

Monday, February 16, 2009

Best-selling author to bring inspirational story to OU

By **Dave Groves**, news editor

The Wall Street Journal columnist and best-selling author who chronicled the touching and inspirational story of Carnegie Mellon University Professor Randy Pausch will share insights he gained from the experience with an audience at Oakland University.

Jeffrey Zaslow, who co-authored the New York Times best-seller "The Last Lecture" with Pausch, had attended the professor's final classroom presentation in 2007. Zaslow subsequently penned a column about the talk, which focused on pursuing one's childhood dreams.

Zaslow's column, coupled with a video clip from the lecture posted on the Internet, compelled tens of millions of people worldwide to explore the emotionally-charged story of Pausch's battle with pancreatic cancer.

"This story just exploded into the American audience," said Garry Gilbert, interim chair of the OU's journalism program. "Zaslow was smart enough to recognize the power of this story and put it out there."

Gilbert added that while Zaslow's talk is likely to move all who hear it, it also will have particular appeal to those interested in the profession of journalism and its mission to fuel public dialogue with timely and meaningful information. As the means of fulfilling this rapidly evolve, OU journalism students are learning that the mission remains the same.

"One of our goals here is to raise the profile of the journalism program," Gilbert explained. "We have an excellent program here and want to have more events like this to expose people to the great work our faculty and students are doing."

Lindsey Wojcik, editor in chief of The Oakland Post, said she and other journalism students are looking forward to hearing from a seasoned veteran who has so effectively demonstrated the power of modern media.

"We're really excited about the future of journalism, so we're looking forward to hearing him speak about that, as well as about his book and the time he spent with Randy Pausch," she said. "Cancer is such a widespread disease that people across America can relate to it. I think for that reason this will get a lot of attention."

"The Last Lecture," which has been featured on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and an ABC prime-time special hosted by Diane Sawyer, has been translated into 36 languages and has had more than 4 million copies printed in the United States alone. Many who've read the book or watched Pausch's lecture online have said the story has changed their lives.

That Pausch so bravely and triumphantly confronted his diagnosis with pancreatic cancer intrigued Zaslow, who has long written on the topic of navigating life's difficult transitions in his column, "Moving On."

"When Randy was alive, I'd often send him links to some of the hundreds of thousands of Web sites talking about him," Zaslow said. "After a while, he wrote to me, 'Will you stop Googling my name and go hug your kids?' He was great at putting things exactly right. So I think of him now when I hug my kids. It's a gift to be able to do that."

Zaslow added that he hopes that he, too, can inspire people to carefully consider the things that matter most in life.

"I hope people at my presentation will embrace Randy's message about the possibilities of life ... and will be reminded that time is all we have, and we may find one day that we have less than we think," He said. "It's an honor to share his inspiring story."

Substantial proceeds from Zaslow's speeches benefit the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network and the Randy Pausch Honorary Fund at Carnegie Mellon University. Admission to his Oakland University appearance is free, though organizers encourage donations to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network.

Sponsored by the journalism program at Oakland University and The Oakland Post, Zaslow's presentation will take place in the Oakland Center Gold Rooms at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 3. Seating will be on a first-come, first-served basis. A book signing will follow the event.



Jeffrey Zaslow will speak at Oakland University on Tuesday, March 3.

SUMMARY

Wall Street Journal columnist Jeffrey Zaslow, co-author of "The Last Lecture," will share insights he gained from chronicling Randy Pausch's battle with cancer.

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