

The New Academic Year

September 24, 2002

Colleagues,

Welcome back to a new semester. We have had a busy summer with the arrival of new faculty, preparation for new degree programs, completion of building and road construction, staging of a gubernatorial primary debate, and the official state visit of Presidents Bush and Kwasniewski.

And now the promise of a new school year is upon us as we collectively welcome the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, while staying focused on our mission of teaching an ever-growing student population.

Thanks to all faculty and staff who made our return to campus special for our new students. Convocation offered more than 1,000 first-year students, parents and loved ones a memorable and informative introduction to the Oakland experience. Welcome Week was a great success - special thanks to the ice cream scoopers. And, I understand that the movement of cars through parking lots and roads was well handled, given our challenging circumstances. I am pleased to report that the parking structure construction is ahead of schedule, and it should be ready next month.

2010 Planning

All of this recent activity certainly shows progress toward our vision of becoming a university of distinction by 2010. With input from the University Senate at the end of the last academic year, Oakland updated its 2010 profile to strengthen its ties to our academic vision and further reflect how we will move from where we are today to where we want to be in eight years. You can find the updated profile on the Web, under About OU, 2010 Profile.

That 2010 profile will continue to keep us focused on the future. So much of what we do this year, and each year that follows, is critical to our success in 2010. Here are some prime examples of how that focus keeps moving us toward our goal.

New Academic Initiatives

This summer, Oakland added several new degree programs to enhance our academic offerings. In June, the Board of Trustees approved two new undergraduate programs - Bachelor of Science degrees in financial information systems for the School of Business Administration, and in wellness, health promotion and injury prevention for the School of Health Sciences. In August, the Board authorized the School of Engineering and Computer Science to offer a doctorate in mechanical engineering. All three programs welcomed students to campus for the first time this fall.

The Provost-sponsored University Research Scholar program now boasts 18 student researchers who are working with faculty mentors and gaining valuable research experience on projects that range from biological sciences, sociology, psychology and mathematics to engineering. Interim Provost Moudgil recently announced the next deadline, and we're looking forward to adding several more student scholars to the list.

I'm pleased to note that we added 56 new faculty members to the university over the last year. They join an already distinctive group of inspired teacher-scholars who bring learning to life for our students. Among those inspired faculty members I'd like to highlight a few:

Shravan Chintala, whose paper on glaucoma research was cited by the New York Times as one of the most significant.

Ravi Khattree, who received a Young Statistician Award from the International Indian Statistical Association.

Ron Finucane was named Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, U.K.

Frank Giblin won a \$150,000 grant from NASA to study the effect of radiation in space.

Kathy Dahlstrom who received National Gold Medal Awards for journalism.

These achievements and accomplishments are to be commended. But they are only a few examples of the research, scholarship and creative endeavors that continue to make our institution distinctive.

Student Focus

Over the last few years, the university has taken significant steps to improve the quality of the student experience on campus, from renovations in the Oakland Center to adding a new Recreation and Athletics Center and creating a one-stop shop for services in North Foundation Hall, to name only a few. Student satisfaction is a vital element in the creation of a distinctive educational experience, and we have more initiatives under way.

We have recently invested in two student success programs - Freshman OUtlook and Parent OUtlook. These new, interactive, Web-based programs, offered by a company called GoalQuest, provide customized, bite-sized tips about how to make a successful transition from high school to college as well as information on resources available at Oakland to help first-year students succeed and have fun. The program is a partnership between many areas on campus, spearheaded by Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. While the two programs deliver tips and information to our first-year students and their parents, we still rely heavily on faculty and staff to take the next step when students make contact. When these students discover the resources available to them here and realize just how much we care about their success, in their first year and

beyond, the demand for campus services will increase - as will the success and retention rates of our new students.

Facilities Improvements

Speaking of new facilities, if you have not yet had a chance to tour the new Education and Human Services building, I urge you to do so or join in the grand opening celebration on October 18. I have heard that faculty members, staff and students are thrilled with what it brings to the educational process. And, the upper-class students who moved into our new student apartments at the end of August are very enthusiastic about their new home away from home. We also had the opportunity to welcome a new food service vendor. Not only is Chartwells providing us with many new food options, its contract includes a capital investment that will help us expand the Oakland Center and make other upgrades around campus.

We certainly have many people to thank for bringing such well-planned and well-executed growth to our university, including our own facilities management group, and those faculty, staff and students who advised them. In addition, the State of Michigan lent its support and our building contractor partners, who kept working through many challenges to keep these projects moving, completed their work on time and within budget.

