

Monday, December 22, 2008

Alumni teaming up in effort to lure students

By **Dave Groves**, news editor

In the midst of tough economic times and a shrinking population of students emerging from high school classrooms, the nation's colleges and universities are expected to face stiff competition when it comes to luring new students.

Fortunately, Oakland has a small army of advocates ready to help persuade students to check out one of the state's fastest growing universities.

A little more than a year into its effort to encourage alumni to help expand the breadth of OU's student population, as well as the geographic range from which students come, the **Alumni Admissions Ambassador Program** (AAP) has already put 68 volunteers to work in 9 states.

In addition, more than 100 Grizzly graduates are waiting for an opportunity to sing the university's praises at college recruiting fairs, information sessions, welcome receptions and other events where college-bound high school students gather.

"The alumni are really engaged, love their OU experience and really want to share that," said Luke Fleer, AAP coordinator. "They can share specific details with students about how Oakland helped them grow over the four or five years they were here."

Bruce Quayle, BA '67, MS '78, said he was anxious to sign up for the program as soon as he learned about it.

"I would seriously like to stay involved with my university, and this is a good way to do it," he said. "I think the alumni are a great resource. You just need to find the right things to ask them to do, and I think this ambassador program is spot on."

Ambassadors are trained to answer just about any question a prospective student might have about OU and often work with admissions advisors in endorsing the university's quality educational programs, lower costs and memorable campus life experiences.

Quayle, a systems engineering consultant in Pittsburgh, said there is great opportunity to begin spreading on a national scale the message about all OU has to offer. Having done so at a college recruiting fair in Pennsylvania, he found that many people he'd spoken with had never heard of Oakland, but were excited to learn more.

Cassandra Fenstermacher, CAS '92, a fitness specialist for the Department of the Navy, discovered the very same thing after participating in a fair near Port Orchard, Wash.

"If (Oakland) did not have an ambassador program, there is little chance any kids out here in Washington state would ever hear about OU," she said. "Our ambassador program is a chance for more areas to find out about our hidden treasure all the way out in Michigan."

Fleer said Quayle's and Fenstermacher's passion for OU is typical of the many alumni he works with. Not the least of reasons for their zeal, he said, is the personal and professional success they've achieved since having graduated from Oakland. This is something prospective students need to see while they're deliberating over where they'll go to college, Fleer said.

"With this program, they're able to get that one-on-one with alumni, find out about the experiences they had and make a connection with the university," he explained. "They can see that the ambassadors are a product of Oakland University and that they've gotten as far as they have because of that."



Cassandra Fenstermacher, CAS '92, prepares for a college recruiting fair near Port Orchard, Wash. in November.

SUMMARY

Oakland has a small army of advocates ready to help persuade students to check out the more than 225 programs at one of the state's fastest growing universities.

Created by David Groves (groves@oakland.edu) on Monday, December 22, 2008

Modified by David Groves (groves@oakland.edu) on Monday, December 22, 2008

Article Start Date: Monday, December 22, 2008