

inside OAKLAND

A newsletter for Oakland University colleagues

Staying ahead of the curve

In such areas as engineering, computer science and decision and information science, Oakland faculty use tomorrow's innovations to assure up-to-date graduates



Going beyond the traditional classroom walls are Joe Hovanesian, chair, Mechanical Engineering; Tom Lauer, chair, Decision and Information Sciences; and Naim Kheir, chair, Electrical and Systems Engineering.

With information exploding and technology moving at breakneck speed, Oakland University faculty are keeping ahead of the curve through innovative teaching methods.

Take Joe Hovanesian, chair, Mechanical Engineering, for example.

He believes the secret to teaching in today's information-driven world is to teach more than hard facts.

"New materials and methods are constantly developing," he says, "so we try to teach resourcefulness as well as principles and fundamentals. We teach students to find the latest technology and information. The successful engineer tries to keep abreast of new developments in order to remain technically viable. We encourage and foster this at OU."

Naim Kheir, chair, Electrical and Systems Engineering, is another example.

Revision of existing courses and creation of new ones allows the introduction of evolving areas of special attention into the curriculum, Kheir says.

"Ford Motor Company asked us to create a curriculum in automotive mechatronics, and we were awarded \$100,000 a year ago," he says. "We have created a lab and have created the first course, and we are

Continued on page 2

breaking NEWS

Senate to review 5 more applications

The Oakland University Senate will begin reviewing five applications for charter schools on December 10.

Senate members are expected to make their recommendations in January.

The applications include three schools from Detroit and one from Southgate and Dearborn.

Five OU-chartered schools are now operational, including the Turtle Island Learning Circle of Redford Township, Dove Academy of Detroit, Nsoroma Institute of Highland Park, Elbert Thomas Clark Academy of Detroit and Academy of Michigan in Ferndale.

The Edison Public School Academy is expected to open its doors in September 1998.

"The university is excited to be part of helping to provide innovative educational opportunities to children," says Angie Melhado, coordinator, Urban Partnerships and Public School Academies. "These schools are fine additions to the already excellent public school programs in Michigan."

1500 and counting: A club of their own

OU's commitment to personal attention spurs record enrollment

They made it. And then some.

This fall, Oakland University enrolled 1,556 FTIAC (first time in any college) students, up 145 from last fall and well over the 1,500 goal set last year by the Office of Admissions and Enrollment Management.

Robert Johnson, associate vice president, Enrollment Management, and director, Admissions, credits the rise to increased personal attention.

"We personalized our approach to recruitment, calling students regularly, requiring each admissions adviser to have a certain number of contacts with each of their prospective students and guide the student through the enrollment process," Johnson says. "We call students to arrange campus

visits. We call each student to remind them to attend new student orientation."

Oakland is also reaching prospective students by having more visibility with community groups.

"Even though we're growing as an institution, we can keep the campus small in terms of the way we deliver services and the way that our classes are taught. Our student-to-faculty ratio is still 19 to 1," Johnson says.

A new computer system also helps OU focus on personal attention.

"The Exeter Student Marketing System helped us tremendously," he says. "It's the foundation in managing information so our recruitment staff can respond to students in a timely and effective

way. It enables us to process students much quicker and provides us a wealth of demographic information."

The system informs recruiters to call students during the enrollment process and stores personal

information, for example.

"It personalizes the approach in a different way than just calling the person back without any history," Johnson says.



Freshmen Katrina McLay, from left, Lisa Remsing and Andre DeLati rub shoulders with Robert Johnson, second from left, associate vice president, Enrollment Management and director, Admissions.

A paperless society?

If that is the case, then what is all that stuff on your desk?

You may not be able to find that note touting the wonders of a paperless society.

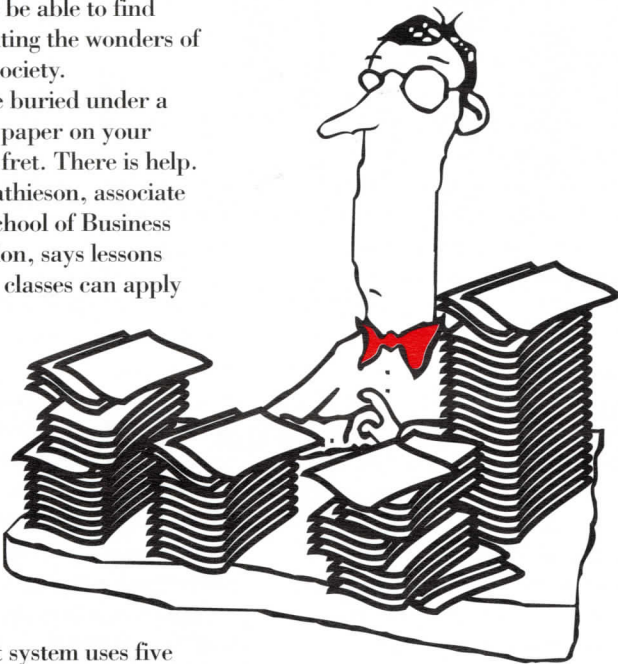
It could be buried under a mountain of paper on your desk. Not to fret. There is help.

Kieran Mathieson, associate professor, School of Business Administration, says lessons taught in his classes can apply to Oakland University faculty and staff.

Start with the basics, Mathieson says. One accepted paper management system uses five "baskets." Label them To Do, To Read, To File, Today and Trash, and be ruthless, he says. "Other" is not a choice. "Once you catch up, keeping up should be easy," he says.

For hard-core paper junkies, you may want to call for reinforcements. Professional organizers can help dig you out of your paper avalanche, in such areas as desk, home and schedule.

The National Association of Professional Organizers



(NAPO) is a nationwide network of professionals in all areas of organization, according to its Web site, and even boasts a branch called the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization. NAPO offers a referral service, where callers receive, at no charge, names and telephone numbers of organizers within their geographic area.

