivating students to serve. Though some

portions of the interviews did relate to the interviewee’s purpose in life, those reflections are best placed in the context of this later section about the interaction between faith and service.



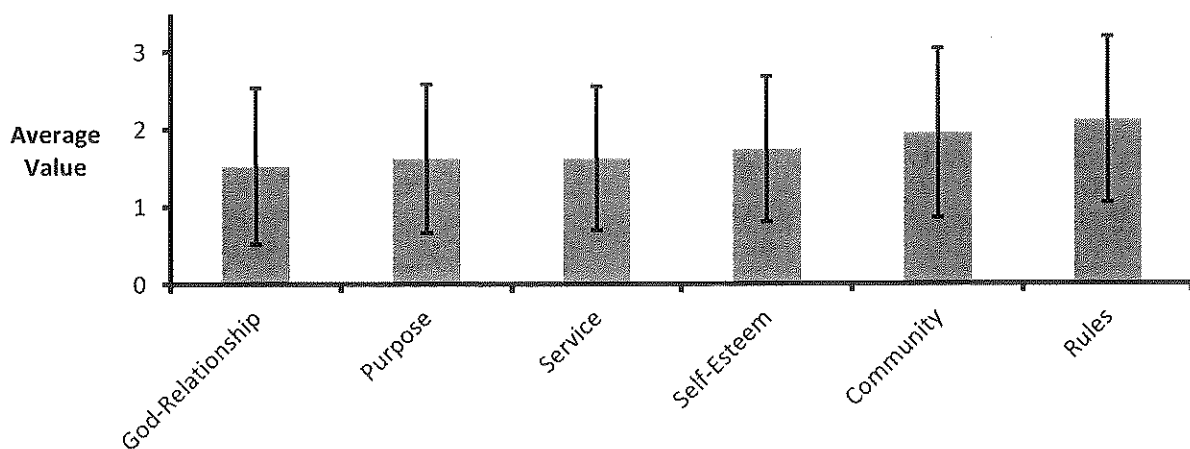
**Figure 7: “How important are the following things in your understanding of your purpose in life?”**

One of the most interesting aspects of the thesis for me is seeing what factors were most formative in shaping a person’s faith, with the frequency results shown below in Figure 8. I think if we can understand better what experiences were formative to people’s faith, we can understand better their current faith, how it affects the way they view the world, and also how it determines their behavior in service. For Evan, as with the average respondent, faith developed most under hardships and experiences with his family: “Dealing with things outside my control, that neither my parents nor anyone else has control over always frustrated me. I try to focus on the human level, and there’s always things we can’t explain. I’ve been grappling with issues that are beyond the human.”

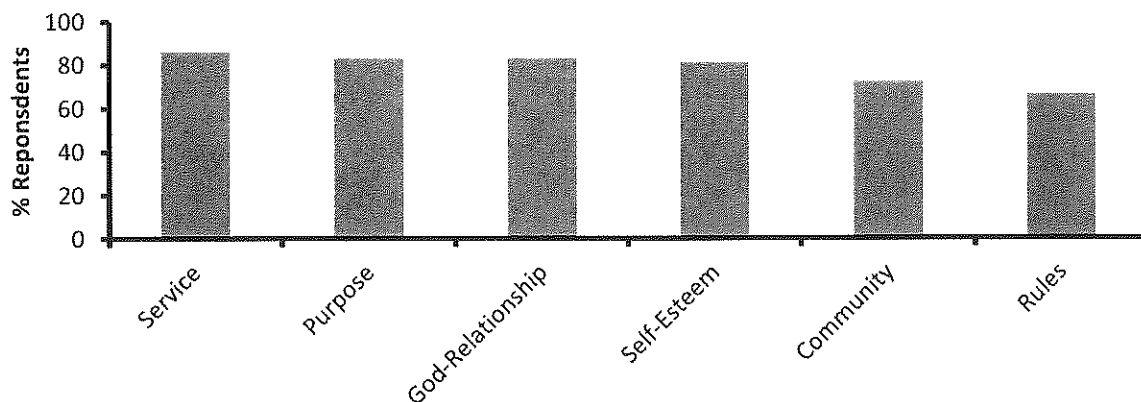


**Figure 8: “How important were the following to your faith development?”**

Finally, I considered the ways that students practiced their faiths, shown below in Figure 9 (via means comparisons) and 10 (via frequencies). I found a lot of variety in my interviewees about the main ways that they practice their faith. For Lina, it was the rules and being loyal to a family/community (the least important in both Figures 9 and 10 for the general student population): “The biggest way I practice my religion is by not doing things that are forbidden...I can't wait to spend most of my time with my husband and my kids, and my dad and sisters who understand why we're doing the things we're doing...Loyalty is a big thing.”



**Figure 9: “How important are the following to the way you practice your faith?”**



**Figure 10: “How important are the following to the way you practice your faith?”**

Though the mean value shows having a relationship with God as being the most important way people practice their faith, the combined value of “Very” and “Somewhat Important” categories show that service is the most important way UDM students practice their faith. This holds true for Jose, for whom faith is about relationships and service: “I have expectations for everybody: ‘Be a nice person.’...[taking aspects from multiple religions] allows me to grow into a religion that I believe in, meaning that I can go ahead and give 100% to God and not necessarily be in a religion, but at the same time I’m still helping others as much as possible. It helps me take different aspects of religion and use them to the best extent that I can.”

When Evan talked about his religious views, he spoke about broadening perspectives, something that was not included in the survey for means of faith practice: “So I guess just thinking of [myself] as insignificant compared to the bigger picture is how I view things. We tend to focus a lot on ourselves, but we need to realize that each person is doing that, being introverted...I guess that’s how I try to add perspective to someone. A bunch of near perspectives can give a wider perspective.”

And for Anna, as with much of the polled population in terms of relative importance, it is about having a relationship with God: “For my family it was more about your relationship with

God than it being a religion.” Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it would be interesting to also ask questions in future surveys about the different perceptions students have about religion and its connections with a relationship with God; some students see these as antithetical (as Anna does), while others see them as part of the same process. Though I used to see religion as opposed to a relationship with God, I have come to see that there can be both empty and fulfilling expressions of religion in connecting with God. My own relationship with God gives me purpose in life and has prompted my career choice to be overseas medical missionary work, which is a large part of the way I will practice my religion in the future.



### III. Influence of Faith on Service

One of the things I wanted to look at in my thesis was the mutual influence of faith and service on one another. The main way that I analyzed this with linear regression equations was to run a service variable as the dependent variable and then my faith variables as independent variables to see which ones provided the best model. I did the reverse to see the influence of service on faith; these regressions can be seen in Chapter 4. To begin with, I ran a regression on service enjoyment and prioritization with faith variables, seen below in Tables 2-3. Frequencies for these variables are shown and discussed more thoroughly in Section VIII.

**Table 2: “Service Enjoyment Level” Results ( $R^2 = .211$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Calling motivates Personal Service	6.737	.000
Prayer at UDM	2.017	.045

**Table 3: “Service Priority Level” Results ( $R^2 = .278$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Calling motivates Personal Service	4.868	.000
Importance of service to faith practice	4.032	.000
Scripture before UDM	2.444	.015
Prayer before UDM	-2.701	.007

We can see clearly in both regressions that students feeling called to service is important for explaining both why they enjoy and prioritize service. After that, the variables separate to some extent; enjoying service can be explained in part by prayer, while prioritizing service can be explained by scripture-reading and importance of service to the practice of faith. Interestingly, there is a negative correlation between pre-UDM prayer and service prioritization. If this is dropped out of the equation, scripture also drops out, so I decided to keep both due to the overall effect on the model.

Scripture before UDM has motivated me to prioritize service, and the Catholic/Christian women in my interviews seemed to have a similar experience to me in knowing God’s love revealed in scripture, and it motivating them to serve. Anna: “God has created so many people, and being able to reach out to them, especially those that are less fortunate, is really crucial to me, doing the best I can to serve them. I feel like serving people who don’t know God is a really good way to make a connection with them.” Kaylan: “The way that I actually show love for someone is to serve them or give them something, and it’s the same with God. I feel like we’re here to glorify him, and to show him to other people, and I think service is the best way to do that.” Kaitlin: “Doing acts of service has also been a big way of living out my faith, going on ASB trips, doing service-learning, or service projects with APO.” Jose brought out the community-duty motivation in his interview: “I’m a big person of virtues and giving back, making sure that the person next to you is doing better than when they came to you. Mother Teresa said ‘never leave someone without leaving them better.’”

To gain a more complete picture of service enjoyment and prioritization in terms of both faith and service, I ran the above regressions with service variables included in the model, with the following results.

**Table 4: “Service Enjoyment Level” Results ( $R^2 = .384$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Making a Difference is important to Personal Service	6.192	.000
Service priority level	4.100	.000
Prayer at UDM	3.741	.000
Parent service attitude	3.597	.000

This model for service enjoyment explains 16% more of the variation in service enjoyment than the model with faith variables alone. Though two of the faith variables (a sense of calling motivating service and social justice awareness) dropped out of the equation, prayer

proved valuable for explaining service enjoyment in both models, leading us to believe that participation in praying is valuable for explaining and helping students to enjoy service.

**Table 5: “Service Priority Level” Results ( $R^2 = .365$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Making a Difference is important to Personal Service	3.732	.000
Serving is important to Life Purpose	3.533	.000
Service enjoyment level	2.857	.005
Importance of service to faith practice	2.542	.012

The model for service priority explains 9% more of the variation in service prioritization than the model with faith variables alone. Again, the scripture, prayer and calling variables dropped out of the equation in favor of service-oriented variables, though the importance of service to faith practice variable stayed. Notable in comparing this regression to the new regression for service enjoyment is that making a difference appears at the top of both of their independent variable tables, demonstrating that feeling like one is making a difference is important for explaining why students both enjoy and prioritize service. Service enjoyment and service prioritization also appear in each other’s regressions, showing that they are important for explaining one another, and in fact bolster one another in students’ experience of service. Also of note in these regressions is the fact that using both service and faith variables to describe these dependent service variables proved to explain more of the data; this in itself is evidence for the interaction of faith and service coming together to describe the enjoyment and prioritization of service.

