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OU retention program is among nation's best

The Oakland University Trustee Academic Success (OUTAS) scholarship program recently was ranked as one of the top seven best student retention programs in the nation by Black Issues in Higher Education magazine.

The program is different from many other student retention programs because it focuses on students of color who did well in high school and meet the university's requirements but need support adjusting to campus life. Many student retention programs focus solely on at-risk students.

"It's really a paradigm shift from placing students in their traditional peer groups and expecting them to succeed," said Gloria Sosa, director of the Office of Equity, in the article. "The program's purpose is to help students develop effective cross-cultural functioning skills to transfer to our global workplace and society. If we keep them tied to their racial or ethnic peer group, we are not necessarily giving them any tools to succeed in a different environment."

The program also is unique because it is co-administered by Sosa and Oakland University President Gary Russi.

"This is an exciting program that this administration fully supports," said Russi. "Understanding and working with people from different cultures is becoming more important than ever in our changing society, and this program gives students the opportunity to explore and appreciate other cultures."

Partial scholarships are available to students of color with a 3.0 high school grade point average. The program features a cross-cultural mentoring component, in which students are paired with those in their major but from a different ethnic or racial group.

The program has a retention rate of 69 percent to 72 percent, surpassing the national average of 40 percent, according to Sosa.

SUMMARY

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