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OU hosts series on multicultural business relations

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Oakland University is hosting a series of talks emphasizing different cultures and the importance of foreign language skills in the international business environment.

The series, produced by the Diversity Programming Project in conjunction with the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and the Office of Equity, arose out of a department survey, said project chairperson Dikka Berven.

"We found that many enrolled throughout the curriculum hope to use their foreign language skills in their future professional environment," Berven said. "Because of where it is situated, Oakland University is surrounded by corporations with international ties. This series of talks seemed like a natural link to Oakland University students, particularly within the business field."

Prominent speakers from the local business community are focusing on six languages: French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish and Russian.

The third talk in the series, "Why Americans Should Learn Chinese," will be held January 18 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Phil Wyckstandt, Platform Director at Johnson Controls Inc., is the featured speaker. Future discussions for the remainder of the series are being planned.

"When students study a foreign language they also study the culture," Berven said. "If a student is going to work for a company with international dealings, knowing something of the culture of that country gives them preparedness."

The speakers have typically offered their personal experience on how knowing a foreign language helped them succeed in their international workplace. Time also is allowed for questions from attendees.

Refreshments following each discussion reflect the featured language and culture.

"Each talk is meant to be an entire cultural experience," Berven said. "We've gone to special lengths to provide refreshments that are ethnic and authentic. The food itself is an educational experience."

For more information, contact Dikka Berven at dberven@oakland.edu or by calling (248) 370-2043.

SUMMARY

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