## **Summary**

I learned that prayer is an important variable for explaining students' enjoyment of service (Tables 2 & 4). I learned that if students feel as if they are making a difference, then they will both enjoy and prioritize service more (Tables 4 & 5). These regressions also show to mutual influence between students enjoying and prioritizing service, as they help to explain each other as dependent variables (Tables 4 & 5). I also learned from these regressions that faith and service independent variables together explain more of the enjoyment and prioritization of service than faith independent variables alone, which is evidence for the interaction of faith and service to explain these models.

## IV. Influence of Service on Faith

One of the ways that I studied the direct effect of service on a student's faith is by running statistics on those students who did service at most once every six months before coming to UDM, and who now do service at least once per month after coming to UDM. The sample size was understandably small ( $N = 20$ , increasing the confidence intervals to a daunting  $\pm 22\%$ ), but I did find some interesting data, seen below in the frequencies comparing the religious practices of all UDM students to these 20 students who made a large change in the amount of time they spend doing service, with the following results (the most significant changes are those with a difference of  $\pm 5\%$ , and are highlighted in the table below).

**Table 6: All Students Religious Practices (At least once per month).**

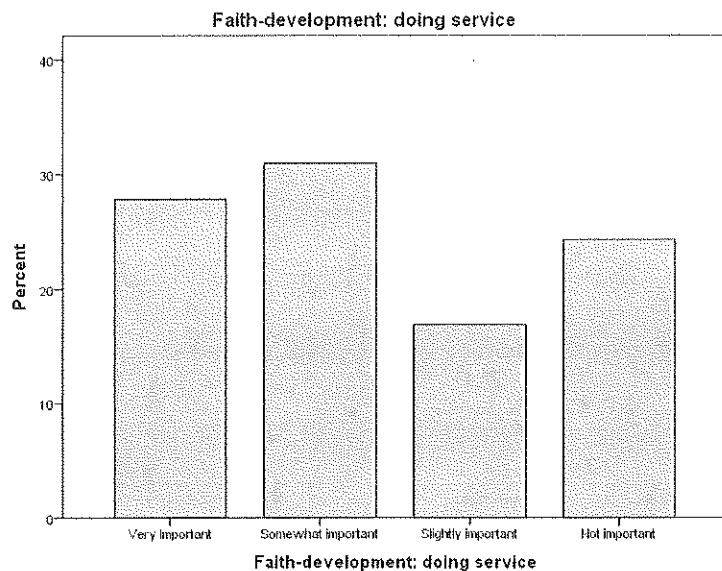
	Religious Services	Prayer	Scripture Reading	Service
<b>Before UDM</b>	76.9%	89.1%	60.5%	76.7%
<b>UDM</b>	67.6%	88.0%	58.1%	75.5%

**Table 7: New Servers Religious Practices (At least once per month).**

	Religious Services	Prayer	Scripture Reading	Service
<b>Before UDM</b>	65.0%	90.0%	45.0%	0.0%
<b>UDM</b>	57.9%	89.5%	68.4%	100.0%

It is notable that in both cases, attendance at religious services went down upon coming to UDM. Kaitlin commented on this in her interview: "I don't have to go to church. I don't have to do anything really. Coming to college has made me see that my faith is more personal because I make the decision about whether to go to church or not." The other obvious change in the tables is that among the new servers, scripture reading went up 23.4%, correlating well with the "Importance of Service to Faith Practice" regression showing scripture to be important to that model.

In order to help determine the influence service has on a person’s faith, I ran a regression on service being important to faith development (see Table 8 below) using both service and faith variables. The frequency responses for this dependent variable are also shown below in Figure 11, with 58.8% of students saying that service was at least somewhat important to their faith development. This variable correlated well with those who said that going to UDM, as well as going on mission trips or going to camps, was also important to their faith development. It also correlated well with students’ motivation for service being making a difference in their community, which was also the highest average-cited reason for a student personally being involved in service (see Figure 6). It seems reasonable to conclude that UDM and other service events, some of which are connected to the university (such as Alternative Spring Break) have been instrumental in student’s faith development, as cited by many of my interviewees (see Sections VI-VII).

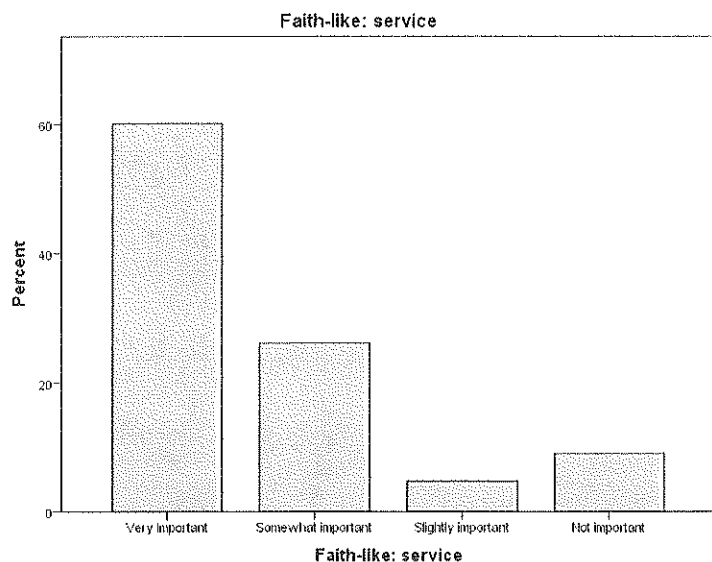


**Figure 11: “Doing Service was important to Faith Development.”**

**Table 8: “Doing Service was important to Faith Development” Results ( $R^2 = .495$ ).**

	t	Sig.
UDM was important to Faith Development	8.718	.000
Special Events were important to Faith Development	5.776	.000
Making a Difference motives Personal Service	5.380	.000

I also ran a regression on students for whom service is important to their faith, with the regression results shown below in Table 9, and the frequencies for this dependent variable shown in Figure 12, with 86.3% of respondents saying that service was at least somewhat important to the practice of their faith.



**Figure 12: “Service is Important to Faith Practice.”**

**Table 9: “Service is Important to Faith Practice” Results ( $R^2 = .517$ ).**  
 (“An important part of my faith is that it helps me to foster an attitude of service to others”)

	t	Sig.
Obeying God is important to Service Understanding	6.511	.000
Doing service was important to Faith Development	4.215	.000
Prayer at UDM	4.086	.000
Building Community is important to Service Understanding	3.079	.002
Duty to Community motivates Personal Service	2.242	.026

These variables relate to understanding service as a community duty (the last two), and service being important to both development and obeying God (the first two); between them lies an interesting religious practice variable: prayer.

Jose spoke about the community aspect of service in his faith: “The more I meet people, the more I see that I can serve them by just being there, and I think that’s wonderful. I’ve met tons of people that just need somebody there...Things like that are why I love to serve. I constantly serve just by being there, it’s like a job.” Evan also touches on this concept of service being important to investing in community with a rephrase of the Golden Rule: “I guess it’s that reciprocal thing again, I do it because I would want someone to serve me if the tables were flipped, help me if I were in need.”

As referenced in Section III, I also wanted to try to discern the effect of service on faith by running specific faith variables as the dependent variables in linear regressions and then trying to describe them with only service variables as independents.

**Table 10: “UDM Faith Influence” Results ( $R^2 = .124$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Importance of service to faith practice	2.542	.012
Faith motivates service	2.413	.017
Increased social justice awareness	2.130	.034

Though these results have a low measure of linearity ( $R^2 = .124$ ) and are not very statistically significant (the significance values are higher than I would like), there is a degree of subjectivity in the “UDM Faith Influence” variable since the middle selection (“I am about as involved in my faith as I was before attending UDM) drew about 65% of the responses, resulting in a bell-shaped curve which would make  $R^2$  correlations less than ideal. In spite of this, we are able to observe some variables which help to explain whether UDM has a positive influence on a student’s faith. Service being important to a student’s practice of faith and faith motivating



service show us that an active, serving faith is a part of students' experience when UDM has a positive influence on their faith. Additionally, we see an interesting correlation with social justice awareness here; students becoming more aware of social justice issues helps to explain UDM having a positive influence on their faith, showing that UDM's emphasis on social justice as an outgrowth of living faith has found its way into the faith development (or at least correlates with and explains the faith development) of UDM students.

**Table 11: "Importance of Service to Faith Practice" Results ( $R^2 = .512$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Service is important to Life Purpose	6.459	.000
Obeying God is important to Service Understanding	4.303	.000
Faith motivates service	3.792	.000
Post-service-learning attitudes	3.087	.002

This regression shows a good degree of linearity, with a few obvious and a few not-so-obvious variables. The two middle variables are somewhat tautologous to the dependent, in that those students whose faith and obedience to God motivate their service would also say that service is important to their faith practice. If these second and third variables are removed, the  $R^2$  value drops to .339, so I considered this to be a better model as it explains 17% more of the variation in the dependent. The first and last variables show that gaining purpose from service and having a better perception of service after service-learning help to explain service being important to practice of faith. So service builds faith in part because it gives purpose, and we might even venture to say that service-learning helps to connect the dots for students between service and faith.

