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OGLs help orient incoming freshmen

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

The transition from high school to college isn't always an easy one. Courses need to be selected and coordinated with work schedules. The college workload is more demanding. Many freshmen live away from family and friends for the first time.

But Oakland University's **Office of New Student Programs** and its corps of dedicated student peers — orientation group leaders (OGLs) — create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for incoming freshmen. During New Student Orientation periods before fall semesters, OGLs help freshmen make the transition to college, reinforce that OU is the right choice for them, and help them to succeed.

"Our OGLs are with the freshmen all day during orientation," said Rachel Brown, assistant director of New Student Programs. "The most important duties for OGLs are helping freshmen understand the differences between high school and college, informing them of campus resources like the Academic Skills Center, informing them of the importance of getting to know their professors and visiting them during their office hours, telling them about the Center for Student Activities and opportunities to get involved, and letting them know that there are resident assistants in the residence halls."

Freshmen can choose either an overnight or one-day orientation program. In both sessions, OGLs meet with students in the morning in small groups of 9-16 for introductions, then conduct campus tours where freshmen learn about OU history and the student services available to them. OGLs also help freshmen prepare for their individual academic advising sessions, assist them with setting up their OU e-mail accounts, and perform humorous skits at the Meadow Brook Theatre that provide opportunities to discuss issues such as academics, time management, diversity, finances and campus involvement. OGLs also staff campus information tables during Welcome Week and conduct campus tours during parent orientations.

Steve Townsend, a sophomore biology major, said he became an OGL because he wanted to help new students and be a positive influence on those new to the university.

"I really like helping freshmen learn about their majors, set up their class schedules and understand the academic side of the university," Townsend said. "During the school year, I usually run into some of the people from my orientation groups, and they still come to me to ask questions or look to me for help. I really enjoy that."

Sophomore mechanical engineering major and OGL Tyshara Lawson said she tries to learn something about each of the freshmen in her groups and relate it to the university, as well as hope students understand the registration process.

"If a student tells me that they like to play basketball, then I'll tell them about the opportunities to play at the Rec Center," Lawson said. "Sometimes students are confused or concerned about registration, but I help them work on it after they see their adviser and reinforce what the adviser tells them. After the students pick their classes and seeing that they're happy with their choices, it makes me feel confident. I feel good when orientation has ended knowing that I've helped them. Each one of them has taken something away from orientation to help start their college careers."

OU has 16 OGLs who are chosen after a five-phase selection process. The qualities needed to be an OGL include a strong desire to help new students and their parents, a positive attitude and strong OU spirit, a desire to develop communication and leadership skills and a willingness to work irregular hours, Brown said. OGLs also must be returning students for the fall semester and be in good academic standing.

"We want our OGLs to be a diverse group who are involved in a lot of different activities and can pass that enthusiasm on to our new students," Brown said. "Our hiring process begins in about January when we advertise on campus and ask for nominations from faculty and staff. OGLs also go through an eight-week training session where they learn leadership and communication skills."

Besides a chance to help others, OGLs earn a \$1,500 stipend, obtain a free residence hall room during the spring semester and orientation, receive a \$200 meal card, and have the chance to develop close friendships.

For more information on becoming an orientation group leader or on the New Student Orientation and Parent Orientation

programs, see the **New Student Programs** Web site or contact them at (248) 370-3260 or nsp@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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