Call NAPO at (512) 206-0151 for more information.

employee of the MONTH



Employee: Rosemary Verkest
Title: Technical Office Assistant
Department: Office of the President
Length of Service: Five Years

Comments: "Rose has been a lifesaver this past year. She is very reliable and dependable, and she always has an extremely helpful and positive attitude."

"Rose is a valued member of the President's Office team. She is extremely capable and always pleasant to work with."

Ahead of the Curve

Continued from page 1

currently teaching it. So our eyes are always open for new fields."

Khair adds the department has paid significant attention to the modernization of existing labs and the creation of new ones, assisted by Oakland University's Strategic Plan Fund, corporate gifts and grants. The combination of efforts, he says, has allowed Electrical and Systems Engineering to remain on the cutting edge to serve students.

"We're constantly trying to keep our technology current," says Tom Lauer, chair, Decision and Information Sciences.

The department teaches students design principles, how to analyze systems and how information is used in

organizations.

In the area of Computer Science, Professor Christian Wagner agrees the underlying principles don't change that fast, and can be taught with confidence in spite of rapid changes in tools.

"There is a strong separation between the theoretical underpinnings of the field and the particular tools used at the moment," he says. He also stresses the value of visiting lecturers from business and industry, and of professors who consult outside the classroom and can bring timely real-world experience to students.

"It's a tough job," he says. "The focus in any discipline is to give students the basic theoretical underpinnings and then teach them how to learn. If they can do that, then they'll do well on their own."

campus REGISTER

INSIDE OAKLAND is published each month September through May for the faculty and staff of Oakland University by the University Communications and Marketing Department (C&M).

Newsletter Staff: Sheila Carpenter, Jennifer Charney, Ted Coutilish, Priscilla Fan, Angela Marchesi, Anne Oliveira, Rick Smith

Call: 3134 Fax: 3132
Write: 119 NFH
E-mail: coutilis@oakland.edu
Printed on recycled paper

DEADLINES
Submit items for publication no later than the 10th of the month before publication

NEXT DEADLINE
December 10

of distinction

Rob Anderson, English, recently presented a paper at the 5th Annual Conference of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism in Hamilton, Ontario. The paper was titled *As on a picture: Poetic Form and Commodity Form in Wordsworth's 'The Ruined Cottage.'*

Marilyn Becker, Women's Studies, received the Women's Studies award for teaching excellence. In other news, Women Studies sponsored an interdisciplinary essay contest for OU students. Linda Eastman earned first prize and Lidija Milic notched second place.

Suzann Bonnici, Constituent Research, was elected to the Board of Directors of APRA-Michigan. APRA is the Association of Professional Researchers for Advancement. Organization goals are to facilitate education about research, to act as a central source of information about prospect research, to encourage professional development among its members and to advance cooperative relationships.

Brian Connery, English, chaired two panels at the annual meeting of the Mid-Western American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies: *Dialogues: Nature and Capitalism, Men and Women, and Masculinity, Authority, and Authorship.* Connery continues to serve as secretary-treasurer and newsletter editor of the society.

Geri Graham, Project Upward Bound, was confirmed as 1997-98 president-elect of the Michigan Chapter of the Mid America Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (MI-MAEOPP) in November. In this role, Graham will sit on the 10-state regional board

(MAEOPP) and will chair two Chapter Committees, Membership and Credentials and TRIO Day/Student Leadership Summit. In addition to being a regular workshop presenter at state and regional conferences, Graham's past service to MAEOPP has included membership on the Chapter Conference Planning Committee, chairing the Chapter Education Foundation Scholarship Committee, and completing the Regional Emerging Leaders Institute training program.

Vincent Khapoya, Political Science, had the second edition of his book, *The African Experience*, published in October by Prentice Hall. He also delivered a keynote address, *Africans and Americans: Links and Heritages*, at a national conference, *Understanding the Dynamics of Contemporary Africa: Beyond Stereotypes and Images*, organized by the American Association of Foreign Student Advisors, East Lansing, October 17.

John Klemanski, Political Science, attended the annual conference of the Great Lakes Economic Development Association, Detroit, October 18. He chaired a panel, *Evaluating Tax Abatements and Other Economic Development Subsidies.* He also presented a paper, *Evaluating Renaissance Zone Programs.*

Sean Farrell Moran, History, delivered a paper, *Images of Michael Collins*, at the Annual Midwestern Regional Meeting of the American Conference of Irish Studies at St. Norbert's College, Green Bay. At the same meeting, he chaired the panel, *The Dolmen Miscellany*, to which he contributed his commentary. Ireland in the 1960s. He also spoke on the state of British politics before the Business

Roundtable at the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club. His book, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption*, was recently issued in paperback by Catholic University Press.

Virinder Moudgil, Biological Sciences, presented *Estradiol regulation of proliferation of T47D breast cancer cells: alterations in p53 tumor suppressor protein and mRNA levels*, at the 88th Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research. The coauthors on the study are graduate students Surni Dinda, Paul Alban and Nidhi Khattree. The work was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health, and is being carried out in collaboration with the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York. Paul Alban, a Department of Biological Sciences graduate student, presented an invited paper, *Regulation of Retinoblastoma protein by Hormonal and Antihormonal Agents*, at the annual meeting of Endocrine Society, Minneapolis. Coauthors are Dinda, Khattree and Cliff Hurd. The work was performed in the laboratory of Moudgil, who directs this and other projects on hormone action via support from the National Institutes of Health and Research Excellence Program of the Institute of Biochemistry and Biotechnology.

Dale Nesbary, Political Science, attended the annual meeting of the Midwest Criminal Justice Association in Cincinnati from October 8-10. He chaired a session, *Internet and the Web in Criminal Justice*. He also presented a paper, *The Web and State Law Enforcement — A State of the Art Review*. Nesbary received the Police Guide Award for Excellence for his Criminal Justice Web site, *Quick Guide to the Internet for Criminology and*

Criminal Justice. The Police Guide is the largest criminal justice resource on the Internet and includes reviews of Web sites for content and design.