My favorite interview in trying to discern the relationship between faith and service was Kaitlin's; we had a difficult time trying to tease out the specifics of this interaction, since with Kaitlin (and I believe with many students) the two tend to influence one another; faith often

motivates us to serve, and serving becomes increasingly important in our faith development as it encourages us to practically live out our faith. “Service is part of the community aspect of my faith, not about being social, but about being an actual integrated community...I would boil it down to learning from other people, whether they share the same beliefs with me or not...that’s the connection between faith and service. Service broadens your perspective, lets you have different outlooks...I guess that’s a big way it connects to my faith too, because I like it when service is able to encourage me personally in my faith, even though that’s not the main point...It probably comes more from my desire to serve than from my faith, but I think that when I serve I’m able to see the connection with my faith, which enhances it.”

## **Summary**

In this section, we were able to see that increased scripture-reading correlated with students increasing their involvement in service (Tables 6 & 7). Special events, including UDM and mission trips, helped to explain service being a part of students’ faith development. We learned that prayer was an important religious practice in explaining the connection between service and faith (Table 9). We also saw that increased social justice awareness and positive views of service after service-learning helped to explain students’ faith development at UDM (Tables 10 & 11), perhaps indicating that service-learning helps students to connect the dots between faith and service. If students’ faith motivates their service (this variable helped to explain the regressions of both UDM faith development and service being important to faith practice), then their faith will be more likely to develop at UDM.

## V. Parental Influence on Service

In order to take a look at how doing service with parents influenced students, I took only those students who did service with their parents at least once per month (N = 67) and ran a regression on the amount of service that they do currently, with the following results.

**Table 12: “Service at UDM” Results ( $R^2 = .545$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Service before UDM	6.264	.000
Service enjoyment level	4.390	.000
Sharing gifts motivates service	3.534	.001
Importance of service to faith practice	-2.589	.012

The strongest correlation here is with doing service before UDM, followed by enjoyment of service and the motive of sharing ones gifts and talents with others. There is a negative correlation with service being important to faith practice, perhaps indicating that (among those who did service with their parents earlier in life) there is a tendency for these students to be involved in service more for reasons of community and family (see frequencies in Section II) and less for faith-based reasons. The prioritization of service is also not present in this model as it is in the model for all students, leading us to see that prioritization is not as important for explaining service-involvement for those who did service with their parents earlier in life than it is for explaining such involvement for all survey respondents as a whole. However, these students who served with their parents do show that enjoyment is important for explaining their participation in service, which is worth noting.

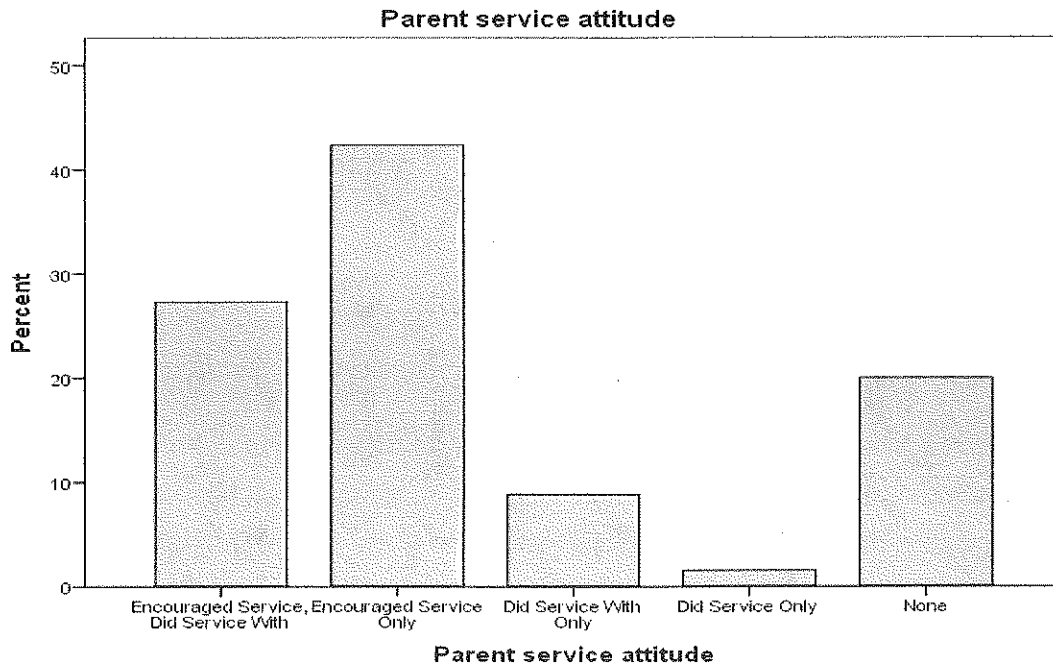
## What influence do parents have on service?

When looking only at the frequencies of my parent questions, I found a few interesting things about UDM students. They are closer to their mothers than their fathers, with 91.9% of respondents saying they agreed or mildly agreed that they were close to their mothers, while 82.7% of respondents said they agreed or mildly agreed that they were close to their fathers. About one-quarter of respondents (25.4%) did service with their parents at least once per month before coming to UDM, with 27.3% of parents both telling their children that service was important and then doing service with their children. Most of respondents (87.9%) had a faith that was somewhat if not very similar to their parent's faith.

Another interesting note is to see whether parents talking about the importance of service translates to them actually doing service with their children. One complication of this fact is that in determining what a parent's attitude towards service was, the spectrum of answers was not exactly linear, though it did represent a progression from being involved in service in word and deed with their children involved to no service involvement. This question is shown in Table 13 below, and Figure 13 shows percentage answers to this question.

**Table 13: Survey Question 11 Concerning Parental Attitudes Towards Service.**

	<b>Which statement best describes your parent's attitude toward service?</b>
(a)	My parents told me that service was important and did service with me
(b)	My parents told me that service was important
(c)	My parents did not tell me that service was important, but did service with me
(d)	My parents did service, but did not involve me in it
(e)	My parents did not tell me that service was important, and did not do service with me



**Figure 13: “Which statement best describes your parent’s attitude toward service?”**

A bivariate correlation between parents having a positive attitude about service as measured in the above question and parents actually doing service with their kids yielded a Pearson Correlation of 0.451 ( $R^2 = 0.203$ ). This means that 20.3% of parent’s positive attitudes towards service can be explained or correlated with parents actually doing service with their kids; 20.3% of the time, attitudes and actions go together, though this is a vast oversimplification due to the complex interaction of all other present variables, yet it gives us an idea of what is actually occurring. It does indicate that attitudes and actions are not perfectly paralleled in parents getting their children involved in service; of course, this is what we would expect since we all have inconsistent tendencies as human beings, and our feelings about a given issue do not necessarily cause us to act.

I ran a linear regression with UDM service as the dependent variable and all of my parental influence variables to see if I could develop a model where parental influence helps to explain involvement in service. After several trial runs with only parental variables, I could not

find any model with statistical significance. I then decided to add in a few service variables to see if I could round out the model, and was able to develop the following regression. One limitation in the dependent variable here is that, though service at UDM tells us how much service someone is doing, it does not tell us whether that service was required by service-learning classes or was voluntarily pursued by the students. Despite this limitation in what the survey can tell us, I believe that this variable is still useful since service-learning classes generally only require two service participations over the course of a 15-week semester, which I concluded is not enough to affect the top two groups (participation more than once per week or once or twice per month).

**Table 14: “Service at UDM” Results ( $R^2 = .127$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Doing service was important to Faith Development	3.391	.001
Pre-UDM service with parents	2.292	.023
Importance of faith practice	2.273	.024

Though these results may seem meager, they do show that pre-UDM service with parents can help to explain 12.7% of the variation in service done by UDM students, in connection with service being important to student’s faith development, and the practice of their faith being important to them.

While in the general population the connection between parental encouragement and student involvement in service seems tenuous, parental encouragement did show up in several interview respondents. Jose: “I was homeschooled and I got an assignment to learn about homelessness so I actually did an interview with some homeless people in downtown Detroit. I remember just sitting down and talking with these people and writing an essay for my mom. I thought ‘that’s cool.’ That’s my starting point.” Though Evan is very involved in service, his family experience drove him away from organized religion: “[M]y mom took me to church.

There was a lot of singing, and nothing really connected to me in any significant way.” Anna: “Having parents that believe really helped because they emphasized our faith in everything they did and said and they weren’t shy about discussing it with us. They would talk about our days with us and it was intertwined with our lives. That had a huge impact...They’re such good examples.” Kaylan: “I think my parents had a big role to play in my development because I live at their house, and they’re serious about God, and it was great to have them hold me accountable...my parents were big on having an ‘open home’ (to serve missionaries and others).”

Kaitlin, as with others, had a supportive faith environment but not much service with parents: “The activity and participation outside of church was the biggest thing, the way that my parents have talked to us about faith has become a really important part of my life...There’s no hard and fast line for how much time you’re supposed to spend [serving], but it’s been a big part of my education. I didn’t really do service with my family earlier in life, it would be more often with my parish/college community.” I suspect that the impact of parents on a student’s faith and service involvement is greater than the contents of this survey can reveal, and I think that further impact could be found with more survey respondents and questions specific to parental involvement in these areas of student’s lives.

