

General Update

November 21, 2002

Colleagues -

OU's future is strong and promising today thanks to the hard work, creativity and commitment of faculty and staff to our undergraduate and graduate students, research projects and day-to-day operations. But even while we move ahead to realize our goal of becoming a university of distinction by 2010, university leadership continues to keep a close eye on the economic challenges facing our state and nation.

Quite a bit has happened since I last wrote. Most significantly, Michigan is in the process of welcoming new members of its governing bodies who will take office in January. As Governor-elect Jennifer Granholm and legislators ready themselves for the responsibilities of the new year, we at Oakland University also can look forward to new challenges and opportunities.

The deans, vice presidents and I continue to work on contingency plans should a budget cut become a reality, and I ask that you take a conservative approach to spending until we get clear direction from the state. I will notify you when we receive that direction. With everyone working together, we will be well prepared to continue our pursuit of our 2010 goals through managed growth.

Our progress so far this fall semester points to our ongoing success.

Academic Quality

Even with our ever-growing student population, the indicators of student quality continue to improve. Initial indicators for incoming freshman for fall 2002 show that the mean ACT score increased from 21.3 in 2001 to 21.5 in 2002 and the mean GPA increased from 3.13 to 3.15. In addition, the number of students with GPAs below 2.5 has decreased, which should increase our retention and success efforts. Although these improvements are incremental, they are significant to our success in meeting our 2010 goal of reaching 20,000 students while improving quality and diversity.

High-achieving students have many reasons to attend OU. Oakland's Honors College, which provides a challenging and flexible academic program- integrating the arts, sciences and professional fields - marked its 25th year this fall. Over the years, 5,000 students have enrolled in the Honors College, and its new director, Jude Nixon, calls it a secret that must be shared. I agree.

As OU works toward 2010, the Honors College should be setting the pace for the rest of the university by providing a high-quality and challenging undergraduate education that crosses disciplines. Congratulations to the Honors College, its faculty and students, and the many OU alumni who helped it reach this 25-year mark. You can read more about this accomplishment on [The News at OU](#).

A newer, but very significant, program in the School of Business Administration celebrated its five-year anniversary this semester with a week of activities for the community, alumni and students. Oakland's Applied Technology in Business (ATiB) program sponsored IT Week at Oakland in the middle of October, bringing corporations and academia together to discuss issues relating to managing information technologies.

This program does a great job of combining a rigorous education in business administration with hands-on training in information technology. Through this program - the first of its kind in Michigan - Oakland students work directly with corporate partners on real business problems, and the partners benefit from the fresh perspectives and bright minds of our students and faculty members. This program is so successful that Automation Alley named it the Educational Program of the Year for 2002, recognizing the undergraduate curriculum that impacts business in a positive way with skilled labor. You can read more about this award [The News at OU](#).

Under professor and founder Mohan Tanniru's leadership, this program has grown in stature. Though Dr. Tanniru is leaving Oakland to head up the Management Information Systems department at University of Arizona (we wish him well, by the way), the program's goals and high standards will continue.

I would like to take this time to recognize and congratulate OU faculty members who were promoted or received tenure during the 2002 review process.

Please join me in congratulating the follow Associate Professors with tenure who received a promotion to full Professor:

- * Joseph Callaghan from Accounting and Finance
- * Brian Connery from English
- * Barbara Mabee from Modern Languages and Literatures
- * Jacqueline Wiggins from Music, Theatre and Dance

And, the following Associate Professors who were granted tenure:

- * John McEneaney from Reading and Language Arts
- * Sherri Oden from Human Development and Child Study
- * Julia Smith from Curriculum, Instruction and Leadership

And, finally, to the following Assistant Professors promoted to rank of Associate Professor with tenure:

- * Patrick Dessert from Electrical and Systems Engineering
- * Mary Eberly from Psychology
- * James Hansen from Counseling
- * Bo-Nan Jiang from Mathematics and Statistics
- * Kerro Knox from Music, Theatre and Dance
- * Paul Kubicek from Political Science
- * Kathleen Pfeiffer from English
- * Mark Simon from Management and Marketing

- * Mary Stein from Curriculum, Instruction and Leadership
- * Vijayan Sugumaran from Decision and Information Sciences
- * Joyce Wiencek from Reading and Language Arts
- * Wen Zhang from Mathematics and Statistics

Oakland's recent performance in an audit by Michigan's Auditor General's Office is another testament to the strength and commitment of our faculty and staff. This external audit found OU is effective in monitoring academic and related programs, and efficient in using its resources. As the highest auditing authority in the state, this is a tremendous endorsement for how the university provides educational services to our students, and how we stay focused on our mission and goals in whatever we do. For more details, see [The News at OU](#).