Kathleen Pfeiffer, English Department, was invited to serve as a discussant for a special session, titled *Plessy v. Ferguson Revisited*, at the Midwest Modern Language Association conference in Chicago November 6-8.

Christina Sieloff, Nursing, published an article, *Nursing Leadership for a New Century*, in the journal *Seminars for Nurse Managers: Strategies for Leadership and Management*.

Ronald Sudol, Rhetoric, has published the essay, *Writers, Computers, and Personality*, as a chapter in the book, *Most Excellent Differences*, published by Consulting Psychologists Press. In addition, he has been appointed by the Michigan Department of Education to a committee charged with revising the standards for certification of English teachers.

new faces

- Helen Ellison, assistant director, Experiential Learning, Placement and Career Services
- Kristina Furey, veterans services coordinator, Financial Aid
- Kathleen Kramer, budget manager/administrative assistant, Communications and Marketing
- Domenico Luongo, safety specialist, Risk Management
- Anne Oliveira, art director, Communications and Marketing
- Sharanda Paul, secretary II, Upward Bound
- Arline Sheffer, clerk II, Admissions
- Holly Toggweiler, adviser, Admissions

A 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience

Visiting professor says Chinese rule probably won't affect Hong Kong lifestyle

Hong Kong most likely will retain its way of life and standard of living even though it is now under Chinese rule instead of the British crown, according to an Oakland

University professor who observed the transfer-of-power ceremony July 1.

Richard Stamps, associate professor, Anthropology, visited Hong Kong with Marsha, his wife.

"There was an electricity in the air," Stamps says. "There was sadness for the British as they saw the sun set on their empire, but they transferred power with class and honor. The Chinese assumed sovereignty of Hong Kong with respect, but it was quite clear they are now in charge."

Chinese troops are now seen in Hong Kong, he says, and shortly before the transfer of power, the People's Republic of China conducted live-fire military exercises that included aiming missiles at Taiwan.

The island of Hong Kong is a mile south off the coast of mainland China near the city of Kowloon. The British had seized Hong Kong in 1841 to provide a base for opium traders. But with its large natural harbor and commercial development, it flourished and began attracting migrants from the mainland. The Japanese controlled Hong Kong in World

War II, but after the war, Britain restored colonial control.

Britain and China agreed in 1984 that China would take sovereignty over the colony on July 1, 1997, but promised that Hong Kong would retain "a high degree of autonomy," allowing residents to keep their lifestyle and capitalistic system.

Although China is Stamps' academic area of expertise, he was in Asia for another reason. He and his wife and Karen, his daughter, lived on the island of Taiwan for three years while he served as mission president of the Taiwan Taipei Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

He was responsible for 474 young Mormon men and women who saved up their own money to serve for up to two years as missionaries in a foreign land. He also oversaw

12 congregations of the church.

"I entered under British Hong Kong and exited from The People's Republic of China Hong Kong," he says.

Stamps, who had been living in Taiwan's capital Taipei, says the cities on that island are crowded and the streets chaotic. Five million people live in Taipei.

"Most families have a car or a scooter, but there are not enough parking spaces," he says. "The roads clog up by 7 a.m. with workers and students. Taiwan is the world's fourteenth largest trading partner, and it's very competitive and intensive."

Stamps says the trip had academic value.

"It was also a great language-

learning exercise," he says.

"Although I'm still not good at ordering in a Chinese restaurant, I can give a 20-minute talk in front of 700 people in Chinese."

While he was there, Stamps also helped develop language-learning materials for the Mormon missionaries and co-edited a book on the

Mormon experience in Taiwan. His academic pursuits in China included visiting Orchid Island three times to renew acquaintances and to develop research proposals.

"Hong Kong is an autonomous unit," he says. "There's nationalistic pride but also concern about their freedom in Hong Kong. The plan now is to maintain freedoms, and I think they will."



Richard Stamps

OU agrees to exchange students with Chinese institution

Oakland University recently agreed to exchange students for the next three years with an education commission in China.

The agreement is an example of OU's commitment to preparing students for the challenges of a rapidly changing global workplace and society, says Mary Otto, dean, School of Education and Human Services.

Oakland will exchange students with the Guizhou Education Commission in Guizhou, a rural province in south central China.

Every year, about a dozen volunteer instructors participate in the nine-year-old Summer English Language Institute. They

travel from OU and nearby school districts to four Guizhou sites to show instructors how to teach English and other subjects. In return, the American educators learn about Chinese culture and lifestyles so they may share their knowledge with their students back home.

Last August the institutions agreed to serve as hosts for up to three exchange students per year who will study at the host institution for up to one year in programs of their choice.

The host waives charges for tuition and housing; the sending institution or exchange student is responsible for other

expenses such as food, books and medical insurance. OU is hosting three Guizhou students who are studying in the SEHS Department of Reading and Language Arts.

"I believe in a global educational system," Otto says. "I believe it is important for us to understand people from other cultures who come to this country to study, but also that we educate American students to be prepared for travel. Americans should be exposed to other cultures by living and working with people from those cultures — not just by reading about other cultures in books."

bits and PIECES

What is your idea of a dream winter break vacation?

"Cottage in Highland village. Christmas assembled from only what is available in the village. New Year's Eve midnight haggis and pipes at local castle. Winter hikes, glowing hearth, family, good books, great single malt."
— Pam Acheson
director, Planned Giving

"Probably a trip to London where I would indulge in food, dance and theatre for one week and maybe even a daily massage."
— Carol Halsted
chair, professor
Music, Theatre and Dance

"I would continue my informal study of 'weird' celebrities by spending a week in Tahiti reading biographies of Gauguin."
— Tom Blume
associate professor
Education Counseling

Oakland offers scholarships for physically challenged students

The Office of Graduate Study invites physically challenged graduate students who use wheelchairs to apply to the Steven R. and Leah P. Vartanian Endowment Scholarship fund for financial assistance.

