



Wednesday, April 2, 2003

New AVP brings OU a world of experience

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

After arriving at Oakland University by way of South Africa, Susannah Cameron-Crichton, the new assistant vice president of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, is relishing the challenges that come with assuming a new position halfway around the world.

"I'm going through a learning curve," Cameron-Crichton said. "It's going to take some time to absorb all the information that comes with taking a new job, and I'm going through a lot of changes. There's a certain amount of culture shock that can be very subtle. I've personally invested a lot to be here by coming from so far away.

"At the same time, I'm excited by the vitality and energy of OU. It's young, growing, and has big plans and big dreams. I've arrived at an interesting time that's full of opportunity. I'm finding the Michigan climate challenging, but I've received a warm welcome here."

Cameron-Crichton, who joined OU on Jan. 15, works closely with Director of Alumni Relations Adrienne Bass as key liaisons between the Oakland University Alumni Association and its members. She also plans and coordinates OU's annual giving effort.

In her previous position, she served as the senior manager of fund development at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Prior to this, she was director of development and community relations at the University of Calgary. She also has a wide range of consultative and managerial experience in many aspects of institutional advancement developed in educational, arts, cultural, private and public sector environments in Europe, South Africa and Canada.

Aside from her professional experience, Cameron-Crichton has a worldliness acquired from spending time in nearly 40 countries worldwide, beginning when her father, an officer in the British Armed Forces, moved her family to Kenya when she was 6 weeks old.

Cameron-Crichton currently maintains dual citizenship from Canada and her native Great Britain. She established roots and raised her children in Calgary in the 1970s, then moved to Cape Town in 1998, where she continues to maintain a residence.

"It was such an interesting time to live in South Africa," said Cameron-Crichton, who has photos of the country's beautiful landscape spread throughout her office. "The country is going through a period of nation-building and forming a democracy. I was pleased to be part of the wave of change there that occurred post-apartheid. Any chance I get to go to Africa, I take it. My love for the country is something you can't put into words. It got into my blood as a child. It's challenging and magical."

So what brought her back to North America?

"It was a fun but complex experience living in South Africa," Cameron-Crichton said. "Even something as simple as making telephone calls is hard. And the country is grappling with problems of corruption and crime. At times, we feared for our safety. Our five children (who live in Canada) are very relieved that we're back."

She and her husband, Paul Licker, professor of management information systems and chair of the Department of Decision and Information Sciences, accepted positions at OU late last year, then moved to Michigan to take on the challenges of a new university environment.

One of Cameron-Crichton's goals is to expand the OUAA's programs and services and include what she calls a "value-added" experience.

"We're currently looking at what's been done in the past and examining the results and benefits to OU and forming strategies around what alumni as customers need from us to add value to their lives," Cameron-Crichton said. "We also want to balance that with our core institutional values. Our goal is to have more alumni involved in OU's mission, especially with regard to the capital campaign, and to provide meaningful opportunities for them to have leadership roles within the association. We're working on some new initiatives to add to what's already been accomplished to reach those goals."

Fund raising is always a challenging prospect – even more so in the current economic climate. But Cameron-Crichton sees a great deal of opportunity within this environment.

"I love fund raising," she said. "It's basically about people. It's a very interesting and complex job that brings a lot of skills into play. And it's one in which you can see measurable results. It's a combination of science and an art.

"Our challenge is to continually attract new donors to support OU and to retain them over their lifetime so they can partner with OU in a range of fund-raising initiatives. I'm very encouraged by the growth potential. I want to broaden the base and deepen it."

One group Cameron-Crichton wants to further promote is the President's Club.

"The President's Club is a very loyal and sustaining group. Each year the donors contribute in excess of \$1 million to the university," she said. "One goal of mine going into the current economic situation is to attract more President's Club members. The members enjoy a range of benefits from golf to cultural and social opportunities. It's a great group of people with a lot of synergy."

In addition to meeting these challenges, Cameron-Crichton said she's eager to meet more students, staff and her colleagues across the university.

"I like OU's people and its size. It's a very spirited community where people feel passionately about the mission of the institution," she said. "I'm excited about the possibilities of the capital campaign and positioning our two teams for greater fund-raising opportunities. I also look forward to serving our alums and having them help meet the OU's core mission.

"I feel that I'm working with an excellent team – the Alumni Relations staff has very dedicated and hard working people, and the Annual Giving team has talent and strong players. I really enjoy working with my fellow AVPs in University Relations and (Vice President of University Relations) Sue Goepp. I'm also looking forward to the summer and exploring Michigan, making new friends and exploring the history of OU."

SUMMARY

After arriving at Oakland University by way of South Africa, Susannah Cameron-Crichton, the new assistant vice president of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, is relishing the challenges that come with assuming a new position halfway around the world. In her previous position, she served as the senior manager of fund development at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, April 2, 2003
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, April 2, 2003
Article Start Date: Wednesday, November 19, 2003