With regard to the Oakland Center expansion, I hope to see many of you on hand Friday, October 11, as we ceremonially break ground for the addition before joining together for the faculty and staff appreciation dinner later that afternoon.

Also new this year, we are honored to welcome the first class of Cooley Law School students taking courses on Oakland's campus. This arrangement with the Lansing-based law school increases the accessibility of first-term law classes to people in southeast Michigan - expanding both Cooley's reach and Oakland's reputation of distinction. A special thanks to all our employees, especially those in the Office of Research and Graduate Study, who are working with Cooley to make this partnership possible.

Fund-Raising Activity

With a focus on making friends and raising funds, the university has entered the early stages of our first comprehensive capital campaign. Our goal is to fund areas critical to creating programs of distinction for our students, and providing support to our teacher-scholars to advance our mission.

The recent \$1 million gift from alumnus and new Board of Trustees member **Dennis Pawley** earlier this year is a great example. Dennis' gift has made possible The Pawley Institute, which is dedicated to expanding research, education and partnerships with business and community leaders. The purpose of the institute will be to share concepts and practices of "lean learning" with university departments to create leaders and learners within the university community.

This summer, the Psychology department received an anonymous gift of \$45,000 to support undergraduate student research projects and encourage other alumni to contribute to an endowment. The donor, an alumnus of the Department of Psychology, made the gift in the hopes of interesting, encouraging and keeping undergraduate students involved in research – an act that reinforces a clear strength Oakland offers its undergraduate students throughout the university.

And, just this July, the College of Arts and Sciences received a major gift commitment from a longtime supporter to establish an endowment for the dance program. Gifts such as these are moving us steadily toward realization of our vision.

Partnerships within the university also build upon our strengths by encouraging interdisciplinary programs and research that benefit students, faculty and the community. Late last academic year, Interim Provost Moudgil requested that faculty members share ideas and initiatives in pre-proposal format to transform our university. The Provost has received several dozen pre-proposals that cross many disciplines, and all have an eye toward helping us create a distinctive undergraduate experience. These are now being prioritized for further development.

Budget Development

Regardless of the focus - student services, teaching, research, scholarship, creative endeavors, community outreach - resources are required to make things happen. I am pleased to report that, despite flat state appropriations funding for this year (FY2002-03), we were able to increase base budgets through strategic planning and financial management. There is no question that our enrollment growth has made this possible. Last week, I shared with the University Senate the following base budget increases:

Discretionary Allocations:

Academic Affairs -- \$3,805,573 (78.0 percent of new base allocations)
Finance and Administration -- \$479,939 (9.8 percent)
Development, Alumni and Community Engagement -- \$254,572 (5.2 percent)
President -- \$203,404 (4.2 percent)
Student Affairs -- \$137,727 (2.8 percent)

Fixed allocations:

Compensation -- \$3,900,000
Utilities - (\$20,897)

You can check the OU website for further information (under the Budget Development Process button on the Administration page). And, later this fall, the Provost will detail areas of funding - including one-time allocations - in Academic Affairs.

Economic Challenges

Even while we move ahead steadily to realize our goals, we are keeping a close eye on continued national and state economic challenges. With a new governor moving to Lansing this January, and many new legislators on board due to term limits, it is difficult to predict what the future holds for public higher education. It is with this in mind that I strongly urge you to spend your budget dollars wisely, strategically and slowly this academic year. Our future is strong and promising today because of your hard work, creativity and commitment to our mission. I ask that you apply that same diligence to your budget this year, so we can continue to deliver our important work without missing a beat throughout the entire academic year.

So we are not caught by a possible cut in state funding, university leadership recently met in retreat to establish and prioritize the following values to guide us in FY2002-03 budget management:

1. Managed growth/faculty support
2. Quality
3. Distinctive undergraduate programs/general education
4. Collaborations and partnerships
5. Capital campaign
6. Student services/retention
7. Graduate programs - grants and contracts
8. IT support

I recently met with the University Senate and called for their review of the values to guide us in FY2002-03 budget management.

The deans, vice presidents and I will meet again in October to draft more specific contingency plans should a cut come. We will continue to share that information with you.

Should you have any ideas about how we can better focus our resources on our 2010 vision, I encourage you to share them with your dean, vice president or me. As always, I appreciate all you do for Oakland, and I look forward to working with you as the year progresses.

Gary