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BOT student liaisons express student concerns

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

When the **Oakland University Board of Trustees** makes important decisions regarding critical administrative affairs, the board's student liaisons ensure the voice of students is heard. For the past year, senior education major Lenny Compton and senior English and philosophy major Rhonda Hanna have made inquiries and suggestions and responded to items brought before the board. Compton's and Hanna's term of office both end June 30. Taking their place as student liaisons for 2004-05 is Stefanie Marshall, a biology major from Rochester Hills, and David Lauber, a political science major from Auburn Hills.

Compton and Hanna each gave their final **student liaison reports** at the May 5 Board of Trustees meeting.

Hanna, who has been a student liaison to the Board of Trustees for two years, is planning to begin law school at the University of Michigan in June.

"I can say without a doubt that being a student liaison to the board for the past two years has been one of my greatest experiences," Hanna said in her report. "I have had the opportunity to observe how this board considers each issue with great detail, and I have also had the opportunity to represent student opinions regarding many of the matters as they came up. After observing the process through which decisions are made, I believe it is evident that this board and the administration genuinely consider what is in the best interest of the student body and the future of Oakland University."

Hanna also spoke of the manner in which the board has handled the difficult state budget situation while maintaining a focus on student needs.

"This past year, we faced possible tuition increases far greater than in many years past, but our administration and this board worked to insure that the entire budgetary burden was not merely passed on to students," Hanna said. "As a result, Oakland approved a very fair balance between cuts and increases. And keeping in line with the mission of Oakland University, financial aid benefits have increased to match tuition increases proportionally. Also, when Oakland received a smaller cut than budgeted, once again the focus was on students, and 100 percent of this money was put to use for the benefit of students."

Hanna is a recipient of this year's Matilda R. Wilson Award, the university's highest student honor. It is presented annually to a senior man and woman who have contributed as scholars, leaders and responsible citizens to the university community. Hanna served as co-president of **Golden Key International Honour Society** and served as a member of **OU Student Congress**, the Pre-Law Society and Sigma Tau Delta-English Honor Society. She also was a peer mentor and diversity ambassador with the **Center for Multicultural Initiatives**, a French tutor in the **Academic Skills Center** and a WOCO student chair. She also was a 2002 Keeper of the Dream scholarship recipient.

"It's been a real pleasure for this board to have worked with you as a representative of the students," BOT Chair Henry Baskin told Hanna. "You're very much appreciated in the job you have done, and I hope that as you move ahead in your career, you work with the same kind of dedication that you have given us."

Compton, who has been a student liaison for one year, will graduate in December. After graduation, he plans to either teach in a Washington, D.C., middle school, work for the Corporation for National and Community Service, or join the Peace Corps.

"The vision for Oakland University by 2010 includes quality academic programs, inspired faculty, a scholarly community strengthened by its diversity, community outreach and partnerships," Compton said in his report. "We know that Oakland is doing very well in regards to our academic programs as indicated by the number of nationally recognized publications that have given our university favorable praise. Additionally, the faculty is more than inspired."

They are committed to excellence, they are personable and have an earnest desire to ensure that students succeed in their courses, and they are heavily involved in the development of our students.”

Compton also expressed a desire to increase diversity in the student body and encouraged the continuation of community outreach programs.

“I want to thank you for the work you have done, but I want to also recognize the notes you have made regarding diversity. They do not fall on deaf ears, and as you know, over the last two years we have been striving for that diversity in both the faculty and student enrollment and graduation rates,” Baskin told Compton. “Your remarks are well noted, and I want to thank you for your commitment and dedication.”

Compton, a 2004 Keeper of the Dream scholarship award winner, has devoted hundreds of hours to tutoring first-through third-grade students at the Great Lakes Academy in Pontiac. He also developed lesson plans and curricula for day camps through the Pontiac Area Transitional Housing program. In recognition of his efforts, Compton’s **AmeriCorps** peers named him Mr. AmeriCorps 2001 and 2002. Even President George W. Bush has praised his dedication to volunteerism. In January 2003, the president invited Compton to attend the State of the Union address and to participate in a White House-sponsored panel discussion on mentoring.

Student liaison positions are open to all Oakland University students who maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average; have earned a minimum of 56 credits, of which 28 are at Oakland; have agreed not to hold other elected or appointed leadership positions during the student liaison appointment period; have a record of service to the campus or community; and have no record of disciplinary action at Oakland or any other university. A screening committee appointed by the vice president for student affairs recommends at least five students from applications and nominations to the president for appointment. Liaisons serve one- or two-year appointments, which begin in June.

For more information on student liaisons, their roles and responsibilities, visit the **OU Board of Trustees** Web site.

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