



## A tour of MUM

BY RACHEL LEATHE  
 Courier photographer

**W**alking around the Maharishi University of Management campus in Fairfield, you may imagine you've somehow been transplanted to a Buddhist temple or an Indian yoga retreat. You certainly wouldn't expect to find yourself on a college campus in rural Iowa.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi set up his first university on a small campus in Santa Barbara, California, in 1973. He dreamed of creating a new kind of university, one that not only offered a traditional education but also focused on what he called a "consciousness-based education." One of the main features of this kind of education was Transcendental Meditation.

In 1973, Parsons College went bankrupt due to a myriad of issues including overspending, a sharp drop in enrollment and a deep deficit. At the same time, Maharishi University was rapidly outgrowing its Santa Barbara campus and looking for a new home. In the summer of 1974, with the help of private benefactors, MUM was able to purchase the former Parsons College campus and move in.

Every new student at MUM is required to first take a class on TM. The class guides students through a seven-step learning process which explains the theory behind TM, the benefits of TM and teaches students different techniques to help them meditate. Ken Chawkin, publicist for MUM and TM practitioner for the last 49 years, says that "after meditation, one comes out recharged and more wide awake." He says this is particularly beneficial to students because it makes them more receptive to what their teacher is saying.

International students make up a little over 75 percent of the MUM student body and on average represent about 85 different countries. MUM offers bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees, similar to most other U.S. colleges. However, unlike most universities, nearly 70 percent of MUM's students are pursuing their master's degrees.

Another unique aspect of MUM is that it operates on a block system. Instead of taking four or five classes at once, "which is very stressful," Chawkin says, students "go much more deeply into that particular subject." They attend this one class Monday through Friday, usually from 10 a.m. to around 3 p.m. with a break for lunch and two daily meditations. Students are also usually expected to attend an additional Saturday morning class.

MUM campus dining services also sets MUM apart by only serving completely organic, vegetarian food. The kitchen receives a small portion of their food from the campus organic farm ran by Director of MUM Farms Steve McLaskey, Ph.D. The rest of the produce they receive is from local organic farmers and from a couple outside providers. Executive Chef Suresh Miller says that the biggest difficulty with an all-organic vegetarian menu is finding a wide variety of vegetables, "Like you can't get asparagus in the winter time. Whereas meat you can buy all winter long, no problem."

