

inside OAKLAND

News briefs for Oakland University colleagues

'Change is at our doorstep'

OU's president blends past and present accomplishments with a bold strategic vision during university update

Borrowing the words of OU's first chancellor, with support from a video and touting the university's past and present accomplishments and



During the Oakland University Update 1999 February 11, OU President Gary D. Russi talks about the university's accomplishments during 1998 before pausing to show a videotape of Woody Varner, OU's first chancellor.

strategic plan, OU President Gary D. Russi bid farewell to the 20th century during the *Oakland University Update 1999* February 11.

Titled *Oakland University — On the Threshold of Educational Innovation*, Russi provided images of a growing university that is on the verge of becoming what the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools predicted would become a "model university for the 21st century."

He praised OU's first chancel-

lor — Woody Varner — and the importance of pursuing the dreams, vision and wisdom of OU's founding pioneers.

"Forty years ago, Woody Varner planted the seeds of what he hoped would grow into a fresh and contemporary educational institution grounded in the liberal arts and focused on the highest academic standards," he said. "Now as we approach the year 2000, we know that Woody Varner's dream for OU was not

'pie in the sky.' Our students are committed. Our faculty is courageous, and our vision for Oakland's future is steady and unwavering."

Russi characterized OU today as a university that is "unique, flexible, innovative: an educational trailblazer."

He said if the past year can be used as a yardstick with which to measure, OU is very close to accomplishing its ultimate goal of becoming a model university.

Russi highlighted Oakland's progress during 1998 in five areas:

- Strategic Direction and Planning
- Academic Program Enhancements
- Campus Facility Enrichment
- Student-Centered Development
- General Improvements

'Plan your work, and work your plan'

In 1998, Oakland University completed the fourth year of its 10-year Strategic Plan.

With nearly 1,700 initiatives categorized toward its successful completion, Russi said that is a record few universities can match.

"OU's strategic plan expresses goals to further our commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, research and service," Russi said. "Four years have passed, and I am still challenged by what we are trying to accomplish with this plan."

Creating the Future is OU's initiative to build on the strategic plan. The effort joined approximately 300 corporate and civic leaders with faculty, staff and students on nine task forces to plan and evaluate every aspect

"As we stand today, Oakland University is growing in stature in the region and the nation as a top-rate academic institution and is recognized as a university on the move — a university that is responsive to the community it serves."

of OU's academic and administrative programs.

Recommendations were presented in a final report on June 13, and are currently being reviewed throughout the campus community and later this winter by OU's Board of Trustees, Russi said.

"We hope that the results of this effort — this harvesting of ideas from southeastern Michigan's best minds — will vault this community and this university into new and exciting directions by rekindling Woody Varner's vision."

'Academic strength defines our current path'

Over the past two years, OU introduced more than 20 degree programs and specializations in response to market demands.

- Other academic highlights:
- Improved work-force diversity, with women employees increasing to more than 54 percent and minorities increasing to more than 20 percent of the work force.
 - New laboratories: EDS Software Verification and Testing Lab; the Applied Technology in Business Lab; and the Product Development and Manufacturing Center.
 - The Voyager information management and retrieval system in Kresge Library.
 - The School of Nursing and Henry Ford Health System created an innovative program to help disadvantaged, non-professional employees of HFHS pursue a bachelor of science degree in nursing.
 - The School of Business Administration was named one of four emerging schools of business in the nation by Executive Forum, a nationally syndicated television program.

- Innovative uses for technology in the School of Education and Human Services' initiative, Testing the Dream.
- The College of Arts and Sciences' Mathematics and Statistics Department hosted the prestigious International Conference on Algebraic Combinatorics.
- OU's Meadow Brook Theatre and the College of Arts and Sciences' Department of Music, Theatre and Dance collaborated for the first time in the acclaimed theatre production of *Angels in America*.
- OU received a total of \$8.7

resource development, master planning and academic development to the forefront of our campus dialogue.

Improving student services

Russi said the university spent a good portion of its discretionary resources on student-centered developments in 1998, such as:

- The Advising Resource Center connects new students with OU advisers, peer mentors, graduate assistants, faculty and various support services on campus to provide a more effective student experience —



OU faculty and staff gather after the university update.

million for research and other sponsored programs in 1997-98.

Beyond brick and mortar

Improvements to campus buildings and facilities were unprecedented in 1998. A sampling:

- Oakland's celebrated \$37-million Recreation and Athletics Center, currently drawing 5,000 visitors a week.
- The School of Health Sciences' newly renovated space in Hannah Hall of Science includes cutting-edge physical therapy teaching labs; exercise science and biomechanics labs; faculty research labs; and classrooms.

- Four new electronically enhanced classrooms brings to date a total of 28 classrooms with voice, video and data connectivity at OU.
- The Oakland Center's Copy Stop and the Information Center.
- Hamlin Hall's new computer lab, including e-mail and Internet access.
- Oakland broke ground on the R & S Sharf Golf Course, which propelled questions of

especially during the critical first year.

- Innovative projects such as virtual job fairs via ViewNet; the alumni Career Coalition; the President's Club student leadership development program; the new OU Foundation

"I feel secure in saying that — together — we can get this done. We have the organization and, most importantly, the talent to create that model university that others believe we are capable of being."

Career Partners internship program; and the soon-to-be launched Michigan Job Coalition.

- A new campus ID and a new debit card system, the OU SpiritCard and SpiritCash programs.
- OU joined the Division I Mid-Continent Conference and played its inaugural men's basketball game in the new arena against Michigan State University on November 17.

A Banner year at Oakland

Oakland opened the door to a new world of information with the campuswide administrative computer system, BANNER.

"Once fully operational, this new system will benefit staff users while providing students with access to financial, registration, advising and academic records," Russi said.

Other campus improvements:

- Oakland's 1998 fund-raising efforts reached nearly \$6.6 million, an increase of 19 percent over the previous year.
- The Oakland University Press was launched with a pilot project titled, *A Place in the Country: Matilda Wilson's Personal Guidebook to Meadow Brook Hall*.

'Reach greater heights'

While praising the efforts of faculty, staff, alumni, friends and partners, Russi said there is much work that needs to be done.

"The challenges before us are many," he said, "and include bringing a focus to Creating the Future, initiating a comprehensive master planning effort with broad-based consultation and campus representation, and managing program and enrollment growth. Additional challenges include building infrastructure to serve that growth, bringing innovative academic programming and new faculty online, solving some daunting technology challenges, and finally, continuing to serve our students both in and out of their classrooms with the highest caliber of

teaching excellence and the strongest complement of student life opportunities for learning and development."

In closing, Russi borrowed the video testimonial of Woody Varner:

"We were a team. It's one of the great strengths of Oakland. We had a family mentality that we had a task to do, and we buckled down, all of us. We sort of held hands and gathered in a tight circle."