



Friday, June 27, 2003

OU introduces new learning communities

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

Oakland University students who want to explore areas of interest with a group of like-minded students while enjoying the benefits of living on campus within a smaller community of scholars can choose from one of five **learning communities** within the residence halls starting this fall.

"The idea of having learning communities within residence halls has caught on across the country," said Director of University Housing Eleanor Reynolds. "For students who come from a small environment, entering a large setting like a university can be intimidating. Our learning communities are very inviting and are especially popular with freshmen and sophomores. Students who have a natural connection through their interests can live together and quickly become involved in student activities and form relationships. Learning communities help take the big college environment and make it a little more manageable."

The Wellness Community, Oakland's oldest learning community, was established more than 10 years ago. One of the new communities joining it this fall is the Scholars Tower and Residential Honors College, designed to facilitate collaborative and communal learning and living among scholarship recipients or **Honors College** students.

"The Residential College is not just students living in rooms near each other. It's much greater than that," said Jude Nixon, director of the Honors College. "We expect to hold classes in the building. We hope to have a visiting professor who will live in a suite with the students for a month or two at a time. We expect to have programs and impromptu discussion groups in the evenings and on weekends. Our students will truly have the experiencing of living, learning and studying together."

Students can choose to live in one of the following learning communities:

- Community Outreach Community, located in West Vandenberg Hall;
- International Culture Community, located in South Hamlin Hall;
- Scholars Tower and Residential Honors College Community, located in West Vandenberg Hall;
- Upper-Division Community, located in Hill House;
- Wellness Community, located in Anibal House.

Community Outreach Community

This community is geared toward residents who want to supplement their academic experience by becoming involved in a number of exciting community service projects. From the Detroit Institute of Arts to the Animal Rescue League, residents are exposed to and gain experience from a variety of organizations and community outreach programs. Residents also have access to faculty who link them with various projects and activities. This community is open to all residence hall students who understand and appreciate the value of assisting society's nonprofit organizations.

International Culture Community

Students interested in immersing themselves in activities and programs related to global society and all related issues can live in the International Culture Community. Residents interact with faculty and staff from a variety of related academic disciplines and departments, all of whom share a special interest in international culture and studies. Community programs include films, discussions, lectures, field trips and social events. This community is open to all residence hall students who share a common interest in international issues, are majoring in a foreign language or international studies, or plan to study abroad.

Scholars Tower and Residential Honors College Community

This academically focused community, open to about 120 students each year, provides expanded opportunities for academic-related activities and interactions with faculty from a variety of disciplines. Residents participate in creative research, colloquia, scholarly and extracurricular activities as well as leadership and service opportunities. For Honors College and scholarship students, this learning community program complements their chosen academic discipline by integrating the arts, sciences and professional fields. This community is open to new students who have been awarded academic scholarships and to all **Honors College** students.

Upper-Division Community

This community focuses on offering interactive programs and activities to help prepare residents for the professional world. Residents have a unique opportunity to participate in a variety of activities offered on a regular basis to help prepare them for life after college. Some program topics include career planning and placement services, financial planning, graduate study preparation, cultural diversity in the workplace, and life planning. Residents also work closely with OU's **Career Services** in addition to other faculty and staff in various academic departments and career development areas. This community is available to students age 21 or older who have attained at least junior academic status.

Wellness Community

This substance-free community offers residents the opportunity to explore different dimensions of wellness, including emotional, social, intellectual, physical, spiritual, sexual, environmental, vocational, occupational and cultural, and apply what they have learned to enhance their overall health and well-being. Residents learn a framework through which they can develop a lifelong management process for continued health and well-being. Each resident abides by a community agreement and sets individual goals related to the individual wellness dimensions.

For more information, visit the **Learning Communities at OU** Web page or contact Dave Moroz, assistant director of program services, at (248) 370-3570 or moroz@oakland.edu. For more information on campus housing options, activities, costs, and life on campus, visit Oakland's **Housing and Dining** Web site.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, June 27, 2003
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, June 27, 2003
Article Start Date: Monday, January 12, 2004