

Tuesday, Feb 28, 2017

International Meet and Greet spotlights OU's diverse cultures

Students, faculty and staff gathered in Oak View Hall on Tuesday for a meet-and-greet celebrating OU's international community. Cohosted by the Honors College and International Students and Scholars Office, the event gave attendees an opportunity to learn about each other's ethnic backgrounds and cultural traditions amid a festive atmosphere that featured live music and international cuisine.

"Increasingly, we've seen more international students coming to OU and we've got a lot of students who study abroad," said Graeme Harper, dean of Oakland's Honors College. "This event is a way to bring everyone together to share their experiences."

Harper welcomed the crowd with a look back at Oakland's founding, highlighting the university's longstanding commitment to providing a liberal arts focused curriculum from a global perspective. He referenced a 1959 New York Times article noting that each OU student was expected to learn at least one foreign language and required to take three courses in foreign studies "to develop an understanding of the world community, particularly the non-western cultures."

Harper also noted that OU founder Matilda Dodge Wilson was an avid traveler who visited many countries, including Egypt, India and England.

David Archbold, director of the International Students and Scholars Office, called Wilson a "visionary" and "trailblazer" for the talents she contributed not only as the founder of OU, but also as the first woman to serve as a lieutenant governor in the United States. He pointed out that Wilson was the daughter of German immigrants and was herself an immigrant, having come to the United States from Canada.

Travus Burton, experiential learning coordinator, said the event was well-timed, especially in light of current events.

"There's a lot that we can continue doing along these lines because, when it comes down to it, we're all just people," said Burton. "Events like these help to remind us of that fact. We have a lot more similarities than we have differences, if you really get down to it."

Murali Gumpeny, a first-year master's student from India, said his OU experience has been positive.

"My favorite part so far has been the college outings that we go on, and the clubs," he said. "I think this event is an excellent opportunity to learn more about the American culture, as well as cultures other than your own."



OU students, faculty and staff members gathered in Oak View Hall for an international meet and greet highlighting the variety of cultures on campus.



Mark Stone, coordinator of OU's World Music Program and Percussion Program, plays the Gyl, a Ghanaian Xylophone.