

Student leader aids library's books

By Joan Herman
Of the Emerald

The words "apathetic" and "student" are often placed together to communicate a common type.

"Students don't vote — students don't get involved — students don't care."

Yet, through his actions, at least one University student is breaking out of the apathetic mold others never care to crack.

For the past two years Matt Schermerhorn has spear-headed a senior class giving project for the University's library, which has been one of the worst "casualties" in the budget "wars" between higher education and the state Legislature. To make matters even worse, library costs for books and other supplies have skyrocketed 350 percent since 1968.

Through Library Project '83, Schermerhorn and other members of the Student University Relations Council, have asked every senior to donate \$15 for three years, beginning one year after they graduate.

Schermerhorn originally got the idea for the project from a similar campus fundraiser in 1968, which also raised money for the library.

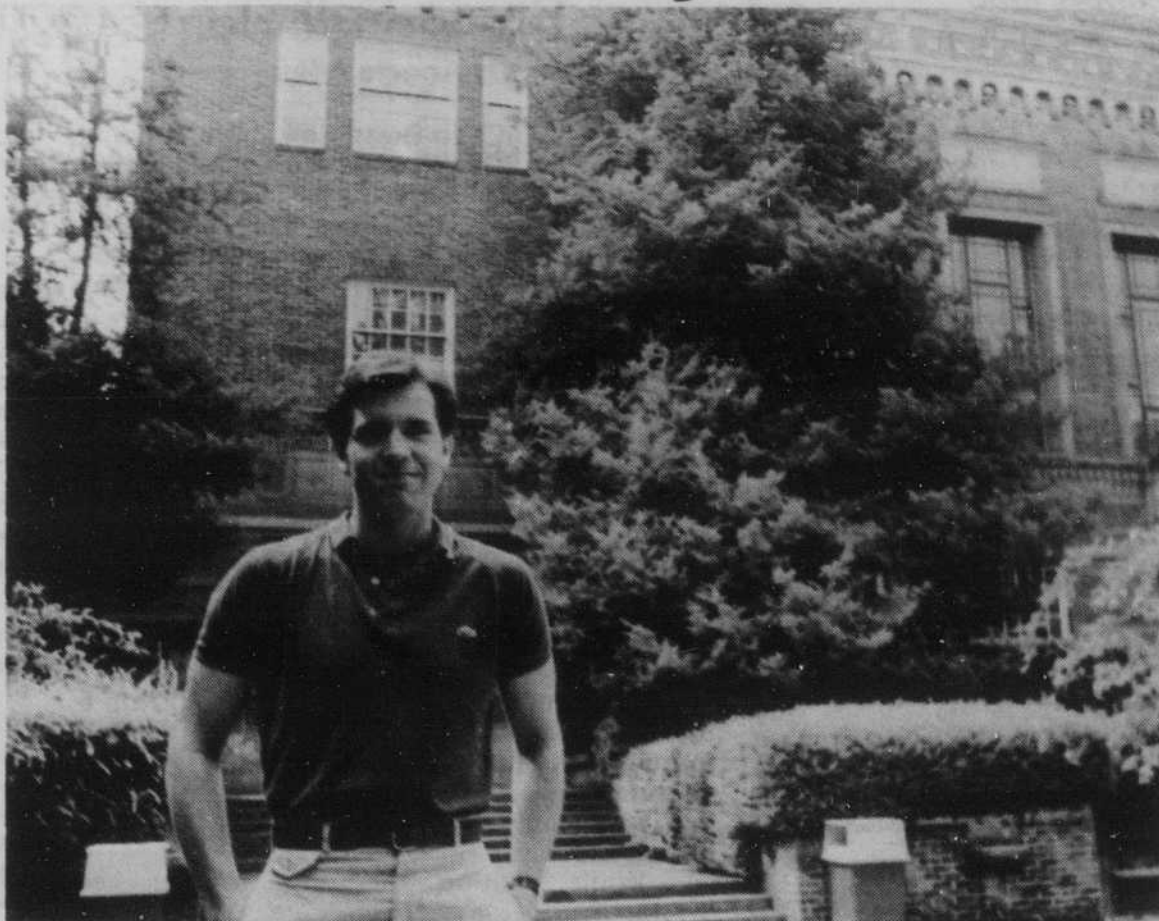
So Schermerhorn and other SURC members, including Lisa Sandau, Randy Thompson and Jay Wheeler began learning all they could about fundraisers.

"We sat down and tried to look at the whole year and what we needed to do. The hardest part was learning about the bulk mailing" of pamphlets explaining the plan to 3,300 seniors, Schermerhorn says. The project also received support from the University Relations office, as well as University Pres. Paul Olum, who endorsed the "splendid efforts" of students involved in the fundraiser.

A desire to use his education and talents pushed Schermerhorn, who recently graduated with a degree in business administration, into directing Library Projects '82 and '83.

"I really did have trouble relating well to students there (the business school) — 'You go to school. You graduate. You make money.' I didn't like the blind idea of not asking 'why' in a lot of classes. I wanted to do something where I felt like I'd really accomplished something," he says.

"I liked my business classes, but I felt isolated and needed a practical application (of his education). I think things like



University graduate Matt Schermerhorn has worked "unselfishly" in directing the senior class giving project, which raised nearly \$4,500 for the library.

Photo by Mark Pynes

this are good for people who are slightly uncomfortable in the classroom," says Schermerhorn, who now works for the Housing Department as a conference manager.

Schermerhorn's efforts haven't escaped administrators' eyes, especially University Librarian George Shipman.

"At his own initiative, Matt has worked on Project '82 and '83. Some (students) scream and holler selfishly — some work unselfishly, like Matt," Shipman says.

Many private universities have strong traditions of student giving projects because they do not receive state funding. Yet even at some state universities, massive student fundraisers are not unusual. For example, University of Michigan students recently raised enough money to help build a new athletic stadium.

"It's a positive gesture, and it's the kind of thing that should happen at the University. This is their (students') society.

They're building for the future," Shipman

Only about 3 percent of the University's 1983 graduates have pledged to donate \$45 within the next three years to what is commonly considered the "heart of a university." But that translates into about \$4,455 the library would not have had otherwise.

Ideally, if every member of the class of '83 pledged the tax-deductible \$45 donation, a \$148,500 endowment fund would be created for the library, Schermerhorn says.

Next year SURC hopes to attract more seniors by getting student leaders involved early on in Library Project '84, who would in turn attract other potential philanthropists. At some schools, donating money for a specific cause is "the thing to do," Schermerhorn says, and he hopes that attitude will spread to this University.

And students as well as the library benefit from their donations, according to Shipman and Schermerhorn.

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