## **Summary**

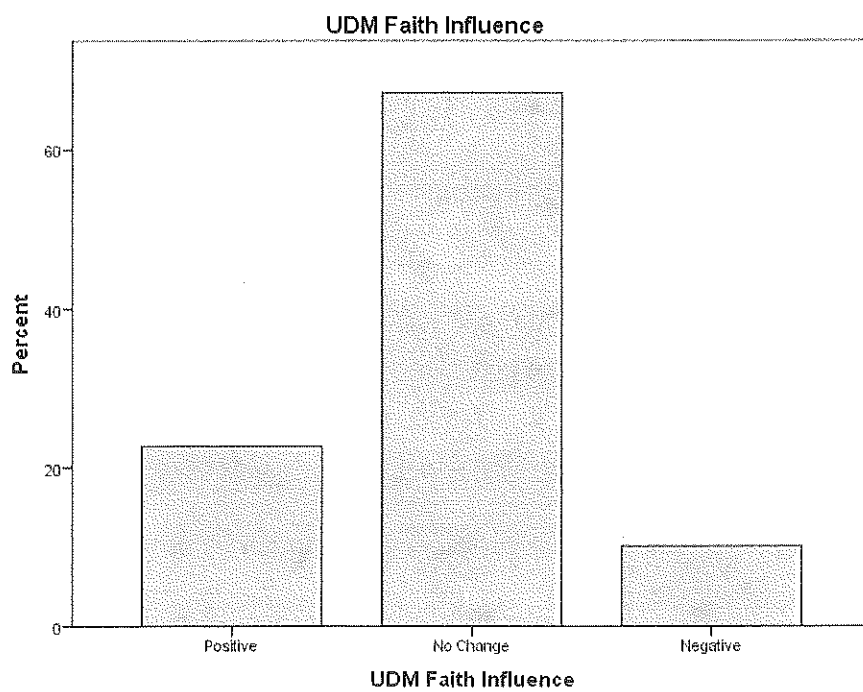
I learned that among students who served with their parents once per month or more, it appears that prioritizing service and pursuing service for faith reasons were not as important as pursuing service for enjoyment and sharing one’s gifts with others, connecting these students with the frequencies in Section II about community being a strong motivation towards service. In

analyzing parent's attitudes and actions regarding service, I found that my questions were not specific or linear enough to yield much data connecting these with student's involvement in service. The best model I could find to describe parents affecting service was that doing service with their children helped to explain 12.7% of the variation in student service at UDM (Table 14), though this is still a valuable correlation. Additionally, Table 12 does show that enjoyment is the second most important variable in explaining these students' involvement in service at UDM, whereas it is the third most important variable in the general population (see Table 19 in Section VIII). So perhaps students who served more with their parents earlier in life consider enjoyment to be a valuable part of their service experience now.

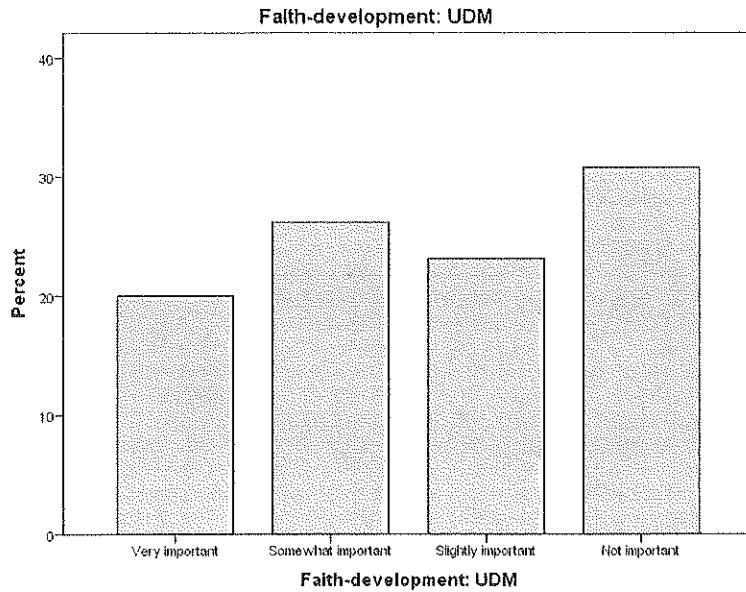


## VI. Influence of UDM on Faith

To get a sense of how students believed their faith and experience of service had grown since attending UDM, I ran a frequency chart on how students believed UDM had affected their faith, shown in Figure 14 below. I also ran frequencies on whether UDM was part of students' faith development, and these are shown in Figure 15.



**Figure 14: UDM Faith Influence.**



**Figure 15: “How important was UDM in your faith development?”**

From Figure 15, we can see that UDM was about as likely to be important to a student’s faith development as to not be important in that process. Students reported the effects of coming to UDM on their faith generally by describing how UDM has affected their faith (Figure 14), and then specifically with practices of their faith before and after UDM. The specific measures used were attendance at religious services, prayer, reading of scripture, and service to others. Students reported the effect of UDM on their faith as follows: 67.2% said their commitment to their faith was the same as before UDM, 10.2% said they were less committed to their faith since attending UDM, and 22.6% said they were more committed to their faith since coming to UDM. These self-gauges of commitment are not really played out in the numbers of how often they participate in their faith, however, as the following table shows participation in the following on at least a weekly basis.

**Table 15: Religious Practice Before and During UDM.**

	Religious Services	Prayer/Meditation	Scripture Reading	Service
Before UDM	51.5%	77.9%	38.4%	46.3%
UDM	42.1%	74.8%	41.1%	41.6%

There are several limitations to this data. First, this is based on the two categories of most consistent participation: weekly or more than once per week. The data does change slightly when different time parameters are set, but the general trends in the data are the same, and I thought that a weekly measure was sufficient to demonstrate this idea. Secondly, these four categories, though part of Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam are not integral parts of all faith traditions. I assume here that these four categories are a good measure of participation in a faith tradition because 84.5% of UDM students fall into one of these three religions. However, part of this discrepancy between claim and action might be due to the fact that students who would consider themselves more “spiritual” than “religious” would have other measures of religiosity, such as donations to charities, time spent investing in people, or other ways that they practice their faith.

Interestingly, with the one number that went up among this weekly participation data set, scripture reading seems to have become polarized; whereas every category hovered around 20% participation in scripture reading, the range after coming to UDM begins higher for more than once weekly (22.5%) then drops to 13.6% for once or twice yearly, then growing to 28.3% which never read scripture. Thus it is probable that those who read scripture often before UDM now read scripture more, and those that rarely read scripture before UDM now never read scripture. Anna spoke about how UDM posed a challenge to her faith and made her stronger in it: “It challenged me being far from my family and not knowing anyone here...Seeing different faiths all around me has also been a challenge to my spirituality and widened my perspective...Noticing people and being ok with them not believing the same things as I do. It’s important to me that even though I try to love them, I don’t let my morals and values get compromised, especially when I’m surrounded by people that don’t care about those decisions that I’ve made... Every day,

I wake up with the choice of living for God or not, so every day I'm trying and practicing living my life for God." Anna brings up a good point here that a change in attitude may also be important to how students becomes more committed to their faith; without the support of parents or a church at home, students must decide whether their religious practices will be important to them or not in their college life. This sort of change in attitude (not necessarily accompanied by a change in religious practices) could indicate why some students said that their faith is more important to them now than before attending UDM.

In doing bivariate correlations with UDM having a positive influence on students faiths, it was very hard to pinpoint what helps UDM to have this influence, even with the variables that describe the line well in the regression equation above. When bivariate correlations were run between UDM having a positive influence on a student's faith and other variables like gaining a better attitude about service from service-learning classes or the number of service-learning classes taken, the results were statistically insignificant. Thus there was not any convincing data in these regressions for why UDM influences a student's faith the way that it does.

It is difficult to say what effect UDM had on the view of service of my survey respondents, since most were already fairly involved in both their faiths and service before UDM, as Kaylan noted in her interview: "I wanted to go to school here, I was really interested in service already when I came here, and I knew that UDM was big on that. Service projects are very acceptable and available. That's why I was fine with coming here, there's always opportunities and it's a real place." Evan spoke of how he wanted to come to UDM in order to gain greater perspective: "I went to a very non-diverse high school. Everyone was more or less the same. Even then I realized how much it was stifling my learning, not being exposed to different religions and races. I needed to go to a place where I had a holistic learning

environment and I really found it at UDM...[Service is] not necessarily important as much as it's just something that you have to do, because I feel like otherwise you just don't open your eyes to the wider perspective. It's not only in my benefit to serve others, but it gives you a clear picture...we just open our eyes as wide as we can."

## **Graduate Students**

Among my respondents were a good number of graduate students (N = 60), on whom I ran some separate statistics to see the effect of UDM on those who are no longer undergraduates at the university, hopefully to be able to discern some of the effect UDM had on whether students do service after graduation. One obvious limitation of this approach is that I cannot be sure which graduate students attended UDM as undergrads, since this data was not taken in the survey, though half of them (N = 27) had taken at least one service-learning class, putting them in the category of post-UDM (or at least post-Jesuit) students. Even with this limitation, it does give us a tiny picture of students at a graduate-level Jesuit school, who have in a sense begun their "adult lives." An important thing to keep in mind about undergraduate students and service is that they are encouraged to be involved in service activities at least in part because such activities will look good on their applications to jobs or professional schools; this pressure is not as present in graduate school where service is not as necessary on a resume, and we are able to see how much service a person will do with resume-pressures set aside, which is part of the reason I am interested in UDM graduate students.

