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## Retiring Sheehan: JCU must be 'competitive'

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Jerry Sheehan has come a long way since he was a young Peace Corps volunteer teaching English to children in the Philippines.

Sheehan, 67, retired May 30 after 19 years at John Carroll University, the last past 2½ as associate vice president for government and community relations in the university's advancement office.

He believes John Carroll University must grow in order to thrive.

"I think potentially John Carroll has a great future, but there are some major constraints that the university is trying to deal with," he said.

"The constraints are (related to) the physical plan that's needed to attract students of today."

In April, John Carroll unveiled its campus master plan, which aims to identify the physical needs of the campus over the next 10 to 20 years.

"You have to be able to provide competitive facilities," he said. "In our case, we need adequate space, particularly for athletic programs."

Renovation and expansion of residence halls and parking are other key issues facing JCU, Sheehan said.

"Because of land constraints, the university



ED WITTENBERG/SUN NEWS

Jerry Sheehan is enjoying his retirement, but he may return to John Carroll from time to time.

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## SHEEHAN

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is faced with the need to carry out a master plan in a constrained area," he said. "The university is trying to do as much as it can on campus."

Sheehan had planned to retire two years ago, but the Rev. Robert L. Niehoff, JCU president since 2005, asked him to stay on a few more years.

"Father Niehoff was fairly new at John Carroll," Sheehan said. "He was trying to put functions together related to some of the strategic goals of the university, and he asked me if I could help him through that transition period. I said sure."

Sheehan, of Cleveland Heights, believes the JCU campus has improved a lot since he joined its public affairs department in 1989. He served as that department's director until taking his most recent post.

He cited the Dolan Center for Science and Technology, a state-of-the-art building that

opened in 2003, renovation of other facilities and equipping classrooms with "high-tech education" as examples.

"We've been able to get some investment from the federal government to support those projects," he said. "Also we've played an active role at the state and federal levels in advocating for student financial aid."

Sheehan, who reported directly to Niehoff, worked under four JCU presidents, starting with the Rev. Michael J. Lavelle, who died tragically while he was president in 1995.

"I've had the opportunity to work with a superior group of people (at JCU)," he said. "That's what I'll miss the most — the association with colleagues, administrators, staff and faculty."

A native of Elmira, N.Y., Sheehan moved to Cleveland as a teenager and graduated from St. Ignatius High School in 1959.

He earned a bachelor's degree in English from the College of the Holy Cross, a Jesuit college in Worcester, Mass., and an executive MBA from Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management.

Prior to coming to JCU, Sheehan worked in government and nonprofit work in

Cleveland, focusing primarily on economic development.

In his retirement, Sheehan plans to learn a new language: Spanish. His wife, Dr. Julie Keller, an urgent care physician, is a former Spanish teacher.

"We've talked about traveling to a Spanish-speaking country," he said.

Sheehan also wants to do tutoring in English.

"I started out my career in the Peace Corps, teaching English in the Philippines," he said. "My initial focus is high school, to give kids who have the opportunity to go on to college some extra help."

"I'm also going to try to play an active role at the university as a volunteer."

Sheehan may do some consulting for JCU in public relations "on an ad-hoc basis."

"It's been a great experience at John Carroll," he said. "It's taught me a lot about the dynamics and politics of higher education."

A search is under way for Sheehan's replacement. The job will be titled director of government and community relations, and he or she will report to Doreen K. Riley, vice president for university advancement.

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