

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

OU trip to Israel results in global exchange partnerships

Oakland University and the Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel in Israel have created a partnership that will provide far-reaching educational and research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students at both institutions. The joint venture will include student and faculty exchanges as well as facilitate research opportunities.

"The greatest achievement of this effort is that it significantly enhances Oakland University's mission to provide a global education for our students, while also expanding our mission of impactful community outreach," says Virinder Moudgil, senior vice president for Academic Affairs and Provost.

The partnership is the culmination of an April visit to Israel by OU administrators. While there, the group met with representatives from the Max Stern Academic College, Kiryat Ono College and the Weizmann Institute. They also toured the Holocaust Museum at Yad Vashem and Tel Aviv.

"The trip provided an opportunity to meet with colleagues and engage in discussions about our joint vision," he adds. "Both institutions play a vital role in the educational, economic and cultural fabric of our communities. We were able to share experiences and begin to build a strong framework for this partnership as we move forward."

Moudgil also noted the historical impact of their visit. "Israel is a major site of three of the main religions in the world. Being there gives you a different perspective on the world. It was an extraordinary experience to be a part of this educational mission, and I believe experiencing this together, and bringing this perspective back to our students, faculty and community, will strengthen us as a university."

Michelle Piskulich, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, says the partnership will enrich both institutions and provide opportunities for growing Oakland's new Judaic Studies program. Judaic Studies is a part of the Religious Studies program at Oakland University, which includes minors in Judaic and Islamic Studies. A minor in Christianity will be added in the future.

The trip came about through the efforts of alumni and donor Bob Schostack, Board of Trustees member, Henry Baskin and the Jewish Foundation of Metropolitan Detroit. Both Schostack and Baskin have been instrumental in supporting the creation and funding of OU's Judaic Studies program, Piskulich says.

"Every one agreed that it was important to learn more about Israel, and this trip helped accomplish that goal," says Piskulich, adding that the history of Max Stern Academic College made it the perfect fit for a partnership.

"Max Stern Academic College mirrors Oakland in that it was a branch of Haifa University until about 10 years ago, similar to OU's connection to Michigan State," she says. "More importantly, both institutions have demonstrated a strong commitment to providing students with an outstanding international experience and both are experiencing significant growth."

The exchange programs will initially consist of study abroad experiences for students from both schools. Faculty will serve as special lecturers or exchange faculty during sabbaticals. Moudgil says they are in the beginning stage of cementing the specifics of the partnership, and expects that each area will grow as the universities work together.

"This is going to be an amazing opportunity to provide our students and our faculty with an international view of the world," he says.



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SUMMARY

Oakland University and the Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel in Israel have created a partnership that will provide far-reaching educational and research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students at both institutions. The joint venture will include student and faculty exchanges as well as facilitate research opportunities. The partnership is the culmination of an April visit to Israel by OU administrators. While there, the group met with representatives from the Max Stern Academic College, Kiryat Ono College and the Weizmann Institute. They also toured the Holocaust Museum at Yad Vashem and Tel Aviv.

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