



Friday, April 18, 2003

OU reflected on through the decades

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

After four decades of growth and expansion, several generations of Oakland University alumni who remain connected to the institution and a current student who is just about to graduate say OU continues to uphold its initial educational objectives – to provide a top-quality and challenging undergraduate education in an intimate campus setting.

A panel of OU graduates from each of its first four decades shared these thoughts April 16 in the Oakland Center Fireside Lounge while reminiscing and reflecting on OU's development in a forum titled "Oakland University Through the Decades." The panel consisted of Ron Miller, a member of OU's Charter Class of 1963; Rose Cooper, '73; Lorna Selberg, '83; Dawn Aubry, '93; and Michelle Jamian, '03.

"The reason I entered OU as a freshman in 1968 and turned down a scholarship from Michigan is because I heard Oakland was a place that cared about its students," said Cooper, now an associate professor of rhetoric at OU. "At Oakland, the professors knew you by name – you were more than just a number. At that time, the student body numbered about 4,000.

"The physical change is what I notice most. There certainly are more buildings. But I still feel that there is an atmosphere where the faculty care about the students and are invested in their success."

Miller, a retired education administrator, spoke of the strong liberal arts program OU established as he arrived as a freshman at what was then known as Michigan State University-Oakland. That curriculum has been maintained through OU's general education requirements.

"OU became known for having a groundbreaking curriculum," he said. "We were required to study a foreign language, take literature courses, music courses and others. There were no fraternities or sororities then. The students voted not to have them. We were all committed to an egghead kind of existence. It's good to see that that has changed, because there are important things in the outside world. But it's good to know that the academic standards are still there."

"I've sat in and monitored a few classes recently, and I can tell you that the curriculum is just as challenging now as it was back then."

Selberg, now a receptionist in OU's International Students and Scholars Office, noted that the university has worked hard over the years to increase student activities on campus.

"After I transferred to Oakland from Western Michigan, I became very involved in student organizations on campus, and it's made a difference in my life," Selberg said. "When I lived on campus as a student, there was hardly anything to do after 5 p.m. and on weekends. Since then, I've seen a lot of push for student needs on campus and there are certainly many opportunities to become involved."

Aubry said as a student she felt the same relationship with the faculty that Miller experienced.

"I was a political science major and really felt connected with the faculty," said Aubry, now director of New Student Programs. "The newest construction on campus was the Kresge Library expansion. But the thing I remember most was the growing student population and the student body becoming more diverse. My favorite experience was being an OGL (Orientation Group Leader). It was an incredible time in my life. Now, as a staff member, I hire OGLs and try to carry on OU traditions through them."

Even over the past four years, Jamian, student congress vice president, has seen plenty of changes in the campus environment. She noted new construction such as the University Student Apartments, Education and Human Services Building, the parking structure, and most recently the expansion of the Oakland Center, which hadn't yet been built when Miller arrived at OU in 1959.

"OU marked an enrollment milestone with more than 16,000 students last fall," Jamian said. "There also has been a big increase in the number of students who live on campus with the new student apartments and an increase in the number of

African-Americans and other minorities.

"But the best thing, I think, is that OU professors still know you by name."

The **Oakland University Alumni Association** is hosting an alumni reunion for the Charter Class of 1963. The 40th anniversary reunion weekend celebration, to be held Oct. 3-5, will include campus tours, a bonfire, gala dinner and dance at Meadow Brook Hall, loyalty brunch, and lots of time to reconnect and celebrate with classmates and friends. For more information or to add your name to the guest list, contact Jamie Simek at (248) 370-3700, ext. 1113, or ruark@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

After four decades of growth and expansion, several generations of OU alumni who remain connected to the institution say OU continues to uphold its initial educational objectives – to provide a top-quality and challenging undergraduate education in an intimate campus setting. A panel of OU graduates from each of its first four decades shared these thoughts while reminiscing and reflecting on OU's development in a forum titled "Oakland University Through the Decades."

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, April 18, 2003

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, April 18, 2003

Article Start Date: Friday, October 24, 2003