



Monday, September 22, 2003

OU dedicates Oakland Center expansion

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

As popular a gathering place as the **Oakland Center** has been for generations of students, most would agree the building had become more cramped in recent years. But the days of waiting patiently for a place to eat or study are over, as Oakland University celebrated the grand opening of its new 30,000-square-foot OC addition in a dedication ceremony Sept. 19.

The mood was decidedly festive, as students, faculty and staff gathered for speeches, a traditional ribbon-cutting ceremony, cake and other light refreshments, and music by the Student Steel Pan Organization. Students in attendance raved about the addition, which they say will significantly enhance their college experience.

"I love seeing how great the OC looks today. Because of the addition, the building has a much better ambiance. It has more energy and feels alive," said Seema Shah, a graduate student in biology. "I first came to Oakland as an undergraduate 10 years ago, and I've seen many changes in the campus. The OC expansion reflects that. Though Oakland is growing, the campus remains intimate.

"I think OU is the best kept secret in the state as far as student life, academics and research. I'm very glad I came here."

The 30,000-square-foot expansion, which opened for use Sept. 2, features state-of-the-art student services representing OU's commitment to enhancing the educational and social environment of the campus. The expansion provides an additional 330 seats in the food court area; a 7,000-square-foot multipurpose room that seats 600; a 24-hour computer lounge featuring wireless Internet access; and Café O'Bears, an 80-seat coffee shop. Other construction involved extensive remodeling and updates to the OC kitchen to meet current catering and food preparation needs.

"This grand facility has transformed the Oakland Center into a campus landmark, a welcoming gateway connecting the university community to new services, activities and the rest of campus," said Oakland Center Director Richard Fekel in his dedication remarks given on the addition's second floor adjacent to the semi-circular glass front. "The improvements that surround us today embody more than bricks and mortar. The OC represents a home away from home, a physical setting where students can gather, make friends and get involved. This is the one spot on campus that all students can call their own."

In his remarks, OU President Gary Russi said the OC expansion is just one of the several ways OU has shown a commitment to enhancing student life. Among the recent efforts Russi cited are the university student apartments; expansion of student organizations and programming; more residential, weekend and evening activities; the construction of the Recreation and Athletics Center; and the move to NCAA Division I athletics.

"Finally, we envisioned a student center that reflects the ever-increasing quality of our programs. One that could provide the support services, programs, common areas and infrastructure important to student development," Russi said. "We have achieved that vision and are indeed fortunate to be opening the doors today on the new Oakland Center."

OU senior and Board of Trustees student liaison Rhonda Hanna, who participated in the development of the expansion, spoke of the many benefits students gain from the addition.

"The new Oakland Center is a perfect place to bring both residential and non-residential students together throughout the day and throughout the year," Hanna said. "Thanks to this wonderful new space, we now have a place to hold dances and parties, a place where we can meet our friends for lunch or study late into the night and still be able to get a few jolts of caffeine. At the Oakland Center, we'll be able to create with friends and faculty the type of memories that will last us a lifetime, the type of memories that make college the best time of our lives."

Judging by the number of students studying, eating and socializing in the new expansion, the Oakland Center is sure to provide fond memories for generations of students to come.

A number of bookings already have been made for the expansion's multipurpose banquet room. To enquire about making a reservation, contact Rakhi Roy, OC assistant director, at (248) 370-3230 or roy@oakland.edu. For more information on the OC expansion, contact the Oakland Center at (248) 370-3245 or ocadmin@oakland.edu

SUMMARY

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