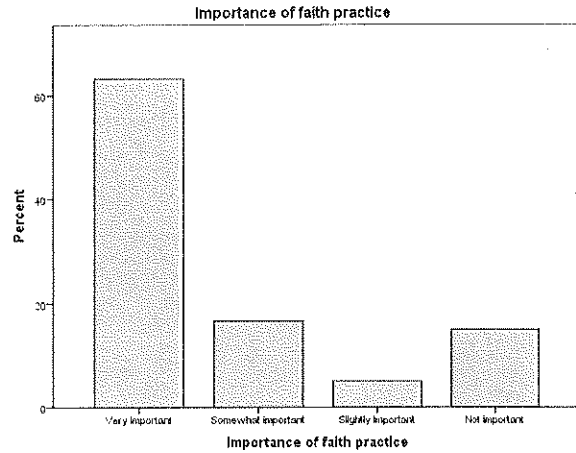
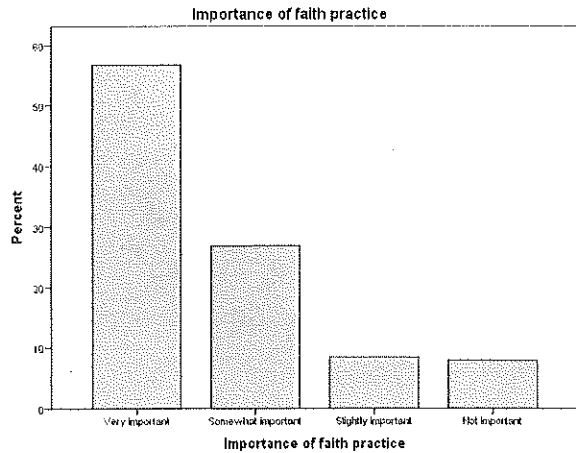
The regression for service among graduate students can be seen below, and admittedly looks similar to the regression for undergraduate students, with a few interesting additions.

**Table 16: “UDM Service” Results ( $R^2 = .765$ ).**

Model	t	Sig.
Service before UDM	8.544	.000
Service enjoyment level	2.702	.009
Sharing is important to Service Motivation	2.410	.019
Obedience to God is important to Life Purpose	2.040	.046
A Relationship with God is important to Life Purpose	-2.135	.037

Obviously, the best predictor of whether someone will do service during their time at UDM is whether they did service before UDM; doing service specifically with parents failed to be significant to this model as it did in the undergraduate service model. Also absent in this model but present in the undergraduate model was students prioritizing service being significant to doing service. New variables that show up are about service-motivation and faith involvement. For graduate UDM students, an important motive for serving is sharing the gifts they have been given with others. Additionally, they think of obeying God – but not having a relationship with him – as being important to their purpose in life.

Upon reading this regression, I wanted to see the relative importance of faith for undergraduate and graduate students at UDM and see if I could find why these “God variables” showed up in the graduate regression but not the undergraduate one. I compared the relative importance of faith practice for the two groups, with the results shown in Figures 15-16 below.



**Figure 15: Undergraduate Faith Practice.**

**Figure 16: Graduate Faith Practice.**

If we add the first and second, and then the third and fourth columns, we can see the distribution of those who consider their faith somewhat (or more) important and those who do not. Among undergraduates, 83.6% said that their faith was somewhat or very important to them; among graduate students, 80.0% said that their faith was somewhat or very important to them. If we compare the mean values of these graphs, we get 1.68 for undergraduates and 1.72 for graduates (1 being more important), meaning that on average the undergraduates consider their faith practice to be slightly more important to them (though not statistically, since the confidence intervals overlap). However, in looking at the graphs, we can see a certain polarization of faith practice occurring in the graduate students; whereas in undergraduates, 56.7% consider their faith practice to be very important to them and 8% consider it unimportant, 63.3% of graduate students consider their faith practice to be very important, while 15% consider it unimportant. This polarization can be understood by considering that undergraduate education is a very formative experience in a person's life; it is a time when faith is somewhat or slightly important for many (35.4%). Graduate students have entered their adult lives and do not tend to hang around in the somewhat/slightly middle ground (21.7%); thus, those whose faith is important to them and who are involved in service tend to have faith influences which correlate

statistically with their service, as seen in the graduate regression. This influence seems to be more duty based (out of a desire to obey God) than based on a relationship with God (which is negatively correlated with service).

Kaylan is a graduate student, and spoke in her interview about her desire to serve, while still noting time conflicts in adult life, and her desire to serve wherever she is: “Service is huge, it’s why we’re here...if Christ were here that’s what he would do, that’s why I think service is such a big deal, this is how we can be him here. That’s what makes me adamant about serving whenever I can; if there’s ever an opportunity, I’m there...I’m sad that I haven’t had as much time for service as I used to, I love being the hands and feet of the Gospel, that’s my passion...I would love to go overseas, because that’s where my heart is, serving the people there that are in need, but at the same time there are lots of people here who are in need as well, and I almost feel like during Detroit’s growth period I want to be here and see it through for a bit.”

## **Summary**

I learned that UDM has a “bell-curve” effect on students faith, with most students saying that their faith practice is about the same (Figure 14), and that UDM was about as likely as not to be important to students’ faith development (Figure 15). I learned that all religious practices measured by the survey went down in frequency with the exception of scripture-reading (Table 15), though this does not take into account non-religious measures of spirituality. I observed that among graduate students, faith practice tends to become more polarized, and service is motivated by both faith reasons (obedience to God) and community reasons (Table 16).

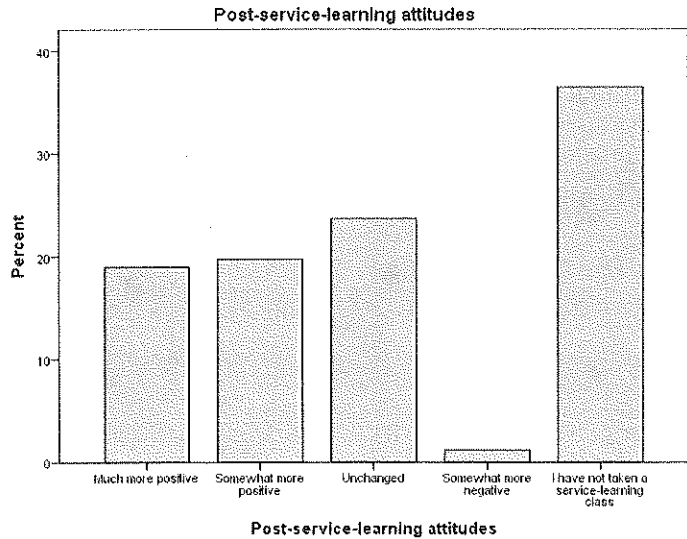


## VII. Service-Learning

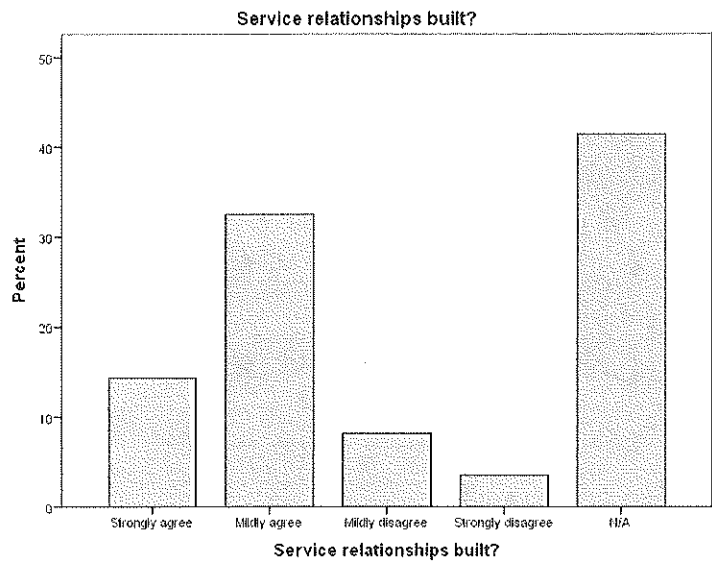
To begin my look at the influence of service-learning on UDM students, I ran frequencies on some key service-learning variables and how students experienced (or did not experience) these aspects in their service-learning. These variables were how many service-learning classes a student had taken, whether a student gained a better outlook on service while doing service-learning, whether they built relationships with the people they served in service-learning, and whether they gained a greater awareness of social justice issues in their communities through service-learning. These frequency results are shown in the figures below.



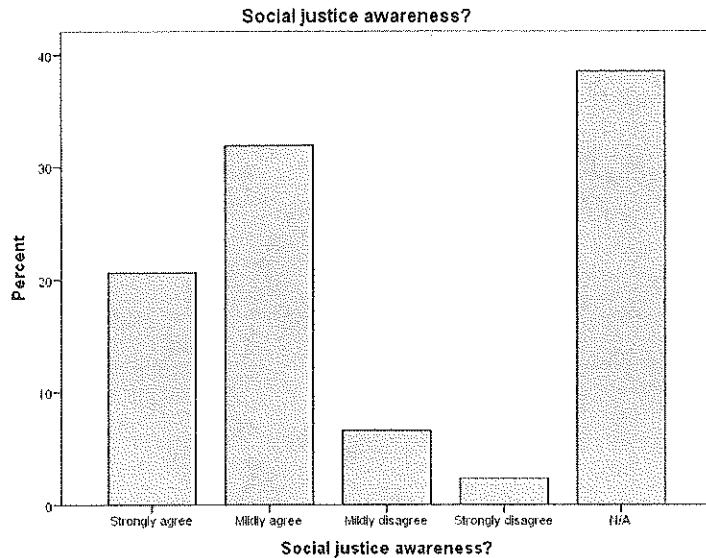
**Figure 17: Number of Service-Learning Classes.**



**Figure 18: Post-service-learning Attitudes.**



**Figure 19: Whether Relationships Were Built During Service-Learning.**



**Figure 20: Whether Social Justice Awareness was Gained Through Service-Learning.**

These frequencies show that just over half (50.8%) of respondents have taken at least 1 service-learning class, and that there is a bell-curve distribution in the answers to the other three questions aside from the N/A category in each for those who have not taken a service-learning class. It should be noted that, though around 50% said that they had not taken a service-learning class, the values in the other three charts for N/A were all around 40%, leading us to believe that perhaps the 10% discrepancy in respondents was because students did not know that the class they were taking was a service-learning class.