Applicants for admission to graduate study at OU, and current Oakland graduate students may file a scholarship application with the Office of Graduate Study, 520 O'Dowd Hall. Deadline application is December 1.

Call 2194 for more information.

A 'can't miss' Web site

Check out this Web site:
<<http://w3.sba.oakland.edu/acc/>>.

The University Senate's Academic Computing Committee created the site to promote discussion of topics related directly to the use of computers in instructional programs.

The site contains discussion forums, as well as a place to take a look at Web site support for courses on campus. This section allows faculty members to enter the sites they are using to support their own courses. The committee hopes the database will grow to include all courses that use the Internet.

Oakland educates the Big K

Oakland University is finishing up

its first year of providing job training to Kmart Corporation employees, thanks to a \$440,860 grant from the Michigan Jobs Commission.

OU has provided training to more than 1,000 Kmart employees from October 1996 to October 1997 at its corporate headquarters in Troy, says James B. Schiro, director, OU Center for Business Excellence.

OU faculty from the School of Business Administration and the Center for Business Excellence helped teach classes at Kmart, says Schiro, who is grant project director. Kmart also contributed more than \$400,000 toward the training program, whose total cost was \$1.4 million.

The Center for Business Excellence offers Southeastern Michigan continuing education, educational conferences, distance learning, corporate and entrepreneurial training, community development, consulting services and professional development programs.

Computer graphics classes taught over the Internet

For the first time, Oakland University faculty are teaching classes over the Internet. No classrooms. No class meetings.

Each week, 15 graduate students and five undergraduates log into a virtual classroom, either on their home computers or at OU's on-

campus graphics facilities. Students enrolled in the Designing Computer Graphics course study lecture materials, take tests and submit homework on-line.

"Computer graphics lends itself to multimedia, asynchronous presentation," says Jack Nachman, professor, Mathematical Sciences. "It's easier for me to demonstrate the principles of computer graphics and easier for students to learn them if they're right there on the computer screen. In my classes, students can relax, take their time, and really study the complexities of a particular concept."

Nachman's "lecture" appears as a combination of audio, text and animated graphic illustrations.

Go shopping at the golf course

Oakland University's Katke-Cousins Golf Course is sponsoring a Holiday Sale 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. December 2-5. Complimentary gift wrapping and food will be available. Call 4152 for more information.

Sieloff receives grant funding for nursing research

The American Nurses Foundation has named Christina Sieloff a 1997 American Organization of Nurse Executives Scholar and awarded her a \$2,000 research grant to further develop an instrument — the Sieloff-King assessment of group power within an organization

— that measures the power of nurses within an organization.

When Sieloff received her Ph.D. in nursing in 1996 from Wayne State University, her dissertation included her own Theory of Departmental Power based on the conceptual framework of nursing first proposed by Imogene King. Sieloff initially developed this instrument through research involving the chief nurse executives of more than 600 hospitals in six Midwestern states. The data from the completed instruments was analyzed and tested for reliability and validity.

The American Nurses Foundation grant, combined with a \$1,000 Oakland University faculty research grant and a \$1,500 School of Nursing Board of Visitors grant, allows Sieloff to conduct the research again, but expand the number of interviews over a larger geographic base and make the necessary revisions indicated in the initial psychometric testing of the instrument.

"For the purpose of this study, power is defined as the ability to attain goals," Sieloff says. "By evaluating the power these nursing executives feel they have in areas such as computer resources, staff development or internal information availability, they can determine if they have a power base within their organization and where that power base lies. That knowledge improves their group's ability to attain goals."

get to **KNOW**

.....

WOMEN OF OU

A feature highlighting specific groups of university colleagues.



SHIRLEY COBB
Senior Secretary,
Office of the President



RHONDA SAUNDERS
Administrative Assistant,
Board of Trustees



JO HAIRSTON
Office Assistant,
Office of the Provost



LINDA VAN NATTA
Executive Secretary,
Campus Facilities and Operations

How did you get involved?	I was on the ground floor as an organization committee charter member.	When I started here, the orientation packet had Women of OU enrollment information.	I was invited to a fashion show and attended a brown bag luncheon. I liked it, so I joined.	Because I was interested in becoming involved in what was going on across campus.
What are the personal benefits?	Networking though brown bag luncheons.	The main goal is to help women who are single, head of household, get an education.	Doing things that help other people through our work with charity organizations and getting together with university people in a non-work setting.	In 1991, I was treasurer and I took part in seeing the Critical Difference Scholarship become endowed.
Why is this group important to OU?	Women of OU created the Critical Difference Scholarship program.	We give back to the university. Students receive scholarships to go to OU.	A better working relationship between colleagues.	It is good to bring together people with different experiences and spin-off ideas that can benefit the university.
If I were in charge of this group, I would . . . ?	They need to expand members and recruit more faculty women, and move support from sponsors.	I'd like to see more students, staff and faculty become more involved.	Expand the group outside the university and with other women's groups in the community.	Meeting more often, but I really enjoy the group and it seems to be working well.
What is your most rewarding experience?	Meeting the people and being part of the scholarship fund.	As the Women of OU chair, it helped me to grow professionally.	Last year when we had our first live play, <i>Shirley Valentine</i> at Varner Recital Hall.	Doing the <i>Shirley Valentine</i> performance, which received money for an additional Critical Difference Scholarship.

faculty **PROFILE**

With an eye on the future . . .



New director outlines her plans for Oakland University's Eye Research Institute

Janet Blanks plans to attract more faculty to Oakland University's renowned Eye Research Institute and build on external partnerships.

As the institute's new director and perhaps the only woman in the United States who heads an eye institute, Blanks looks to the future with optimism.

Blanks succeeds Venkat Reddy, who founded the institute in 1968 with Everett Kinsey. Before coming to Oakland, Blanks directed the Doheny Eye Institute's Electron Microscopy Laboratory in the University of Southern California's School of Medicine. She was also a professor in that school's Departments of Ophthalmology and Anatomy & Cell Biology.

