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SECS dean sets ambitious goals for school's future

By **Katie Land**, news editor

New Dean Louay Chamra is ready to put the School of Engineering and Computer Science on the map. With little more than a month spent at Oakland University, Chamra is ready to get to work.

His two major goals for the school are to increase enrollment and research funding dramatically. The expectation is to increase enrollment by 35 percent, with an emphasis on recruiting women and minorities, and to grow external funding from the current \$2.9 million to more than \$10 million in the next five years.

"I believe that we have great potential as a school and as a university to achieve all of this," Chamra said. "We are literally surrounded by Fortune 500 companies. All we need is to harvest this energy and we will have great potential for growth."

Chamra is developing a strategic plan for SECS to assist in achieving the university's 2020 Vision of increasing total enrollment to 25,000 students, to broaden a research intensive agenda, to expand professional education, to broaden OU's prominence as a national university and to strengthen student friendly experiences.

"I have noticed that many people believe SECS is linked exclusively to the automotive industry. But in truth, anyone who graduates from this school has all the world open to them. We do not cater exclusively to GM, Ford or Chrysler. This is a broad discipline that encompasses all types of manufacturing and industrial bases."

With 47 current faculty members, Chamra believes that each could bring in \$200,000 each year through research funding. This is an achievable amount for any engineering faculty, and will motivate them to achieve more, he said.

The SECS will lead by example when working to increase enrollment among women and minorities, Chamra said. He hopes to nearly double the gender and racial diversity in the school by attracting more role models and faculty members that represent the student body.

"I am excited to do this," he said. "A job without a challenge is not interesting. This will be a challenge, and I think we can achieve our objectives."

Many ideas are being developed, such as creating a high school-based summer research program, new online courses, an annual alumni report and events to reenergize the student organizations.

An Engineering Day has already been scheduled for Friday, Jan. 15, 2010. OU's engineering student organizations will act as the driving force to welcome high school students into their world. The event will open all the labs, bring out the formula race cars and show students what it will be like to become an engineer.

"Oakland is unique and distinguished for its small classes and one-on-one interaction with faculty members. This is an experience that students cannot have at larger universities," he said. "Dr. Russi and Dr. Moudgil have been very supportive of my goals. They see the importance and the potential of helping the school to grow, and will support any school that works to achieve such results."

For more information about the SECS and its programs, visit the Web site at oakland.edu/secs.

SUMMARY

New Dean Louay Chamra is ready to put the School of Engineering and Computer Science on the map by increasing enrollment and dramatically boosting research funding.

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