One of the things I like about UDM and the Jesuit order and Sisters of Mercy is that they emphasize service to others as the natural outgrowth of faith; this commitment to serving as a part of the learning experience at Jesuit and Mercy universities like UDM is demonstrated in service-learning. I wanted to look at whether taking service-learning classes had any specific effects on students, and I found that an increased number of service-learning classes proved valuable to explaining several different variables. The most important finding of these regressions, however, was the importance of building relationships with the people students

served in achieving positive service-learning outcomes. These regressions are found in Tables 17-18 in the following section.

### The Importance of Relationship-Building

I ran several linear regressions to see if building relationships would help to explain positive impressions of service after service-learning, with the following results.

**Table 17: “Post-Service-Learning Attitude” Results ( $R^2 = .639$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Relationships built during Service-Learning	9.633	.000
Increased # of Service-Learning Classes	4.277	.000
Increased awareness of Social Justice Issues	2.536	.012

Here, as I suspected, building relationships was the most important variable for explaining students gaining a better attitude about service from service-learning, with a very high  $R^2$  value of 0.639! Also very well correlated is an increased number of service-learning classes, leading us to believe that more service-learning exposure does help to explain a better attitude about service from such experience. We gain a similar picture by looking at whether relationship-building during service-learning is important to explaining social justice awareness, seen in the following regression.

**Table 18: “Increased Awareness of Social Justice Issues” Results ( $R^2 = .571$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Relationships built during Service-Learning	8.448	.000
UDM has a Positive Influence on Faith	2.529	.012
Post-service-learning Attitude	2.119	.035
Increased # of Service-Learning Classes	2.027	.044

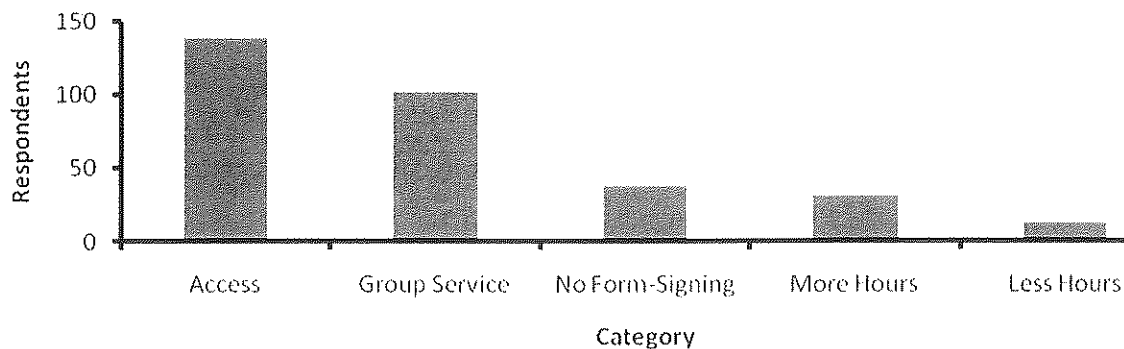
Both models provide a significant correlation between the independent and dependent variables ( $R^2 \sim 0.600$ ), and both indicate relationship-building as the key variable, with very high t-values and 0% chance of being due to random error in each case. An increased number of service-learning classes also proved to be significant to each model, helping to explain better attitudes about service and better awareness of social justice issues. I think that Kaitlin sums up the importance of relationship-building well in her encounter playing cards with homeless people on a service trip: “It was that common part that made it cool. Playing cards was hilarious, it wasn’t like I was doing service anymore, I was but we were having the experience in common with the people. While we’re not experiencing the same things as them, we have this common time together. So I think that the desire to serve comes from there, comes from seeing how those common interactions have contributed to my life.”

Also to be noted is that better attitudes about service and increased awareness of social justice issues appear to influence one another since they are in each other’s regression equations. This makes sense if we consider that the more students understand the population they serve, the better attitude they will have about service, and vice-versa. Anna’s desire to serve was born during a service-learning type experience on a mission trip to Nicaragua in which she was exposed to social justice issues: “My trip to Nicaragua was really big also, my experience working at the camp. I have a passion for those less fortunate than me and for serving them. It’s where I feel like I’ve been called...The whole justice aspect was in the back of my mind and I just wanted to go fix the problem...[We were also] interacting with the people, just getting into their life and [seeing] what it was like being in their shoes.” So building relationships is key to both gaining better perceptions of service in general, and in gaining awareness of the social justice issues which students intrinsically grapple with by engaging in service-learning. Also,

the more service-learning classes a student takes, the better their perception of service and the broader their awareness of social justice issues will become.

**“What could be done to make service-learning better at UDM?”**

One of the final portions of the survey asked students to indicate what could be done to make service-learning better at UDM, with the results shown graphically below.



**Figure 21: “What could be done to make service-learning better at UDM?”**

Though this topic was not covered very much in my interviews, some students commented on these categories. Jose commented on the fact that increasing access could make service more user-friendly: “If we had more stuff like that [kid programs and community events], more openness to get people in would be helpful...There are so many things to help the people of Detroit but there’s not much advertising of that help.”

One requirement of service-learning at UDM is that students must get their verification forms signed by a member of the site where they provide service; I found this aspect of service-learning to be both pointless (it would be very easy to forge the necessary signatures if one desired to skip service-learning hours) and saddening, as they made it appear to our clients that we were only serving for school credit rather than out of love for them. Kaitlin commented on

this process: “Those sheets of paper put a whole new outlook on the event. I don’t like the requirement part of it. Even if you go as a requirement and get something out of it, they change the experience. The sheets are a burden because you know they’re going to look at you differently for it.”

In addition to the provided categories, an “other” category was provided to put in specific suggestions for changes to service-learning, which are shown in the list below, with those mentioned multiple times shown with the number of times they were mentioned in parentheses.

### **Other Student Service-Learning Suggestions**

- ◆ Tailoring service opportunities so that they match students skills so that they will be more likely to continue service after graduation (3)
- ◆ On campus service opportunities (2)
- ◆ Increase service location options (2)
- ◆ Better organization/advertisement of service organizations (2)
- ◆ Purposely doing service in the neighborhoods close to UDM (2)
- ◆ Integration of service with faith-building
- ◆ Teachers specifically coordinating service location/time for students
- ◆ Allowing service already done by students to count for service-learning hours
- ◆ Increased integration of service-learning into classroom material

I found several of these suggestions to fall into the general category of “access”, the most commonly chosen category for improvement of service-learning, indicating that many students think service-learning does not provide easy access to service organizations to work with. This

seems strange to me, since every time I did service-learning I was greeted with multiple options (group and individual, close to or far from UDM, etc.) and a catalogue list with contact information for service organizations. Perhaps other students have simply had teachers who were more difficult to work with on this aspect and it might help to have the service-learning process homogenized to some extent in order to provide a consistent experience for students, yet this will obviously come at the cost of flexibility.

From the survey data itself, we can draw some good suggestions for what things should be emphasized in service-learning to make it a better, more impactful experience for both the students and the clients. In Section III, I drew the conclusion that students need to know they are making a difference in order to both enjoy and prioritize service. Prayer is also a key variable for explaining how students come to enjoy service. Section IV added to the idea that prayer correlates with an increase in service, and adds scripture-reading to the list of independent variables. From this section, we see the key importance of building relationships, taking more service-learning classes, and becoming more aware of social justice issues to positive views about service from service-learning. I recall when I participated in service-learning at Manna Meals, one of the priests who worked there explained some of the social justice issues present in the client population, which really added to my own experience and the perspective-broadening nature of the event. To sum up these suggestions drawn from data in this thesis, here are some additional suggestions to enhance service-learning.



### **Summary of Thesis-Driven Service-Learning Suggestions**

- ◆ Encourage (and/or require) students to take more than one service-learning course during their time at UDM.
- ◆ Ensure that students are taught (by their teacher or service-site organizer) about the social justice issues faced by the client population.
- ◆ Encourage (and/or require) students to seek to build friendships with the clients that they serve during their service-learning experience.
- ◆ Encourage student participation in prayer and scripture-reading in combination with their service-learning course.
- ◆ Teach students how they can (and do) make a difference through their service-learning and through service of their own prerogative.

## VIII. Who Does Service, and Why?

One of the main things I wanted to learn about in this thesis is (1) who actually does service and (2) what motivates them to do it? That is, what factors correlate well with actual service currently being done by the student? I ran a linear regression on service at UDM, with the results shown below in Table 19.

**Table 19: “Service at UDM” Results ( $R^2 = .524$ ).**

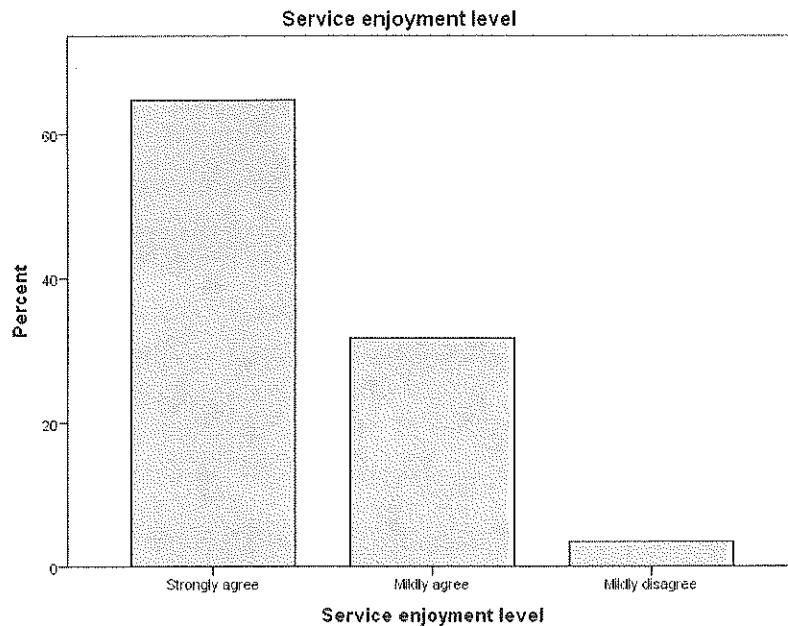
	t	Sig.
Service before UDM	12.065	.000
Service Priority Level	3.304	.001
Service Enjoyment Level	2.872	.004

It appears that if a student did service before UDM (an extremely high t-value of 12.065), and also enjoys and prioritizes service, enjoyment proves to be a more important variable than prioritization in explaining the model as a whole in correlations with service at UDM.