Blanks brings with her a \$1 million National Eye Institute grant to study the use of gene therapy in the treatment of inherited retinal diseases such as Retinitis Pigmentosa. She's among a handful of researchers in the country studying this therapy to treat the retina, the light sensitive tissue of the eye. The retina receives the image formed by the eye's lens and

converts it into chemical and nervous signals that reach the brain through the optic nerve.

Blanks' research involves using a virus to place a gene from a normal mammalian cell into a mutant mouse retina, where such a gene is missing or inactive.

"It's hoped that if you can target the degeneration cells in the retina, you could possibly either cure or slow retinal degeneration," Blanks says.

"This research may lead to more ideas about how to target cells in the brain that die during Alzheimer's disease."

One reason Blanks came to Oakland is its partnership with Beaumont Hospital, which has a strong group of retinal surgeons who could help in her research. "There is a very large ophthalmology practice at Beaumont," Blanks says.

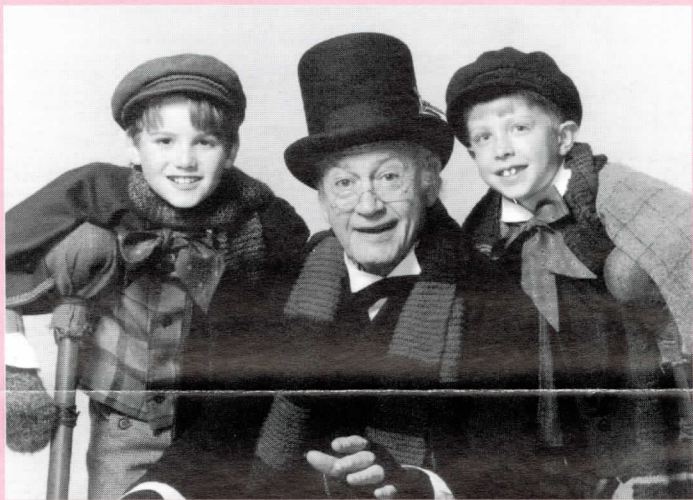
"They have some of the largest clinical trials in the nation in macular degeneration and other eye diseases. I feel that we can do a lot together."

The institute's state-of-the-art research, which rivals research on large medical school campuses, also drew her to Oakland. Blanks also values the institute's opportunities for undergraduate students to work in research laboratories. Such experience is a tremendous advantage for students who want to go to medical school, she says.

Blanks' other goals include securing funding from private eye foundations. Meanwhile, the native Californian, her son and their Labrador retriever and pug are adjusting to the Michigan winter. Blanks bought a house in Rochester. Her husband, Robert, professor, Anatomy and Neurobiology, University of California Irvine School of Medicine, is trying to arrange a position at OU.

Their daughter, Meggan, 20, is finishing her second year of college in California.

Janet Blanks earned her Ph.D. in anatomy from the University of California, Los Angeles, and did post-doctorate work at UCLA's Jules Stein Eye Institute.



Booth Coleman, center, performs as Ebenezer Scrooge and Jeffrey Hyke, left, and Jamison Schrock, right, alternate the role of Tiny Tim in Meadow Brook Theatre's Production of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, November 28 — December 28.

calendar of **EVENTS**

People with disabilities who need special assistance to attend any of the events listed may call the sponsoring unit or the Office of Disability Support Services at 370-3266.

Meadow Brook Hall tours, 1:30 p.m. daily and from 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Sundays (last tour begins at 3:45 p.m.).

DECEMBER

- 2 — 28** A Christmas Carol, MBT
- 2 —** Weight Management Seminar, MBHEI, 6 p.m.
- 3 —** Art, Book & Gift Fair, OC, 9 a.m.
- 3 —** Stress-Free Zone, Fireside Lounge OC, 10 a.m.
- 3 —** Opera Workshop, 109 VAR, noon
- 3 —** Concerto Auditions, VAR, 7 p.m.
- 3 —** OU men's basketball, Ferris State, The Bubble, 7:30 p.m.
- 4 — 7** Meadow Brook Estate Holiday Spectacular, RH VAR
- 4 —** Board of Trustees, Gold Room B-C, 3 p.m.
- 5 —** Alan Hine, Vehicle to Production in 20 Months, DH
- 6 —** Law School Admission Test, 8:30 a.m.
- 9 —** Miller's Analogy Test, 3 p.m.
- 9 —** OU women's basketball, Lake Superior State, The Bubble, 5:30 p.m.
- 9 —** Weight Management Seminar, MBHEI, 6 p.m.
- 9 —** OU men's basketball, UM-Dearborn, The Bubble, 7:30 p.m.
- 11 —** OU women's basketball, Kentucky Wesleyan, The Bubble, 7 p.m.
- 12 —** Community Chorus and Orchestra's 34th Annual Yuletide Concert, Music for Voices & Brass, RH VAR, 8 p.m.
- 13 —** APICS, Gold Rooms A & C, 8 a.m.
- 14 —** OU men's basketball, Lake Superior State, The Bubble, 7 p.m.
- 18 —** Holiday Party, Fireside Lounge, OC, 3 p.m.
- 20 —** APICS, 128-130 OC, 8 a.m.
- 21 —** OU women's basketball, Indianapolis, The Bubble, 1 p.m.
- 22 — 23** OU men's basketball, Blimpie Classic, The Bubble

TOGETHER learning

A special supplement to *Inside Oakland*

about this ISSUE

This is the first of a special six-month series focusing on Oakland University's Excellence Initiative. Each issue will highlight the work and accomplishments from OU's design and development teams:

- Minority Student Recruitment
- Non-Faculty Hiring
- On-Campus Software Support
- Student Billing and Cancellation
- Student Placement Testing
- Training and Development

This first issue will focus on Student Placement Testing Team efforts.

For more information, e-mail <excellence@oakland.edu>.

Getting the word out

Design and development teams celebrate excellence in action

Oakland University's Excellence Initiative is bringing new efficiencies to OU systems and services by keeping one goal in sight: preparing learners for the 21st century workplace and society.

