OAKLAND UNIVERSITY™

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New VP to focus on e-learning, instructional support

*By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer*

Catheryn Leda Cheal joined Oakland University's Center for Information Technology as assistant vice president for e-Learning and Instructional Support, effective July 1.

Cheal comes to OU from California State University Northridge, where she was director and faculty coordinator of online instruction.

One of her top priorities at OU is to work with deans and faculty to increase online course degree programs, concentrations, minors and general education courses.

"We were very impressed with Catheryn's range of experience. She led the team at Northridge that put many of their courses online after an earthquake made physical access to their campus a problem," said John Klemanski, chair of the hiring committee and professor of political science. "She offered the best combination of credentials and performance as well as leadership qualities in terms of program development, strategic planning and technical know-how."

As an adjunct faculty member at CSU Northridge and Ventura, Cheal also taught courses in art history, history, art, general studies and humanities.

"After the Northridge earthquake in 1994, I was able to take my little Mac SE home and had ample time to play with it during the unexpected time off while the university began its reconstruction," she said. "I began writing art history programs in HyperTalk and then graduated to Web pages and online bulletin boards for discussion sections."

Four years ago, Cheal developed an online art history course, created the Office of Online Instruction, and introduced the campus to WebCT through a series of four-part workshops.

"One thing led to another and by the end of the academic year, we had 50 online courses to support with about seven online software teaching programs," Cheal said. "Although, initially, I had doubts about teaching completely online, my first and subsequent classes were very positive experiences and the students became more active and enthusiastic participants than in traditional lecture courses. I've enjoyed helping other faculty restructure their courses and discover just how well it can work."

In her new position, Cheal also will focus on university service.

"Any instructional technology unit must be primarily about service, so I will offer WebCT workshops and personal one-on-one consultations," Cheal said.

Cheal is excited about the recent restructure at OU, which creates OU's Center for Information Technology, including Classroom Support and Instructional Technical Services (CSITS) led by George Preisinger, and University Technology Services (UTS) led by Theresa Rowe.

"Technology is often best served when organized as a hierarchic, secure and efficient model, while university instruction has traditionally been offered as a democratic, creative and individualized process," she said. "Information technologists and instructional technologists need to work together very closely on problems to keep academic technology working as smoothly as possible for the faculty and students."

Cheal was a graduate student lecturer at Brown University, where she earned her Doctorate of Philosophy. She received her Bachelor of General Studies degree from the University of Michigan.

Cheal is looking forward to moving to OU and returning to her home state. She grew up in Oakland County, and her mother attended OU, where she has fond memories of visiting Kresge Library and attending Meadow Brook concerts.

"I remembered Oakland University as a cultured and beautiful place," said Cheal, who moved from Michigan 30 years ago. "My husband and I are delighted to be moving back home."

SUMMARY
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