



Wednesday, September 3, 2003

Students, families welcomed at convocation

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

At Oakland University's New Student Convocation, faculty and administrators provided a warm welcome to new students to mark the beginning of their academic careers. Students and their families also received some good advice from student orientation group leaders and other current students on opportunities and strategies to help make their OU experience enjoyable and successful.

"Oakland University has so much to offer you in the way of outstanding academic programs, great students and first-rate professors," **Vice President for Student Affairs Mary Beth Snyder** said to the crowd of more than 300. "We're aware that each of you will have unique challenges ahead of you this year, but college requires you to confront them head-on, but with the knowledge that you are in a community that truly believes in the motto 'we're all in this together' – students, faculty and staff. If you do your best to manage your time well, get involved, ask for help when you need it, and strike up friendships, then we'll do our best to get you to your graduation ceremony at the other end."

During her speech, Snyder showed a video presentation containing helpful advice from current students on topics such as time management, asking for help when needed, building relationships with faculty, and becoming involved in student activities. The advice, particularly from the orientation group leaders, made an impact on the students in attendance.

"The students gave some helpful advice based on their own experiences," said nursing major Julie Bolam of Fraser. "What stood out the most for me was not hesitating to ask questions if I need help and the importance of getting involved. I'm planning on going Greek and working on the student newspaper. I wrote for our high school paper for three years."

Communications major Jessica Perry of Clinton Township said convocation and the way the advice was presented made her feel excited about taking classes at Oakland.

"I found I could relate to the students' advice because hearing it from them makes it more meaningful," Perry said. "Everyone presented themselves as very down-to-earth and welcoming. I chose Oakland because I heard nothing but good things about it, and it's a beautiful campus close to home. I also heard great things about the communications program."

In her remarks, **Associate Professor of Teacher Development and Educational Studies Mary Stein** spoke of strategies for finding success in the classroom.

"I know that I need to keep (students) involved if they are truly going to learn from the courses I teach," said Stein, who also is the 2003 Teaching Excellence Award winner. "At the same time, there has to be a willingness to learn on the part of the student. Students, you all have heard it – you will get as much out of a situation as you put into it."

"You may find yourself in a course or situation that simply seems 'boring' or doesn't excite you. Challenge yourself to find the excitement and make the experience worthwhile. Put more into it, and you will get more out of it."

New Student Congress President Jonathan Parks also shared his own insights on the ingredients for academic success at Oakland. Among the topics he spoke of were blocking off time for studying, asking questions, building relationships with faculty and staff, and managing stress by becoming involved in campus life.

In his remarks, **OU President Gary Russi** reaffirmed the reasons why parents and students made an excellent choice when they selected Oakland.

"While I don't know most of you personally, I do know that you share one simple hope and dream – to be successful in life," Russi said. "I can say, without hesitation, that you have come to the right place to achieve this goal. How do I know this? Because time and again I have seen students grow and develop at Oakland University and go on to become leaders in their field of work, their communities and their families. What you learn here – both in and outside of the classroom – will serve you well and last you a lifetime...Your journey through Oakland's wide-ranging and distinctive programs will take you places no other university can."

The **Office of New Student Programs** awarded OU Bookstore gift certificates to the winners and runners-up of the New Student Orientation Spirit Award. The two most spirited students from this summer's orientation were Gordon Buchanan of Madison Heights and Dana Wolfe of Romeo.

Oakland University's pep band also was on-hand with "The Grizz," OU's mascot, to lead the audience through the OU fight song and provide a spirited conclusion before a reception in the lower level of the Recreation and Athletics Center. **OU junior Steven Townsend**, a biochemistry major from Detroit, acted as the master of ceremonies for the event. "The enthusiasm of the staff and faculty, and the supporting and well-wishing parents, made this a joyous occasion for new Golden Grizzlies," said Randy Schuman of Detroit, father of nursing major and Honors College student Deanna Schuman. "Oakland went out of its way to make sure everyone was greeted warmly. That's really important when you're sending your kids off to school – you don't want them to be lost. Knowing that OU strongly supports its students is part of feeling welcome."

For more information on student services that can help new students succeed in their academic endeavors at Oakland University, visit the **Office of New Student Programs** Web site or contact them at (248) 370-3260 or nsp@oakland.edu.

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, September 3, 2003

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, September 3, 2003

Article Start Date: Friday, October 3, 2003