Just what is the Excellence Initiative?

It's an effort to attract the best students to Oakland University and to graduate students with the knowledge they need to succeed.

But it's how the Excellence Initiative embraces this challenge that has made it both innovative and effective.

The multidisciplinary, grass-roots effort began nearly four years ago when Oakland renewed its commitment to improvement. More than 30 faculty and staff were trained in such process redesign techniques as facilitation skills, effective team leadership and meeting skills.

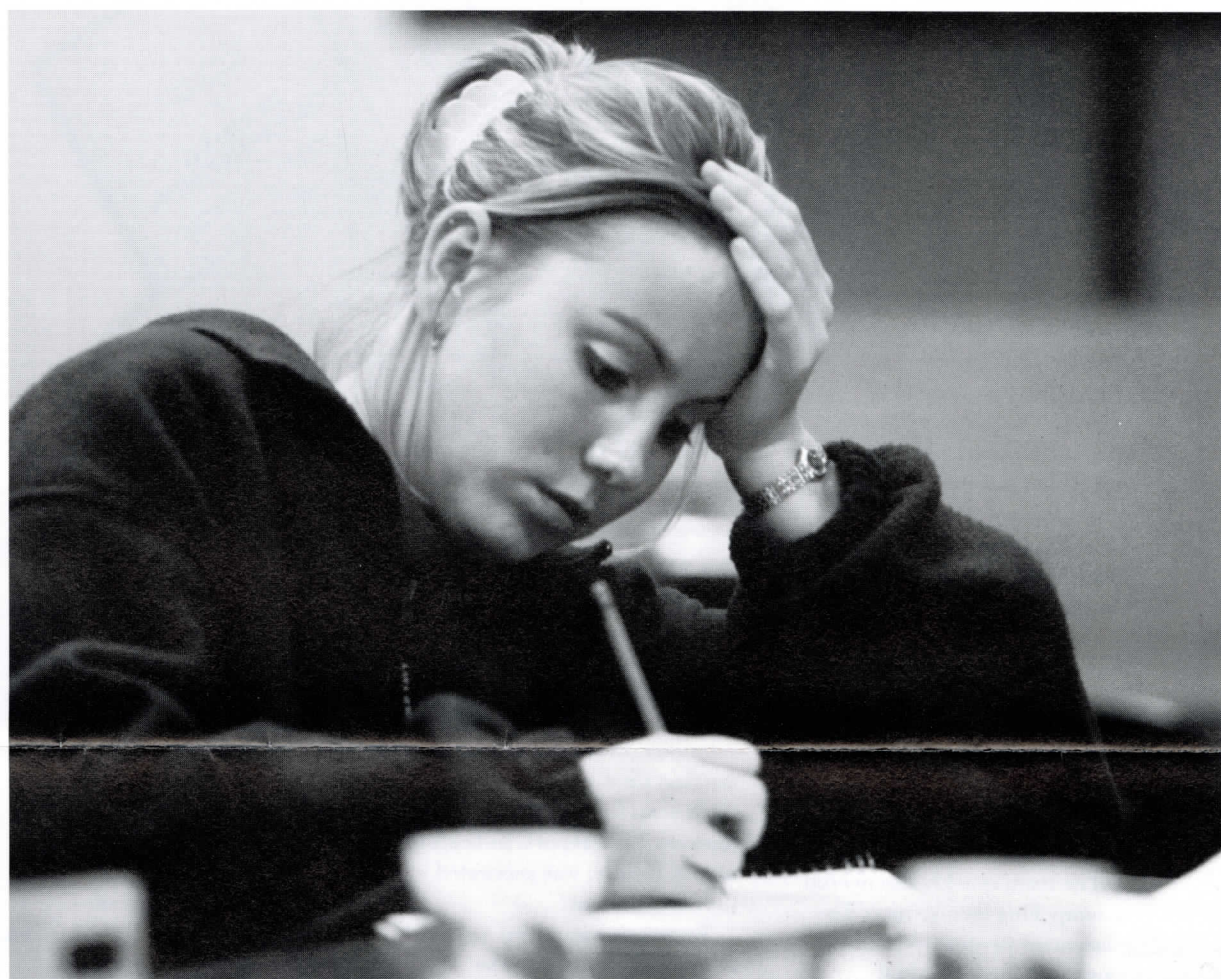
They were assigned to one of six teams, each facing a sizable task of improvement.

Each team was asked to assess its assigned area and look for opportunities to enhance systems and services. Unlike the typical top-down strategies, Oakland's Excellence Initiative took a unique approach by:

- combining the efforts of employees from all areas
- encouraging employees to express their opinions and ideas for change
- supporting the university's strategic plan
- focusing on the benefits of a learner-centered culture on campus

"The idea is to have the key players, the decision-makers at the same table," says David Herman, assistant vice president and dean of students. "By gathering the people most affected by the process, we can make progress in a fairly short amount of time."

The training equipped team members with tools that would make the committees more



Oakland University students now spend less time in placement testing.

efficient and effective. These

- action-oriented meeting agendas
- gathering and analyzing data
- charting all steps in a process to better understand it
- making decisions based on data, rather than hunches
- testing decisions before putting them into action

"The tools help you understand what parts of the process are needed and which are not," Herman says. "Or maybe there are better ways to do something. Do we need a paper trail, or can the work be done electronically? The result, we hope, is that by becoming more efficient, staff can spend their time on more exciting and productive things."

While the teams complete the projects, their work will

continue as new areas of

"This team was successful in integrating faculty, administrative professionals, clerical staff and student members. It was useful having these varying perspectives as we worked on the project. We had the advantage of different experiences and insights, and it made the difference."

— Wallis May Andersen, chair, Rhetoric, Communications and Journalism, College of Arts and Sciences

improvement are identified within the university community. Team members are also now probing the hard-hitting questions of process redesign "How do we learn from what we've done? How do we involve more people? How can we communicate better?" Herman says.