### **Prioritizing versus Enjoying? A Mutual Requirement**

When correlating service enjoyment level with service prioritization,  $R^2 = 0.193$ , leading us to believe that people do not necessarily make service a priority just because they enjoy it. Which factor, enjoyment or prioritizing service, leads to more service? When bivariate correlations were run between actual service hours at UDM and these variables, the correlation more strongly favored prioritizing service ( $R^2 = 0.213$ ) than enjoying it ( $R^2 = 0.163$ ), with prioritization explaining 5% more data correlation than enjoyment. This would lead us to conclude (since the significance for both correlations was .000) that UDM students are more

likely to do service if they decide it is a priority in their lives than if they decide that they feel like doing it because it is fun.



**Figure 22: “Service Enjoyers.”**

In order to discern what attitudes towards service correlate well with enjoyment of service, I isolated those students who strongly agreed that they enjoyed service (N = 170), and used the following regression model to understand what factors correlate well with their enjoyment of service.

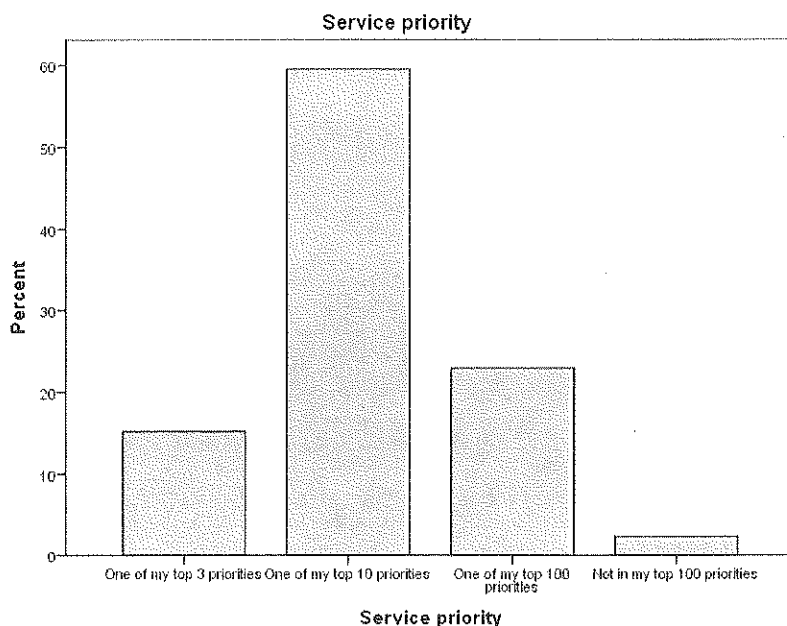
**Table 20: “Service Enjoyment Level” Results ( $R^2 = .384$ ).**

Variable	t	Sig.
Making a difference motivated personal service	6.192	.000
Service Priority Level	4.100	.000
Prayer at UDM	3.741	.000
Positive Parent Attitude towards Service	3.597	.000

Here, the most notable correlation is that students who enjoy service need to know that they are making a difference through their service. They also prioritize service, which is not surprising since these variables go together in most regressions. Also significant are prayer and

their parent’s attitudes towards service; here we see a significant part that parents play, in that parents having a good attitude about service helps students to enjoy service more (this was also seen in the service enjoyment regression for all students, see Table 4).

Jose was probably the interviewee who most enjoyed service among those I interviewed. He enjoys it because of spending time with people and knowing that he’s making progress in helping them. “The more I meet people, the more I see that I can serve them by just being there, and I think that’s wonderful. I’ve met tons of people that just need somebody there...Things like that are why I love to serve. I constantly serve just by being there, it’s like a job...I help people out and they get a promotion...I helped those people get to where they are. I know the full story, the truth.” He went on about his time at UDM: “I like it. I love it. I don’t see myself anywhere else...I love the comedian events, the Safety Street events; it’s always my favorite when we bring the community in.”



**Figure 23: “Service Prioritizers.”**

In order to discern what attitudes towards service correlate well with prioritization of service, I isolated those students who said that service was one of their top 3 priorities in life (N

= 43). The reason that I chose to isolate those who said service is one of their top 3 as opposed to top 10 priorities is because of the way I believe we talk to ourselves about our commitment to help others. While most of us know whether service is actually one of our top 3 priorities in life, it is easier for us to believe about ourselves that it must somehow be one of our top ten priorities; this bias seems to be reflected in the data, as nearly 60% of respondents say that it falls into their top 10 priorities in life. I find this hard to believe, and so decided that those who put service in their top 3 priorities were a better group with which to look at prioritization. It is apparent here that it is easier to say that we enjoy service (65% of respondents) than that we prioritize it (16% of respondents)! Still, these numbers may only describe a slight difference in practice; when prioritization was correlated with actual service performed while at UDM,  $R^2 = 0.213$ , while the correlation between enjoyment and service coming in close behind at  $R^2 = 0.163$ , hardly the four times less linear we might have expected from the self-reported prioritization and enjoyment, indeed these linear descriptions are fairly comparable. It appears that the appeal of enjoying service paired with the limitation of being able to prioritize time for it result in disparate self-reporting between the two claims, yet results in about the same actual amount of service performed. Enjoyment and prioritization are also two of three variables to best correlate with amount of service done at UDM in bivariate correlations, second only to the highly significant variable of how much service they did before UDM.

To ensure that I was not selling short the group of students who said that service was one of their top 10 priorities, I ran a regression on service prioritization for their subset (N = 196) and found that the independent variables which best described the model were somewhat contradictory to other material in the thesis, and that the  $R^2$  value for the model was only 0.167. When I ran a regression on service prioritization on the students who said service was one of

their top 3 priorities (N = 43), I developed the following regression (Table 21) which explains more than twice as much data as the model for the larger subgroup.

**Table 21. “Service Priority” Results ( $R^2 = .400$ ).**

	t	Sig.
Service at UDM	3.595	.000
Increased perceived impact of Service	3.113	.002
Service is important to life purpose	3.036	.003
Service enjoyment level	2.900	.004
Service is important to faith practice	2.333	.020

Among these 43 respondents, a number of variables define the line well. While enjoyment helps to describe the line well, three variables which do not appear in the enjoyment model describe the prioritization better; first is the actual service done, indicating that those who say service is one of their top 3 priorities are telling the truth to some extent. Secondly, prioritizing service correlates with believing one is having an impact through service (somewhat tautologous to difference-making in the enjoyment model, see Table 20). Students who make service one of their top three priorities also consider serving to be an important part of their life purpose, and consider service to be important to their faith practice. The presence of faith influence and actual service done here reflects my own personal experience, as my faith motivates me to make service a priority in my life and actually participate in service.

Anna spoke of how she made service a priority in her life through APO, a service fraternity. “Serving has always been important to me, that’s why I’m in APO. It’s something I’ve always been doing and I couldn’t come to college without continuing to do that. Also, that’s why I’m in nursing, to serve others. It’s really important to me.” She went on to mention that she would consider staying in Detroit after graduation in part to serve: “Maybe a community health program, that would be a reason to stay here, being able to do something service-oriented

in the city.” Evan echoed this sentiment: “I really want to make a difference here, but if work comes up in other places I’d be willing to move...I feel like the city needs me and I need the city. I’d be sad if I couldn’t come back. So yea, I want to live here.” Kaylan agreed: “I almost feel like during Detroit’s growth period I want to be here and see it through for a bit.” Kaitlin sees the need for people to stay and serve: “I’d love to be a part of revitalizing this area, and I think this university is important for that and raising awareness. If we don’t go outside of the gates, we don’t see what needs to be done...I think the only way the city will get better is if people stay; the mayor and government and city council can only do so much. Everyone wants it to be better but nobody is willing to buckle down and live here. So there’s potential and we’re all part of it.” It was exciting to see the willingness, admittedly among friends already committed to service, to consider living in a city because of the availability of service opportunities.

Ultimately it seems that since both enjoyment and prioritization help to explain both UDM service involvement and each other in the linear regressions, we can conclude that they are mutual requirements for one another and involvement in service. This makes sense; if a student makes spending time doing service a priority in their lives, then they will probably enjoy it more when they participate in it; if a student enjoys service, then they will probably make it a priority in the way they spend their time. Enjoying and prioritizing service are different reasons, but they are synergistic in the overall picture of students deciding to give their time to others in service.

## **IX. Conclusion**

I think that for the most part, my questions were answered, even if sometimes the answers were only correlations or the lack of correlations.

I learned that UDM students desire to serve in order to contribute to and connect with their communities, that they find purpose in life by enjoying and contributing to those around them, and that their faith developed most under hardships and time spent with their families. I observed that when students know that they are making a difference, they enjoy and prioritize service more; this makes sense in light of the frequency findings on community, since students will enjoy and prioritize spending time serving their communities if they know that they are able to make an effective difference.

In reflecting on the influence of faith on service, I learned that prayer correlates with and helps to explain service enjoyment in several linear regressions. I learned that for those who did not do much service before UDM but increased their service at UDM, increased scripture-reading was an important correlation. These findings in themselves demonstrate a part of the connection between faith and service; participation in prayer and scripture-reading helps to explain service enjoyment and service involvement. It is also noteworthy that the service regressions in Section III were better explained with faith and service variables together than by faith variables alone, which is further evidence of the interaction between faith and service to help students to enjoy service and make it a priority. I learned that scripture-reading becomes polarized in college, with the readers reading more and the non-readers reading less. Among graduate students, it seems that faith becomes somewhat polarized, and that those who do serve at that point in their lives do so from a greater sense of obedience to God than undergraduate students.



