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Preferred vendors save university money

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

When it comes to the procurement of goods and services such as computers, office supplies, pagers, photocopiers and temporary staffing, Oakland University departments get the best value and save money thanks to a number of preferred vendor agreements negotiated by the university's **Purchasing Department**.

"Preferred vendors are companies OU has a long-term agreement with completed through a bid process or a company that offers the university special pricing," said Purchasing Manager Maria Ebner-Smith. "Through this arrangement, the university always has reduced pricing and often an increase in services."

OU's preferred vendor list currently includes:

- Apple;
- Dell;
- Gateway;
- Ricoh;
- Roth Staffing;
- Staples;
- Verizon Pagers.

With Ricoh, OU not only receives competitive pricing but also low photocopier maintenance costs. And, last March, the university switched from Office Depot to Staples as its office supply vendor, mainly because of an attractive rebate program.

"On contract items, the price difference between Office Depot and Staples was about the same," Ebner-Smith said. "But Staples offered a \$50,000 rebate, which was significantly more than what any other company was offering. The rebate will go back to departments on a prorated basis depending upon their spending."

Additional preferred vendors that may be added during the next fiscal year include a cell phone company for personal phones; a science supply company for OU's Eye Research Institute and Chemistry, Physics and Biology departments; and a travel service to provide coach buses for Athletics and programs such as Gear Up and Upward Bound.

"On top of the competitive pricing, preferred vendors also provide a savings in time for the university," Ebner-Smith said. "Normally, we have a three-year contract with a preferred vendor, so people don't have to worry about which source to use when making a purchase or make bids or check pricing. Oftentimes orders can be placed online. And in the case of Staples and Verizon, Accounts Payable has to make just one payment a month instead of multiple payments."

For more information on OU's preferred vendors, visit the **Purchasing Department** Web site or contact Maria Ebner-Smith at (248) 370-3171 or ebnersmi@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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