



Monday, July 16, 2001

Position Statement: Virinder Moudgil

The selection advisory committee (SAC) charged with seeking campus reaction to the candidates for the position of vice president of Academic Affairs and provost asked each candidate to address the following issues in the position paper:

1. What is your vision of priorities for the next three years?
2. How will you implement the task force recommendations?
3. How will you approach the budget issues and allocations for Academic Affairs?
4. As provost, describe the relationship you would establish with the president.
5. As provost, describe the relationship you would establish with the faculty.

Virinder Moudgil presented the following paper:

1. Vision of Priorities for the Next Three Years

I was attracted to Oakland University because of its reputation, excellence in key academic areas, and its enormous potential for growth. The opportunities of working with young and non-traditional undergraduates, developing and teaching courses in contemporary topics in biology, and establishing a department graduate program presented incredible opportunities to grow with the institution. I also believe in the beauty of distinction and uniqueness; Oakland is such a place.

Oakland University is in a unique position to extend its record of excellence by placing itself as a champion of balanced and global education and scholarly activities. In my view, an Oakland graduate should be a well-educated citizen who knows the world around him/her and is a contributor to making it a better place. I believe general education plays an important role in shaping the curriculum in that direction. Distinctive undergraduate research and educational experiences should be a hallmark of an Oakland student. The institution should place emphasis on interdisciplinary programs and encourage multi-faceted approaches to teaching and research. Graduate programs in key areas of need with appropriate resources should guide our mission to making this institution truly a place of excellence for higher education. I will seek to further partnership with the surrounding academic and business communities to establish collaborations which impact academic and financial resources for teaching, research, scholarship and creative endeavors. I believe Oakland should strengthen its place among the top universities in the state and most certainly as the premier institution providing a distinct undergraduate experience.

2. Implementation of Task Force Recommendations

Traditional modes of teaching and learning are now supplemented with practical training and diverse approaches to internship and on-site learning. Because of its geographic environment and the high-caliber faculty, Oakland is uniquely qualified to prepare its students to be well-informed citizens. The task force recommendations contained in the 10-year strategic plan provide a basis for meeting the challenges of evolving global society and the needs of our community.

As provost, I will seek immediate consultations with the president, the academic deans and the faculty to assess the operational feasibility and time line of action. I will put priorities on globalization of our curriculum, emphasize general education to prepare each of our graduates to be a world citizen. Studying abroad should become a possibility for all Oakland students, and campus should make it possible for attracting and retaining foreign students. Whereas liberal arts foundation of undergraduate curriculum is central to a wholesome learning experience, internship experience at local academic institutions, industry and corporate world will position Oakland graduates to succeed in a globally competitive environment and lead enriched lives. Given the range of various task forces, and the magnitude of resources that would be needed to implement all or most of their recommendations, I will promptly initiate assessment and feasibility studies.

3. Approach to Budget Issues and Allocation for Academic Affairs

Since 1978, I have acquired enormous experience managing budgets for my research grants submitted to and approved by the National Institutes of Health and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. As the chair, I worked closely with the department laboratory manager on all budgetary issues related to research and instruction. I have been successful in raising and managing funds to host international scientific conferences on the campus of Oakland University. A number of pharmaceutical companies and other organizations have contributed generously toward these events. In addition, I have served as a member of advisory committees of the National Institutes of Health which are charged with the review of submitted grant applications that include the examination of budgetary details. All these experiences have prepared me for dealing with any budgetary matters.

At the outset, I will make efforts in thoroughly familiarizing myself with the budget of the Office of Academic Affairs. President Russi has indicated during one of his meetings with the department chairs his willingness to make the academic affairs' budget available to the university community in an open forum. Given this opportunity, my priorities as provost would be to maintain excellent ongoing programs and invest in initiatives approved by faculty-administration collaboration. As provost, I will work with the president and my staff for timely decisions on formation and allocation of yearly budgets. It would be important to know in advance what resources the provost has, and whether the budgetary cycles need adjusting. Such efforts will be guided by the input from all concerned parties. Whereas, intuitively I am more compelled to secure resources for critical academic needs (e.g., courses, scientific or technical equipment). It would, however, be prudent to exercise fiscal responsibility.

The university must provide a safe and healthy environment for all its employees. Appropriate resources must also be allocated to maintain the beautiful campus, and comply with local and federal regulations as they pertain to faculty and staff academic activities. Establishing an effective communication with the deans and the chairs will allow budgetary adjustments that balance academic needs with available resources.

4. Relationship with the President

To be effective in their respective positions, the president and the provost must work as a team to advance the goals and mission of this institution. A healthy and effective communication and trust between the two leaders is a must, and efforts should be made to foster this relationship. I see the role of provost to be an advisor, a link to the faculty, and a counsel bringing affairs of the university to the attention of the president.

I have had numerous opportunities of interacting with Dr. Russi on various fora over the past eight years. I had the privilege of working with Dr. Russi and even writing grant proposals for raising money for the renovation of biological instructional laboratories. This professional relationship has evolved into mutual respect and understanding indispensable for a solid and lasting working platform in the service of Oakland University. In a complex and growing institution, difference of opinion within the academic leadership would be expected but must be resolved amicably. When differences of opinions or positions emerge, there should be readiness to persuade another with logic and reason that are consistent with the declared mission and policies of the institution.

5. Relationship with Faculty

I see a great opportunity for enlarging the scope of faculty-administration communication. As provost, I will work to establish a cordial relationship with faculty; trust of faculty must be earned. Fair and just processes should be in place for all faculty decisions, be it hiring, a tenure position, or promotion, support of a program or a constriction of unsuccessful-nonproductive academic ventures.

My relationship with the faculty will be guided by the wealth of experience I have acquired in various capacities, both as a member and a leader of a dynamic academic unit of Oakland University. Serving in nearly all major institutional committees during the past 25 years has enriched my appreciation for the diversity and the complexity of the professional activities of my colleagues. It was also a great opportunity to recruit six new faculty and help acquire scientific equipment and establish their research laboratories as well as update common research facilities in the department. Today, the department is in a better scientific and economic health than ever before. This significant feat could not have been accomplished alone, but was the result of team work involving faculty, administration and staff members of the university. Raised in a family involved in a struggle for freedom from colonial rule; writing and directing one-act plays, presenting musical concerts for charity, leading a high school cricket team, organizing international conferences and raising money to host such events, publishing monographs and conference proceedings, working and living abroad as a faculty - these are some of my many experiences which will help me understand issues and concerns of a cross-section of diverse community of Oakland's 450-strong faculty.

I believe a provost should be accessible to faculty. As the provost, I will explore ways to immediately seek and establish direct links with the faculty. One such effort involving monthly meetings with the chairs have been successful in the recent past. I will also like to hold one open meeting per semester with faculty-at-large. Visiting academic departments for scheduled meetings, attending scholarly seminars and conferences on campus, and increasing resources for faculty research would enhance interaction with and support of the faculty. Whereas I firmly believe in the respect for institutional protocols, under warranted circumstances, I will encourage the faculty to call or write directly to facilitate dialog and problem solving. I will propose to establish an Oakland Day in conjunction with the faculty recognition event to showcase faculty scholarly works and instructional progress in the university-wide poster presentations.

SUMMARY

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