Our students continue to make positive impressions - locally and nationally. While there are many wonderful examples, one stands out this semester - the recognition Lenwood Compton, a junior elementary education major from Pontiac, received from President George W. Bush for his extraordinary efforts as an AmeriCorps volunteer. Lenny is completing his second year with AmeriCorps, and in addition to his 16-credit class load, he serves 15 hours each week through the Pontiac Area Transitional Housing program. Lenny had the honor to greet and shake hands with the president during a fly-in for a Republican rally at the Oakland County International Airport in mid October. At that time, President Bush said Lenny "understands one person can't do everything to change America, but one person can do something. One person can help change America one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. I want to thank you, Lenny." Lenny and Oakland's AmeriCorps program should be held up as an example of the difference our students - and our university - can make in the world. For more details about Lenny and this event, see [The News](#) article.

Faculty Research

The research, scholarship and creative endeavors of our faculty members continue to make our university distinctive. Our inspired teacher-scholars bring learning to life for our students while making an impact in the world of research. Faculty members receive millions of dollars in grants and sponsored research - far too many projects to list, but here are a few recent examples:

- * Oakland scientists Xiangqun Zeng and Gabrielle Stryker received a \$2 million research grant from the National Institutes of Health to develop a novel biosensor.
- * Sitaramayya Ari, from the Eye Research Institute, received more than \$350,000 from the National Institutes of Health for an exploratory study on cyclic GMP signaling pathways in retina.
- * Geraldine Graham, from Project Upward Bound, receive more than \$500,000 from the Department of Education to implement a summer academy and an academic year program that encourages participants to complete high school, and enroll in and complete a post-secondary education program.

* Professor Ishwar Sethi and Associate Professor Fatma Mili received a \$288,384 grant from the National Science Foundation for their project "Undergraduate Computer Research (UNCORE) for Women at Oakland University."

You can always find a complete list in the Board of Trustee meeting materials by selecting Administration from OU's home page, then Board of Trustees, then Meeting Agenda or Archived Agendas. Once there, look for Grants on various agendas.

Fund-Raising Activity

Oakland University is still in the very early stages of our first comprehensive capital campaign, which has primary goals of funding programs of distinction for our students, and providing support to students and to our teacher-scholars. I'm pleased to report some significant support from OU friends and family that will help us advance our mission.

Gifts from the OU community send a clear and strong signal to others that we believe in what we're doing. When we're willing to add personal financial support to our already-strong work-related contributions to the university, others outside the university are sure to take notice.

I want to recognize and thank School of Education and Human Services Dean Mary Otto for her \$100,000 planned gift to support the university. Dean Otto makes many financial and personal contributions to Oakland, and this gift reinforces her commitment and will help ensure that future faculty will have opportunities for research and students will have opportunities to study.

The new Education and Human Services Building is helping forge friends for the university through room-naming opportunities, with \$10,000 gifts from:

- * Katherine and John Banicki, members of the SEHS board,
- * JM Olson Corporation and Duce Simmons Associates LLC (construction/design vendors for the building), and
- * Linda Hahn, wife of former SEHS Professor Harry Hahn.

We also recently received significant gifts from DaimlerChrysler for the SBA gift fund and Crittenton Hospital Medical Center to support Oakland's School of Nursing initiatives.

And, speaking of giving, OU is in the midst of the All-University Fund Drive (AUFDD), which ends December 31. Through the AUFDD, OU faculty and staff can support OU, United Way and the Black United Fund with charitable gifts. For the third year in a row, I will match gifts up to \$5,000 to the university with 50 cents on the dollar. For more details about AUFDD, review your AUFDD information package. Special thanks to Elaine Didier, dean of Kresge Library, and Patrick Nicosia, director of budget and financial planning, for co-chairing this year's campaign.

Other Campus Activity and Accomplishments

I'm pleased to hear the parking crunch is easing near Elliott and Varner halls, the Recreation and Athletics Center, and the Education and Human Services Building thanks to the opening of the parking structure earlier this month. Everyone on campus has been very patient as the structure was completed - and we can now thank our construction team, led by Rusty Postlewate, associate vice president for facilities management, and Janet Hepburn, manager, capital planning and design, for bringing the project on line, on budget and on schedule.

Recent accomplishments in Division I athletics have been quite impressive. The Golden Grizzlies added four more Mid-Continent accomplishments to our ever-growing list. Congratulations to the men's cross-country team, which won its first-ever Mid-Continent championship, and the men's soccer team which captured the Mid-Continent Conference regular season title and conference championship. This team now makes its first trip to the NCAA tournament since moving to Division I. The women's soccer team won the Mid-Con Conference tournament also, losing to U of M in a first-round NCAA tournament game. Congratulations to all the coaches and players for their dedication and outstanding performances.

These impressive accomplishments over the past weeks further prove that our students, faculty and staff members can compete and win against anyone - in the classroom, the boardroom, the laboratory and the field.

Gary Russi