

Update on Vision 2010
Issued to Oakland University employees.

March 28, 2002

Dear Colleagues,

With spring weather right around the corner, and with it the end of the winter semester, I wanted to bring you up to speed on the university's progress on several fronts.

First, an update on our budget development process: Consistent with our schedule (which appears on the Administration page of the university's website), the units have forwarded their budget requests through the division vice presidents. Recently, with the help of Vice President Lynne Schaefer and other administrators, I have set budget assumptions based on enrollment targets, our expected state appropriation and other economic targets. And, I have had initial meetings with the vice presidents to begin to match new budget requests to available dollars.

As of this writing, the higher education appropriation bill is on Governor Engler's desk for signature. Following the Governor's lead, the Michigan legislature and university presidents worked together this year to propose a flat budget for higher education; that is, higher ed would be funded at the same level in 2002-03 as it was in 2001-02. Given the downturn in state revenues and resulting net cuts taken by most state agencies, the flat funding recommendation indicates the importance our Governor and legislators place on higher education.

Flat state funding will create challenges in this and coming years for Oakland, given our employee compensation commitments, and rising health care and energy costs. These factors and others are making our budget development process - and its potential to bring about positive change through resource allocation based on 2010 objectives - even more important.

Speaking of 2010, I am pleased to report that the planning to realize our vision of a distinctive undergraduate education has come to an important jumping-off point. In a few days, Provost Virinder Moudgil will be sending the OU academic community a request for ideas and initiatives, in pre-proposal format, through which we can transform our institution. I look forward with great anticipation to our faculty's response. This stage reflects much preparatory work by the Oakland community, building on our Strategic Plan, our Creating the Future recommendations and most recently the community's positive response to the Washington Advisory Group's report - which has confirmed our focus on building on the strength of our undergraduate program.

Let me offer one example of how a creative idea can offer the potential of transformational change for our students. Just last week, the College of Arts and Sciences' department of Rhetoric, Communication & Journalism brought to campus a noted scholar in the field of rhetoric and composition - Anne Ruggles Gere, professor of

English and professor of Education at the University of Michigan. Professor Gere shared with our campus audience how an effective, collaborative program that teaches writing across the disciplines could contribute to a distinctive undergraduate experience. Here was an expert in her field, from one of the nation's leading universities, delivering the message that Oakland could offer a valued and rare advantage to our students. This particular idea would take commitment and work, but I think most would agree it could be achieved and certainly has merit. Those in attendance seemed excited by the possibilities.

I am also heartened by the dovetailing of our creative process with work to prepare for our first comprehensive capital campaign. As our vision takes shape through the pre-proposal submissions, we will shortly be in a position to share ideas with our Board of Trustees on how to match resources to specific projects and initiatives that will foster systemic change - change that will move us quickly along the path to distinction. The articulation of our vision to create a new educational experience will then be shared with friends and donors through our emerging campaign case statement. I can tell you that preliminary discussions with friends have indicated strong support for our ideas, and for the ability of our outstanding faculty and staff to execute them.

Even as we look months and years down the road, we need to celebrate the good works so many of you are contributing every day to advance our institutional mission. We have had an outstanding year of accomplishment and the past few months are no exception. I would like to call attention, in particular, to this academic year's President's Colloquium series, through which Oakland shared some of its best with the community - Barry Winkler, professor of biomedical sciences, spoke on "Understanding the Contribution of the Retina to Vision;" Jay Meehan, associate professor of sociology, on "Racial Profiling and the Police;" and Virinder Moudgil, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and professor of biological sciences, on "Hormones in Health and Disease." If you missed any of these compelling presentations, you can find stories on each on the university's website.

The university also recently selected three longtime faculty members who exemplify the best in our undergraduate instruction for recognition as Distinguished Professors, pending Board of Trustees approval at the April meeting - Dr. Sheldon Appleton, professor of Political Science, Dr. Ronald Cramer, professor of education, and Dr. Jane Eberwein, professor of English. Congratulations to these colleagues, who have prepared so many of our students for the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world. I invite you to read more about them on The News @ OU Web page.

Of course, the academic year is not over. Next week, Provost Moudgil expects to announce the first recipients of the new Oakland University Student Research Scholars awards. And, we will wind up the year, once again, with our celebration of Founders' Day on April 17. On that day, we will dedicate the new Varner Memorial Garden and sculpture outside Varner Hall, initiate the Varner Seminar Series on University Vitality with a "Creativity in the Arts" panel discussion, honor outstanding faculty at our annual recognition luncheon, officially open the new graduate admissions and services office in

North Foundation Hall and break ground on our new parking structure. Event details can be found on the university's new online calendar, which can be accessed from a number of areas on the website, including the home page.

I invite all of you to join us on April 17, as we reflect on both recent accomplishments and our founding principles. Based on the energy apparent across campus, I suspect that Matilda and Alfred Wilson would be pleased with our progress.

Gary Russi