

2008 and Our New Year

January 9, 2009

Colleagues,

I want to take a moment to reflect on 2008, and share a few thoughts about the year ahead.

Thanks to the remarkable dedication of faculty, staff, students and many others who so earnestly support Oakland University, 2008 brought a wealth of news that highlights Oakland's evolution as an institution of outstanding educational opportunity, meaningful community involvement and state and national distinction.

Building on the Oakland Medical Initiative's vision to establish the county as a premiere destination for health care services and education, for example, Oakland University was awarded \$40 million in state funding to support construction of a 157,300-square-foot Human Health Building. Its state-of-the-art facilities will dramatically enhance the region's medical education and research opportunities.

Meanwhile, we welcomed the nationally and internationally acclaimed Dr. Robert Folberg to serve as founding dean of the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine. Scheduled to open in 2010, the school will create hundreds of new jobs and eventually generate a regional economic impact of up to \$1 billion each year.

The Detroit News recently featured a major article about the "medical park" we will establish on our campus. You can read the article by clicking on <http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008812310391>.

In the realm of new programs, Oakland became the only university in the world to offer International Baccalaureate Level 1 program education for teachers spanning the entire K-12 curriculum. We also announced that the Thomas M. Cooley Law School-Auburn Hills campus became the exclusive educational law school of Oakland University, and that OU graduates who meet Cooley's admission requirements will receive priority status in the school's enrollment process.

Over the past year, Oakland reinforced an already intense focus on academic research. We welcomed experts from across the nation and the world to the First Midwest Conference on Stem Cell Biology and Therapy, and the university's chapter of the Sigma Xi national research society received a Certificate of Excellence for demonstrating exceptional involvement and vitality in the research community.

Expanding access to OU programs also was on the agenda in 2008. We announced the establishment of an innovative satellite campus, as well as significant outreach and community engagement efforts in Macomb County. The new campus will offer programs in health care, education and human resources, technology and international business, engineering and communications arts.

Also in Macomb, Oakland University partnered with the county's Planning and Economic Development Department and the City of Sterling Heights to launch the Macomb-Oakland University Incubator. Part of a new SmartZone, the business incubator will eventually create 600 jobs and stimulate growth in the defense and advanced manufacturing sector.

To broaden Oakland's goal of establishing valuable community partnerships, the university played host to both the start and finish lines of the inaugural Brooksie Way Half Marathon, an event designed to encourage healthy lifestyles in Oakland County. We also announced that the Royal Park Hotel in Rochester will serve as Oakland's official conference center and preferred site for guest lodging, which undoubtedly will stimulate local commerce in the coming years.

Perhaps the most heartening news of 2008 is that the immense generosity of our many supporters allowed Oakland University to reach \$100 million in charitable contributions. We are now well ahead of schedule in terms of attaining the \$110 million goal outlined in "Innovation and Opportunity – The Campaign for OU."

To read a complete account of all that happened at Oakland in 2008, please click on <http://www4.oakland.edu/?id=7271&sid=225><http://www4.oakland.edu/?id=5581&sid=44> to access the Year in Review.

As you know, Michigan's economy is still in bad shape. To help our students and their families meet the cost of paying for their education, we have created a special assistance fund for students who may be unable to continue their OU education due to significant changes in their economic circumstances. In addition, low-interest federal loans and other forms of financial assistance are available to those in need. Our "You CAN Afford This" campaign is designed to be a short-term assistance program for those who truly have a financial need. The campaign focuses on the fact that we are all in this together, and we want to help our students to continue their work toward an Oakland University degree. Students and parents recognize in times like these that it is essential to receive a top quality education, and we are committed to quickly helping each and every student find the best solution for keeping their OU education affordable. To learn more about this campaign, visit the website at <http://www4.oakland.edu/?id=7271&sid=225>.

Developments over the last year have made it resoundingly clear that Oakland remains on the right track, both in terms of offering superb educational programs and contributing significantly to the health and vitality of the state and the nation. Despite the economic challenges we face, I'm confident the dedication and support of our growing Oakland University community will guide the institution toward still greater success in 2009 and beyond.

Sincerely,
Gary