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OU celebrates dedication of Laidlaw Room, named for devoted alum

On April 18, Oakland University leaders, dignitaries, staff, students and friends gathered in Oak View Hall, home of the Honors College, to celebrate the dedication of the Gary W. Laidlaw Room.

The space, a multipurpose seminar room formerly known as Room 208, was named in honor of alumnus and longtime university supporter Gary Laidlaw, who passed away in 2016, at age 73. Laidlaw graduated from OU in 1964 and went on to a successful career at Comerica Bank, rising to the position of vice president.

Throughout his life, Laidlaw remained a strong advocate for Oakland University. In November 2015, he was honored as a Distinguished Volunteer as part of National Philanthropy Day. Sponsored by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) of Greater Detroit, the event recognized outstanding contributions that philanthropists, distinguished volunteers, and those in the fundraising profession have made to enrich the Southeast Michigan community.

In 1998, Laidlaw received the Distinguished Alumni Service Award – the university’s highest alumni honor – which recognizes outstanding alumni leadership and service to the OU Alumni Association or the university.

The Laidlaw Room dedication was made possible through a gift by Camille Jayne, one of Laidlaw’s longtime friends and colleagues at Comerica Bank and a former visiting professor at Oakland University.

Jayne told the audience about her inspiration for making the gift.

“I wanted this to be the Laidlaw Room . . . so at least 20-30 times a day, people will say the ‘Laidlaw Room,’ and people will ask, ‘Who is Mr. Gary Laidlaw?’ And you will tell them all the great things he did and how much he cared about the students at Oakland University and especially the Honors College.”



The Gary W. Laidlaw Room is located in Oak View Hall, home of the Honors College at Oakland University.



Pictured from left: Graeme Harper, Ann Laidlaw (Gary's wife), Camille Jayne, Eugene Miller and James Lentini, OU Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.



Gary and Ann Laidlaw pictured at a donor dinner at Meadow Brook Hall in 2014.

Eugene Miller, retired Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Comerica Bank, was also in attendance and spoke about the friendship he Laidlaw shared.

“I believe that Comerica is a better bank because of Gary,” said Miller, who like Laidlaw, is a past chair of the OU Foundation Board of Directors. “I think this university is a better university because of Gary, and I think this community is a better community because of Gary.”

Graeme Harper, dean of the Honors College, explained the significance of the Laidlaw Room, which he described as the “heart of the Honors College.”

“Because outstanding and aspirational students join us here and achieve so much here and make a difference here, it seems to me so very fitting that this room should bear Gary’s name. Here you will find the hardworking, the dedicated and the remarkable,” Harper said. “Here you find a community of students that cares as much about the success of others as it does about its own success, something this naming also exemplifies.”

For his part, Laidlaw was proud of his strong OU ties and touted the university to those around him, especially his family. “There’s 27 of us who attended OU,” he once said.

He added, “I’ve been on a mission to pay back the university since 1961. I’ve been on a lot of committees and groups over the years. Since I could attend on a scholarship, I feel I should pay back the university, not vice versa.”