



Monday, April 22, 2002

## State of the Student Body Address

**By Derek J. Dickow, OU Student Body President**

Good afternoon, my fellow executive board members, legislators, student leaders, faculty, administration and students of Oakland University. We have reached a time on our campus that is unlike any other seen by our generation. A time that began with turmoil and tragedy has now been followed by unity and liveliness. A student body once flawed with apathy is now being driven by momentum from those we have elected as our present and future leaders. It is my duty and privilege to submit the current state of the 2001-2002 student body of Oakland University.

This year, with the support of our advisers, student initiative and our commitment to all students, Student Congress has experienced a wealth of accomplishments. Through our efforts and teamwork we have made significant changes to the betterment of the OU community. Our mission statement has remained consistent with our course of action; to provide equal representation, services for improving the quality of campus life, valuable programming and to continue in upholding the reliable infrastructure our predecessors have set for us.

As student leaders we have the distinct duty and privilege to represent students on every level of our campus. More importantly, we have forged the necessary relationships and partnerships with other organizations and departments on campus also committed to improving student life. Another facet of the University Student Congress is providing services, and it is through the implementation of these services we have been able to realize our goals.

Our first opportunity to represent OU students came early in the fall term when the Michigan Senate considered passing Senate Resolution 371. This resolution called for a repeal of the Michigan Tuition Tax Credit reimbursing 15 of Michigan's public universities a sum of \$24 million. Upon the recommendation of the Office for Government Relations, the OUSC passed resolution 02-01, citing our support for the benefit of the tax credit to all Michigan students. Our legislative affairs director and I lobbied in Lansing with over 40 elected officials in an effort to represent student interests. We were able to join forces with other student leaders through a Michigan-based advocacy student group known as the Association of Michigan Universities.

This administration also has had the opportunity to represent Oakland in leadership conferences in Boston and in Washington, D.C. We were provided with a cost-effective and time-efficient way for leadership training to occur. These conferences provided the OUSC with a unique and valuable opportunity to meet other student leaders across the nation in an exchange of ideas to further develop leadership potential, strengthen student government and establish networking.

And just last week, the OUSC helped to co-sponsor the sixth annual OU Day at the Capitol — a service providing students with an opportunity to meet their elected officials, learn about the political process and help to establish a name for Oakland.

And we have made fiscally responsible decisions to allocate monies to organizations that have represented OU on a national level.

In order to accomplish some of the goals we outlined early in the fall, the OUSC formed necessary partnerships with several departments on campus.

Over the summer, we co-sponsored, along with the Office for New Student Programs, Welcome Week 2001. This partnership was to communicate to incoming freshman that they had a voice working for them.

And then there was the day that we will never forget; a day that will go down in history known to us all now as the Attack on America. Instead of pointing fingers and ostracizing our neighbors for what they believe, our community came together in a fashion that was positive and uplifting. Shortly after the tragic events of September 11, the OUSC co-sponsored with the Office of the Provost, "A Day of Understanding." The day was dedicated to an open dialogue between students and their professors to discuss the severity of these tragic events, and how we as a community could and eventually grow from it.

And we certainly have grown from that day.

We are fortunate to have students from more than 50 countries exchanging ideas on this campus and co-sponsoring events such as Diversity Day, Cultural Awareness Week, International Night and WOCO, along with the Office of Equity, the Student

Program Board and Center for Student Activities, became an absolute must. Students were given an education by and for their peers, and new levels of respect were formed for each unique culture.

And for many, attending basketball games this year became a new tradition that will surely increase with each year. The OUSC, Athletics Department and President Russi co-sponsored a promotion to encourage students to attend home games: a raffle to win free tuition for a semester. Our aim was to increase student participation and boost student morale on campus. We distributed more than 1,500 "Grizzgang" T-shirts to Oakland students each marked with the Student Congress logo. We continued our mission by co-sponsoring games along with the Dean of Students to provide 500 free tickets to students for both men's and women's home games.

Oakland also has enhanced student life through its work with the Student Life Lecture Board. Another OUSC co-sponsorship, along with the Student Program Board and the CSA, that brought such speakers as Nobel Peace Prize Winner and former President of Poland Lech Walesa to our campus. Students were exposed to other lecturers offered by the SLLB, which is committed to improving student life and the learning process.

One of the most successful partnerships the OUSC has is with the members of the Student Program Board. This year, the SPB has promoted and offered a very diverse and entertaining programming calendar. With their innovative publicizing techniques and professional commitment to their job, the students in the SPB have brought a new meaning to the term on-campus life.

A part of involvement within the OUSC comes the responsibility to provide services that will enhance and define the true college experience.

