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Area executive sees value in supporting SBA

By *Flori Meeks*

When John O'Reilly was invited to join the Board of Visitors for Oakland University's School of Business Administration in 2005, he requested time to give the offer some thought.

"I didn't graduate from OU, but our organization had a deep relationship with the university," says O'Reilly, executive vice president of Palace Sports and Entertainment (PSE). Not only does PSE manage OU's amphitheater, it also handles sponsorships and promotions for OU's athletic teams. Plus, a number of PSE employees currently attend or have graduated from OU. "I thought it (board service) might be an opportunity to learn about the university and contribute to a great asset in the community," O'Reilly says.

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His gift targets the dean's scholarship fund. "I'm a huge believer that education is the key to our future at every level," O'Reilly says.

O'Reilly says he's confident in the SBA's abilities to equip students for the future, especially in light of Dean Mohan Tanniru's efforts to promote communication between the university and area businesses. By seeking feedback from the business community, Tanniru is helping the SBA produce successful graduates who meet and exceed employers' needs, O'Reilly says. "That type of barometer with businesses and other organizations is vital," he says.

The SBA further promotes university-community connections through its Applied Technology in Business (ATiB) program, which allows undergraduates to complete hands-on project utilizing technology under the guidance of area businesses.

O'Reilly learned about ATiB shortly after he joined the Board of Visitors, and he put PSE support behind it. "Part of it was selfish," he says. "We had a number of tasks to complete and limited resources. The ability to dedicate somebody to them really was helpful." Another part, O'Reilly explains, was philanthropic because it meant his organization could provide valuable work experience to talented business students.

From his perspective, ATiB gives students business-world experience while providing businesses access to the SBA's talented student and faculty base. O'Reilly says it only has strengthened PSE and OU relations. "With our organization being in the middle of Oakland County, it's been neat to expand the contacts and the relations with OU beyond what we had."



SUMMARY

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