

## **Accreditation Self-Study Steering Committee**

### **Results from a Focus Group on CMU and the Local Community**

Criterion 5 for accreditation by the HLC, our regional accreditation body, deals with our relations with and how well we serve external groups. The Accreditation Self-Study Steering Committee organized a focus group to gather input about CMU's relationship to the local community. Eight community leaders participated and they were asked to comment on three questions, which had been provided in advance: (1) "What are your expectations of CMU?," (2) "What are some areas where we do a good job?," and (3) "What are some areas that we need to work on?"

The comments touched on four general areas:

- How CMU influences the quality of the Mt. Pleasant community.
- Need for and present views regarding communication between CMU and community groups.
- Need for and present views regarding the quality of CMU's academic programs.
- How CMU students, faculty and staff do and should interact with local community groups.

The major points made were:

- CMU plays an important role in the quality of life in the local area as well as in the local economy; this is important in giving our area a competitive edge when recruiting businesses, physicians, school teachers and attracting "quality families" to live in the area.
- CMU's communication with local groups has improved in recent years (the efforts by President Rao were lauded), but there is concern the present level of contact may not continue and better communication is needed at lower levels (the placement office and academic departments were mentioned as examples).
- Quality of academic programs is good and improving, but more attention to writing skills is needed on and our teacher preparation program is seen as having too much "red tape."
- Many opportunities exist for CMU students and staff to participate in and benefit from the local community, but often these opportunities are missed. Internship programs need more standardized procedures and expectations for students and hosting organizations.