We have provided the student body with \$4,500 in scholarship opportunities. A bookswap to help cut costs for students buying and selling books. Participation nearly doubled this semester in our online course evaluations. We also have subsidized the cost of blue books and scantrons as an incentive for students to visit our office and meet with their student leaders. We held an open forum to discuss issues students raised within the Math Department. We held our annual voter registration drive and promoted Oakland students to participate in the voting process. We provided students with an invitation to the 10th annual Keeper of the Dream Banquet, a reception dedicated to awarding OU students for keeping the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. alive. And our Student Activities Funding Board dispersed more than \$230,000 to help finance the activities of the 130 organizations on campus. And we have done all this together as a team.

And now I would like to highlight a few of the goals we defined and accomplished.

Prior to the fall term, our vice president Vesna Saveski and I met with President Russi to discuss funding concerns for Kresge Library. We emphasized that students were car-pooling to other institutions to obtain reference materials our library should contain. As a result, Kresge received a much needed \$200,000 increase in its base budget. Students no longer have to commute to off-campus libraries to acquire resources.

In late October, we voted on goals we wanted to accomplish throughout the remainder of the year. Students voiced their concerns about the new meters in the Oakland Center parking lot. Our campus development committee was able to negotiate a two-hour maximum that would help to ease student concerns.

Resolution 02-02 was presented before the Board of Trustees voted on the approval of the first parking structure. The OUSC cited accessibility for students with disabilities and the safety and security of all in the OU community to remain a top priority before the board issued its approval. The structure will be completed by fall of this year.

OUSC leaders also were representatives for the Food Service Committee. Their task was to decipher which company offered the lowest price as well as the finest quality in customer service. They gave insight, perspective and voiced student concern to the committee to ensure all student interest was expressed.

Our heart and soul of this campus and the hub for activities, the Oakland Center, has finally been approved for an \$8 million renovation. By August 2003, this campus will be able to facilitate the need for more multipurpose student organizational space, 400 plus added seats to the food court and a 24-hour computer lab to completely centralize this center as a bona fide one-stop shop. The OUSC appeared before the board solidifying our wants and needs for the expansion of this center.

And this year became revolutionary for all members of the OUSC, administration and for the advancement of the OU community in general. With the support and determination of all involved, our annual elections went from the pre-historic paper ballots to a state-of-the-art online Web site. Our intention was to increase voter turnout and simply make it easier for all students to participate in a democratic election process. Through the efforts of the elections commission, administration and the most innovative of IT professionals on campus our mission became a success. Other institutions have conveyed that our model is the most authentic and secure of its kind. The OUSC is setting a trend not only in the state of Michigan but also across the nation. Without risk there is no reward, and these students around the table voted to take that risk.

And have you heard the latest buzz on campus: Student Congress spearheaded an initiative to designate majors on our

diplomas. Resolution 02-04 was passed citing the OUSC's support to add our majors to our diplomas. We forwarded our resolution to the proper committees and the university senate agreed the idea for change was realistic and feasible. Last Thursday at the university senate meeting, I witnessed first-hand a change that will forever mark our abilities as the student voice. It has been wanted, and so it will be changed. Every student on this campus will benefit from our course of action and our abilities as the student voice are only becoming more potent as time goes on.

It is up to you to decide your own level of involvement on this campus. Oakland University is moving forward in its mission as a premier institution of higher education. The need for a strong student voice is becoming more prominent as decisions on capital outlay projects are being made.

In the end, we are the customers, clients and consumers of everything that is OU, and it is up to the students to maintain these partnerships and relationships we have worked so hard to build.

The Oakland University Student Congress is a finely tuned and powerful machine ready to tackle any concerns students may have. This is because of the dedication of our executive board members and the enthusiasm of our legislators.

I believe the state of this campus is the strongest it has ever been because of the diversity and commitment brought to this legislative body. And I believe this organization will continue to serve in its capacity as the student voice as long as students remain unified.

Remember when it comes to student government, as it is in life, you're either making it happen, watching it happen or wondering what happened. You decide . . .

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for everything we have learned working in our capacity as your elected leaders, from each other and from working as a team. I will graduate knowing that the state of our campus is in the hands of students of those who are determined to reach new levels of success. And I wish the president, vice president and newly elected legislators the same opportunity to experience success at every level they desire.

Thank you and God Bless.

#### **SUMMARY**

OU Student Body President Derek Dickow presented his State of the Student Body Address at the last official Oakland University Student Congress meeting for the 2001-2002 administration on April 15.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Monday, April 22, 2002  
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Monday, April 22, 2002  
Article Start Date: Thursday, November 6, 2003