One of the most promising aspects of the Excellence Initiative has been its openness in involving various departments. As the teams begin

to evaluate their work, it is certain that even more faculty and staff from throughout the campus community will have an opportunity to lend their ideas and expertise to the continuing task of improvement.

Placement team results on back.

Get to know placement team members

Oakland University Student Placement Testing Team members were:

- Team Leader Beth Talbert, associate director, Admissions
- Facilitator Bridget Payne, adviser, Financial Aid
- Wallis May Andersen, chair, Rhetoric, Communications and Journalism, College of Arts and Sciences
- Paul Amaranth, analyst, Computer Center
- Pat Bennett, academic adviser, School of Engineering and Computer Science
- Carole Crum, director, Academic Services
- David Herman, assistant vice president and dean of students
- Darrell Schmidt, professor, Mathematical Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences
- Micki Dynda, OU senior
- Bill Headley, assistant director, Admissions

"This is a good process for tackling problems. We had clear-cut goals from the beginning. When we met, we knew what we were going to examine and why. Everything was geared toward efficiency."

— Patrick Bennett, adviser and program coordinator, School of Engineering and Computer Science

Making the transition much easier

Diversity spells success for Student Placement Testing Team

The Student Placement Testing Team, one of six Excellence Initiative teams Oakland University created, found strength in its diverse membership.

With faculty, administrative professional and student members, the team discovered that success would depend on its ability to blend the expertise and interests of every member.

The team recognized change could be beneficial, according to Patrick Bennett, adviser and program coordinator, School of Engineering and Computer Science.

"We had tremendous team members," he says. "They participated, they were involved, they asked questions and took charge. They were willing to change, and looked at it as something positive."

OU formed the Student Placement Testing Team in December 1994 to streamline the process for placing new students into introductory courses. It focused on two aspects of the process: 1) the immediate need to reduce the time spent processing placement test results and 2) the long-term need to reduce testing time for students.

The team quickly discovered a compelling incongruity: The placement process seemed to work well for individual departments yet was inefficient for the university as a whole.

"It was cumbersome," Bennett recalls. "Students had to make more than one visit to campus, and then they were hit with a battery of tests. Although the purpose was sound, students needed to be placed correctly and we saw room for improving the process."

Team members learned that student tests were administered and scored manually. Individual results were then entered by clerical and professional staff. Although departments liked the personal aspect, there was no uniformity in the testing methods.

"Each department wanted things a certain way, so they were happy," says Beth Talbert, associate director, Admissions. "But no one realized the amount of work involved. And we weren't convinced it was really serving the student." Students were required to complete up to nine different information cards and expected to make a separate trip to campus to complete tests. Because scoring often was not completed on time, results were frequently unavailable during orientation, making academic advising difficult. When students did receive their results, each test was recorded on a separate form — "up to nine" — which students easily

misplaced.

Most demanding was the staff time required to maintain the process. Staff spent nearly 200 hours processing paperwork. More than a quarter of that was used to simply alphabetize the test score sheets.

Moving fast to develop solutions

The team quickly developed workable

Reaching out to all departments

The team then met with individual departments to assess their placement methods. While meeting with the Chemistry and Modern Languages departments, the team discovered that chemistry placement "once based on the combined results of the chemistry and mathematics tests" was now based only on math results.

submitting a writing portfolio. Currently, the department is considering using the Michigan High School Proficiency Test for future course placement.

Early results show success

Although it is still early, the results of the cooperation of these academic departments is undeniable. In 1994, the typical OU student spent more than five hours in testing, filed as many as nine forms and often did not receive results in time to make appropriate course selections during orientation.

Three years later, students spend less than one hour in placement testing during orientation, receive results before advising and complete almost no paperwork. The orientation program soon will return to a day-and-a-half model.

The team admits that the work has not ended.

"Our job is not really done yet," Schmidt says. "We need to

several academic units in the decision-making process. "Even so, this diverse group of people most likely would not have joined together to resolve this important issue had the format not called for cross-functional teams," Talbert says. "This approach helped us understand how our individual efforts come together to impact students." Bennett agrees, "This is a good process for tackling problems. We had clear-cut goals from the beginning. When we met, we knew what we were going to examine and why. Everything was geared toward efficiency."

Andersen credits those throughout the university who assisted the team. And for future university teams, she offers prudent advice. "I encourage teams to integrate perspectives, especially across administrative and faculty lines. It's too easy to make decisions from one viewpoint or the other, without taking all ideas into account."

"We really worked hard to understand each other. It still has its rough edges, but it's worth it in the long run."

David Herman, assistant vice president and dean of students, calls the team's work "a big plus for students. They don't have to make an extra trip. They can get it all accomplished in one step, and still do it effectively. Now, as a result of their contributions, OU students are experiencing a smoother transition into university life."

Students benefit most from streamlined process

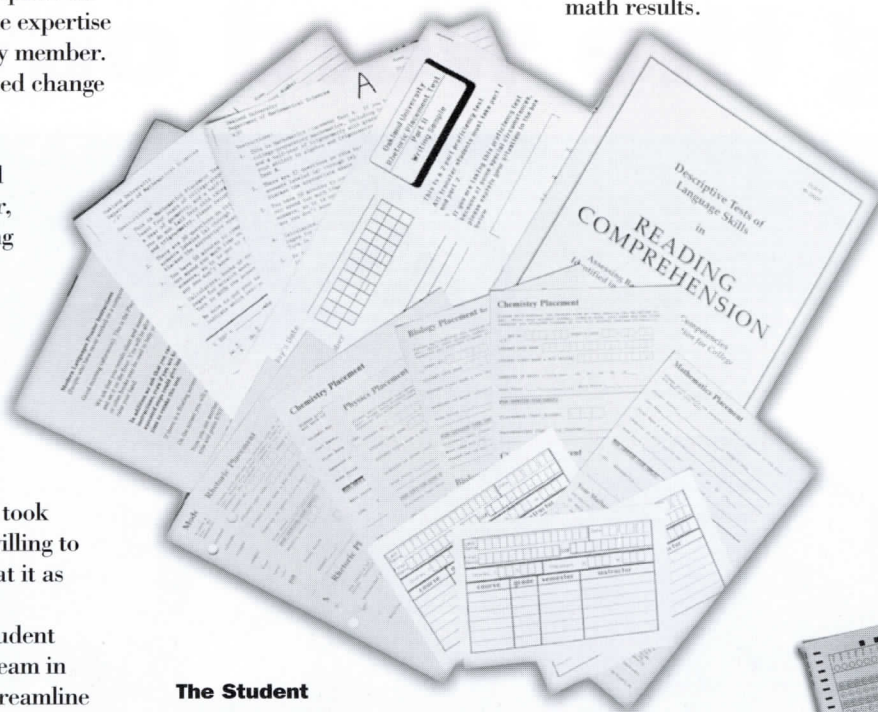
The team's efforts have been noticed by those affected the most — students. Freshman Tom Peterson was pleasantly surprised at orientation.

