



Friday, October 11, 2002

Honors College celebrates 25 years

The **Honors College**, one of Oakland University's best-kept secrets, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

At a recent anniversary celebration, Jude Nixon, director of the Honors College, said the College is a "secret that must be shared."

As OU embarks on its 2010 vision, OU President Gary Russi believes the **Honors College** should be setting the pace for the rest of the university to follow. One of OU's goals is to provide a high quality and challenging undergraduate education.

"Dr. Russi wants the Honors College to take the lead in setting the academic climate and agenda for OU," Nixon said.

Over the years, 5,000 students have enrolled in the Honors College, a challenging academic undergraduate program integrating the arts, sciences and professional fields. Students participate in creative research, colloquia, scholarly and extra-curricular activities as well as leadership and service opportunities within the university and in the community

The **Honors College** currently enrolls about 350 students.

History Professor Mel Chernob helped create the College and was its first director from 1977 – 1980. At that time, the Honors College had 36 students and offered one class in the fall semester and one class during the winter semester. The College also introduced the first colloquium, a capstone course on futurism.

"One of the most memorable events was in 1988 when former Michigan Gov. G. Mennen Williams taught a leadership class," said Julie Granthen, a 1982 OU Honors College graduate and volunteer. "This made people realize that an important role of the Honors College is to train leaders."

Granthen earned her law degree and currently is a professor at Oakland Community College and a part-time instructor at OU.

"The Honors College makes a big impact on students' lives," Granthen said. "A recent survey found two-thirds of Honors College students go on to higher education, earning one or more graduate degrees."

Nixon agrees and says, "The Honors College gives students a solid undergraduate background as well as the confidence and support to move on to graduate school."

Honors College alumni go on to work in industry, government, arts and academia.

"One of my fondest memories was after our class saw a movie called 'Letter from an Unknown Woman.' One of the class members wrote a paper 'Letter from an Unknown Student.' The class members wore brown paper grocery bags to class with our student numbers on them," Granthen said. "Professor Burdick was quite taken aback. She also invited us to her house after the class was over for dinner and we watched the movie Rashomon."

In its 25-year history, the program has had only four directors. When Chernob left the program, Robert Howes, professor of history, held the position from 1980 to 1985. Brian Murphy, professor of English, became the Honors College director in 1985 and stayed a record 16 years. Jude Nixon, professor of English, was appointed director earlier this year.

The **Honors College** attracts students from all majors and seeks to represent the colleges and schools on its Advisory Council. The policies of the College are established through the direction and approval of the Advisory Council, which meets once a month during the academic year.

As director of the Honors College, Nixon wants to expand the curriculum across and within all majors, increase the rigor of the program, add a community service component and continue to build the endowment. Nixon also plans to increase the racial, ethnic and economic diversity of the College.

"My top priority is increasing the number of students in the program," Nixon said. "President Russi would like to see 1,000 students or more in the Honors College."

Ninety percent of Honors College students are recruited through admissions. The remaining students learn about the Honors College at orientation. Students are automatically admitted to the Honors College with a minimum 3.6 grade point average and a score of 25 or better on the ACT.

Students who don't meet these requirements can request a personal interview with Nixon.

"If the students' grade point average or ACT score is close, I look for their willingness to improve, their commitment, charisma and confidence," Nixon said.

"One thing hasn't changed over the past 25 years, the Honors College is still looking for bright students and overall curious learners."

The **Honors College** also is looking for ways to increase visibility throughout campus and the community. The College is sponsoring a lecture by Art Historian Tamara Machmut-Jhashi on Monday, Nov. 6, at 4 p.m. at 124 Wilson Hall. She will discuss Degas and the Dance, which is on view at the Detroit Institute of the Arts, Oct. 20 – Jan. 12. The lecture is open to the public.

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