Parental influence was not as pronounced as I had imagined; neither parents doing service with their kids nor parents having a good attitude towards service showed up in regressions about actually doing service in college. In fact, these variables (the action and the attitude) only went together 20.3% of the time. However, parents did show up in one linear model: service enjoyment. So if parents have a good attitude towards service, their children are more likely to enjoy service. That is an interesting correlation, and it is indicated by the data, so I was pleased to find it, and am sure that more connections could be made between students and their parents in the area of service with more respondents and questions specifically about parents and family.

The variables which correlate most strongly with actually doing service are service done before UDM, followed by enjoyment and prioritization; these last two flip back and forth in statistical significance depending on the technique employed, and seem to be about equally important in getting students to serve. It makes sense that if you do not prioritize service, you will not enjoy participation and that if you do not enjoy service, you will not prioritize it. Students feeling like they made a difference proved to be the most important independent variable for explaining variation in both service prioritization and service enjoyment, showing us the importance of students making an impact - and knowing that they are making an impact - through their service. Service prioritization and enjoyment are mutually beneficial, and making a difference is important in explaining and encouraging both.

I also learned that building relationships is key to better outcomes in service-learning and service in general, something which I hope to focus on in my future service and something I think would be useful to remember in modifying service-learning activities and curriculum. I also gained some useful ideas for improving service-learning relating to access and seeking to do

service-learning activities together as a group. Students need to know that they are making a difference to enjoy and prioritize service. Prayer and scripture-reading can also add to this experience. Service-learning teachers and site coordinators should also seek to ensure that students both build relationships with clients and are also made aware of the greater social justice issues at play in the client's lives. All of these things can contribute to the service-learning experience and help students to enjoy and prioritize service after their time at UDM.

I think that I have a better understanding now of why students serve, and a few key things to build on in improving service-learning and focusing my own view of service in the future.

### **Further Questions**

This thesis can obviously be expanded upon in many different directions to further understand the connections between faith, family background, and service. Here are a few questions I think could be pursued for further research:

- ◆ How can relationship-building be encouraged in service-learning, and does it matter which type of service-learning technique is employed (the extent to which it is discussed in the classroom, whether students served in groups, where they served, etc.)?
- ◆ How can UDM encourage service-learning in DPS, since pre-UDM service is the strongest indicator of whether a student will give time to service in college and beyond?
- ◆ How do parent's attitudes and actions specifically influence a student's involvement in service? Does it matter how large a family is?
- ◆ What other research has been done in the fields of faith and family background influencing service, and how could they be put in conversation with this thesis?

**Appendix A: Final Survey Draft Employed Using SurveyMonkey**

**1. I would describe myself as a**

- (a) Catholic
- (b) Protestant
- (c) Muslim
- (d) Buddhist
- (e) Hindu
- (f) Atheist
- (g) Agnostic
- (h) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How similar is your faith to your parent's faith?**

- (a) Very similar
- (b) Somewhat similar
- (c) Not very similar
- (d) Not similar at all

**3. How important to you is practicing your faith?**

- (a) Very important
- (b) Somewhat important
- (c) Slightly important
- (d) Not important

**4. How important are the following to the way you practice your faith?**

It gives me predictable rules to follow

- (a) Very important
- (b) Somewhat important
- (c) Slightly important
- (d) Not important

It connects me with a community

- (a) Very important
- (b) Somewhat important
- (c) Slightly important
- (d) Not important

It makes me feel good about myself

- (a) Very important
- (b) Somewhat important
- (c) Slightly important
- (d) Not important

It offers me purpose in life

- (a) Very important
- (b) Somewhat important
- (c) Slightly important
- (d) Not important

It offers me a relationship with God

- (a) Very important
- (b) Somewhat important
- (c) Slightly important
- (d) Not important

It helps me to foster an attitude of service to others

- (a) Very important
- (b) Somewhat important
- (c) Slightly important
- (d) Not important

**5. How important were the following to your faith development?**

Spending time with my family when I was younger

- (a) Very important
- (b) Somewhat important
- (c) Slightly important
- (d) Not important

Going through hardships in my life

(a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Going to camps/retreats/mission trips

(a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Going to college at UDM

(a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Doing service before or during my time at UDM

(a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Exposure to religious leaders I look up to

(a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Attending religious services

(a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

**6. Before coming to UDM, how often did you do the following?**

Attended regular religious services

(a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

Prayed or meditated

(a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

Read scriptures

(a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

Engaged in service to others

(a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

**7. How many of your biological parents do/did you live with growing up?**

(a) 2

(b) 1

(c) 0

**8. I did community service with my parents before college**

(a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

**9. I have a close relationship with my father**

(a) Strongly agree (b) Mildly agree (c) Mildly disagree (d) Strongly disagree (e) N/A

**10. I have a close relationship with my mother**

- (a) Strongly agree (b) Mildly agree (c) Mildly disagree (d) Strongly disagree (e) N/A

**11. Which statement best describes your parent's attitude toward service?**

- (a) My parents told me that service was important and did service with me  
(b) My parents told me that service was important  
(c) My parents did not tell me that service was important, but did service with me  
(d) My parents did service, but did not involve me in it  
(e) My parents did not tell me that service was important, and did not do service with me

**12. How important are the following things in your understanding of your purpose in life?**

Doing what God wants me to do

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Contributing to society

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Serving others

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Enjoying life

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Raise a family

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Developing my talents

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Having a relationship with God

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Getting to heaven

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Making money

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Holding an important position

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

**13. How important is service to your practice of faith?**

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

**14. Now that you attend UDM, how often do you do the following?**

Attend regular religious services

- (a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

Pray or meditate

- (a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

Read scriptures

- (a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

Engage in service to others

- (a) More than once per week (b) Once per week (c) Once or twice per month (d) Once or twice per year (e) Never

**15. Which statement best describes you?**

- (a) I am more committed to my faith since coming to UDM  
(b) I am less committed to my faith since coming to UDM  
(c) I am about as committed to my faith as I was before UDM

**16. How important are the following in your understanding of “service?”**

Helping people who cannot help themselves

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Sharing your gifts and talents with other people

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Engaging in relationships with people

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Obedying God’s command to love other people

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Building a better community

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Saying “thanks” for the things I have been given

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Collaborating with others

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

Giving back

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

**17. How important are the following for why people should serve?**

We have been blessed with talents and gifts which we should share with others

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

It will help to broaden our perspective on the world

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

It will help the greater good

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

It is a part of my faith

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

We have an evolutionary instinct to take care of each other, so we should do so

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

**18. I enjoy doing service**

- (a) Strongly agree (b) Mildly agree (c) Mildly disagree (d) Strongly disagree

**19. How important are the following in motivating you to do service?**

It makes me feel good about myself

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

It fulfills the duty I have to take care of my community

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

I feel called to do service

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

I feel as if I can make a difference

- (a) Very important (b) Somewhat important (c) Slightly important (d) Not important

**20. How much of a priority to you is service?**

- (a) One of my top 3 priorities  
(b) One of my top 10 priorities  
(c) One of my top 100 priorities  
(d) Not in my top 100 priorities

**21. When the people I serve are ungrateful for my service**

- (a) I am less likely to serve in the future  
(b) I will keep serving the same amount  
(c) I am even more motivated to serve  
(d) I do not care

**22. How much impact do you feel that you have by doing service?**

- (a) Large
- (b) Some
- (c) Slight
- (d) None

**23. How many classes have you taken at UDM which require a service component?**

- (a) 0
- (b) 1
- (c) 2
- (d) 3 or more

**24. My views about service after doing service-learning at UDM are**

- (a) Much more positive
- (b) Somewhat more positive
- (c) Unchanged
- (d) Somewhat more negative
- (e) Much more negative
- (f) I have not taken a service-learning class

**25. During my service experience at UDM, I felt as if I got to know the people that I served**

- (a) Strongly agree
- (b) Mildly agree
- (c) Mildly disagree
- (d) Strongly disagree
- (e) N/A

**26. I feel more aware of social justice issues than before serving at UDM**

- (a) Strongly agree
- (b) Mildly agree
- (c) Mildly disagree
- (d) Strongly disagree
- (e) N/A

**27. What could be done to make service-learning better at UDM? (check all applicable)**

- Easier access to community service organizations
- Doing service-learning in groups with fellow classmates
- Increasing the number of required service hours
- Decreasing the number of required service hours
- Not having to get our service-learning forms signed by site coordinators
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**28. I am a**

- (a) Freshman
- (b) Sophomore
- (c) Junior
- (d) Senior
- (e) Graduate student
- (f) Professional (Dental or Law)

**29. I am a/an**

- (a) African-American
- (b) Arab-American
- (c) Asian-American
- (d) Hispanic



- (e) White/Caucasian
- (f) African
- (g) Arab
- (h) Asian
- (i) South American
- (j) European
- (k) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**30. How do your parents feel about Detroit?**

- (a) They love it
- (b) They like it
- (c) They have no feelings about it
- (d) They worry about my safety
- (e) They dislike it
- (f) N/A

**31. I like Detroit more since beginning to attend UDM**

- (a) Strongly agree (b) Mildly agree (c) Mildly disagree (d) Strongly disagree

**32. Thank you very much for your participation in this survey! Part of this project involves post-survey interviews with selected participants. Would you be willing to do a short (less than 30 minute) interview based on your responses to this survey?**

- (a) Yes, my phone number is \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) No