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# OUTAS program earns statewide honor

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

The Oakland University Trustees Academic Success (OUTAS) program continues to be recognized as one of the most successful recruitment and student retention programs in the country. Recently, the **Michigan Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers** named OUTAS the Equal Educational Opportunities Committee (EEOC) Award Winning Program of the Year.

OUTAS, administered by the **Center for Multicultural Initiatives** (CMI), is designed to create an ethnically and culturally diverse group of high-achieving students and leaders. The program differs from many other student retention programs because it focuses on providing scholarships to a diverse group of students who experienced academic success in high school and meet the university's admission requirements but need support adjusting to campus life. Many student retention programs focus solely on non-regularly admitted (at-risk) students. OUTAS also fosters cross-cultural interaction by encompassing Caucasian, African-American, Native American, Asian Pacific Islander and Latino students.

"The EEOC was impressed by the fact that the OUTAS program is geared towards equipping students with necessary tools for success," said Stephanie Woodson, award committee chair. "The program is an institutional approach that facilitates campus diversity, academic excellence and leadership development.

"The OUTAS program goes a step further than traditional retention programs because it forms and navigates culturally diverse student cohort groups and ushers them through classroom and extracurricular activities designed to develop cross-cultural functioning skills."

Recent statistics illustrate the program's effectiveness. At the end of the fall 2002 semester, the program continued to maintain a significant retention rate of 86 percent. During the 2002-2003 academic year, 119 program scholarships were awarded and 30 OUTAS scholarship recipients graduated, bringing the total to 108 since 1994. An additional 35 graduates are expected this academic year.

"Anytime a program that helps students stay in school and graduate wins an award of this magnitude, it adds to its prestige and weight," said Gloria Sosa, director of the Center for Multicultural Initiatives. "The award is special because it comes from an admissions organization, which acknowledges the impact OUTAS has at every level of student success."

OUTAS also has earned a number of other honors. In 2001, the program was ranked as one of the top seven best student retention programs in the nation by "Black Issues in Higher Education" magazine and was among seven U.S. university programs awarded the Noel-Levitz Retention Excellence Award. The program also received the Michigan Counseling Association Diversity Award in 2000 and was the National Association Student Personnel Administrator's Exemplary Program for 1999.

The CMI was established in 1993 to advance Oakland University's commitment to diversity in increasing the recruitment, retention and graduation of all students and particularly underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (African American, Latino and Native American) by developing strategies that engage students in the attainment of academic excellence and social success.

For more information on OUTAS or other CMI programs, visit the **Center for Multicultural Initiatives** Web site or contact them at (248) 370-4404.

## SUMMARY

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