"I expected to take several placement tests to help decide my classes," says Peterson, a Sociology major. "I was happy. I feel that I've already taken tests to get into college — the ACT and SAT — so I shouldn't have to take another round of tests."

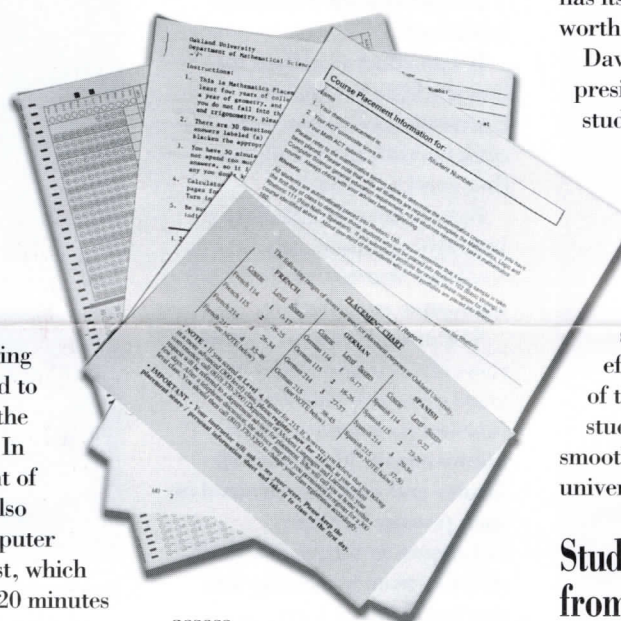
Having only one placement exam during orientation made the experience more rewarding for Freshman Don Miller.

"That gave me a chance to get to know other students at orientation," says Miller, an engineering major. "More tests would be a waste of time. I've already been tested through the ACT; there's no need to be tested again. A change like this is proof that Oakland University is upgrading and improving."

Freshman Bryant Kountz says this year's orientation and placement process was great. "They showed me around campus, and talked about the curriculum and the student-to-faculty ratio. Orientation should be more about the college, instead of taking a lot of tests."



The Student Placement Testing Team streamlined the orientation process by reducing the number of placement forms, above, to just a few, right.



solutions. In summer 1995, for the first time, students used an NCR scan form to record test answers. One report, indicating all test results, was generated for each student.

Testing was included as part of orientation, which was expanded to two days, and the number of forms was reduced to three. Most significantly, students received their results at orientation. But the team's work was just beginning. The next step was to minimize the time students spent in placement testing.

Following process redesign principles, the team started by analyzing data. Members surveyed all 15 Michigan universities about the types of tests required and actual testing time for students before the start of the freshman year.

The results were surprising. OU required more testing time from students than any other Michigan campus.

The team researched the amount of administrative and student time spent on placement testing. To better understand the process, members even monitored clerical staff for two hours as they entered test scores by hand. During training, teams learned a variety of tools to help gather and analyze data, says Darrell Schmidt, professor, Mathematical Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences. "You gather data from all sources involved in the process, and you make your decisions based on that data. You may have hunches, but you don't act on them."

The department agreed to stop requiring the chemistry test and to place students using the mathematics results. In 1996, the Department of Modern Languages also began offering a computer adaptive language test, which required fewer than 20 minutes to complete.

With these successes behind them, team members recommended that ACT representatives examine the current course placement by OU's mathematics and rhetoric tests and compare this with placement according to ACT results alone. ACT representatives visited the campus in 1996 to present their findings, and the decision regarding the mathematics and rhetoric tests was left in the hands of the departments.

Later that year, the Mathematics Department began basing placement on students' ACT subscores. For example, students with an ACT mathematics subscore of 24 or higher were eligible to take a calculus readiness exam. Moreover, students would receive test results before their academic advising session.

Soon after, the Rhetoric, Communications and Journalism (RCJ) faculty decided to place all new students in Rhetoric 150. Based on a writing sample taken the first day of class, some students would be moved to Rhetoric 102 (basic writing) or Rhetoric 111 (for non-native speakers). Students with advanced writing skills were invited to attempt a Rhetoric 160 placement by

assess our progress;

we need to get a sense as to whether the students are being placed correctly. But I think it will have a positive outcome." Bennett also says he expects a favorable outcome from the changes in the placement process.

"This is our first semester using ACT scores as a placement tool for Mathematics, but my feeling is we'll find it to be as accurate, or even more accurate, than the tests we were using. And it's more efficient. We still have some things to work out with the RCJ students."

RCJ Chair Wallis May Andersen, says, "We changed the testing for RCJ students, decreased the paperwork and minimized student effort. Also, students received their scores before they left that day, knew they were placed and registered the next day. We're looking at more changes for next year, but that's a good start."

Student Placement Testing Team members say they appreciated the flexibility of the process redesign format.

The need for flexibility was evident. The team needed to make immediate decisions for placement in summer 1995, and was committed to including