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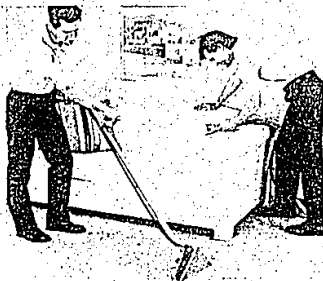
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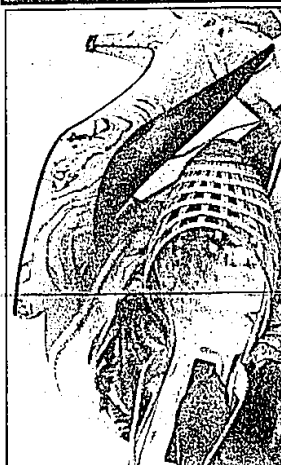
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LTU takes on Ugandan islands

BY TIM CARVELL
STAFF WRITER

Most college professors assign mountains of reading. The professors at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield assign islands. Uganda's Sese Islands, to be precise.

Since January, more than 300 students have spent a total of 50,000 hours formulating a workable design for the 84 Sese Islands, located in Uganda's Lake Victoria region, including areas for work, housing and even a golf course.

Their efforts were for more than just a grade; last week, the students packed their plans and models into a van and drove to Washington, D.C., where Wednesday they presented the project to a group of investors and Ugandan officials.

Although LTU's students have taken on outside projects in the past, this is their largest and most unusual assignment yet.

At the center of the Sese island projects is sisal, a natural fiber made from a cactus native to Uganda, which can be converted into inexpensive building panels.

Professor Robert Champlin, project supervisor and a Birmingham resident, estimated that a three-bedroom ranch house could be constructed from sisal "for about \$10 per square foot."

In the students' plans, sisal will provide both construction materials and a manufacturing base for the islands.

The adaptation of building methods to accommodate sisal panels is emblematic of the problems encountered by students in adapting American ideas to the African environment. Before they could even begin planning, the students had to conduct extensive research into the Ugandan economy, habitat and life-style.

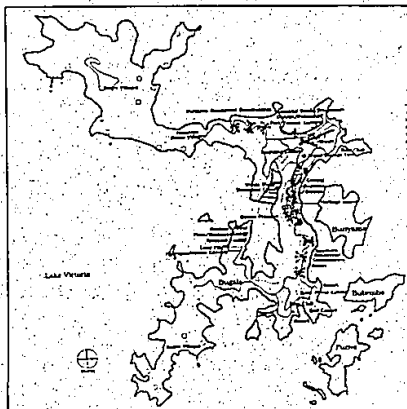
"We have to know the land itself very well," Champlin said.

Although they have already finished the school year, the students' true final exam will come when the Ugandan president decides whether or not to approve the project, an approval which will determine whether it ever moves past the planning stages.

According to Champlin, the students' attention to detail might be the decisive factor in securing that approval.

"I suspect he will be assured from the presentation that the project has been well thought out and is a serious endeavor," Champlin said. "The students have done a great job on a very complex project."

A total of 19 classes were recruited for the project, which was over-

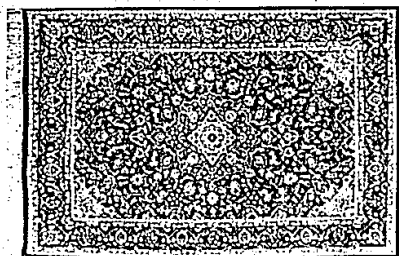


Sese Islands: The students devised plans and models for a new town with a population of 133,000 on Bugula, the largest of the 82 islands.

seen by two graduate students of architecture. John Grifka of Mount Clemens served as the urban design

project director while Kevin Marshall, a Bay City resident, was class coordinator.

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