



Thursday, April 11, 2002

OU Day at the Capitol examines legislative process

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

More than 60 Oakland University students, alumni, faculty, staff and supporters made the trip to Lansing on April 10 to participate in a wide variety of educational events focusing on state government and the legislative process at the sixth annual OU Day at the Capitol.

"It was a very busy day for the event participants," said Rochelle Black, director of OU Government Relations. "The event is always a great opportunity for people to learn a great deal about state politics. Our participants were able to see and hear a lot, such as observe Senate and House sessions and meet with legislators."

In addition to the event activities, OU President Gary Russi testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education. Russi was asked to detail OU's cost containment policies and efficiencies, to describe what actions OU is taking to reduce the time to complete an undergraduate degree, and explain the factors that have contributed to OU's resident undergraduate and graduate enrollment growth.

Russi responded by stating OU has experienced its greatest cost-containment results through outsourcing, energy conservation measures and partnerships and collaborations. The estimated annual costs savings as a result of these measures exceeds \$1.6 million.

Russi also noted that, though degree completion rates are lower than the university would like, OU is consistent with other comparable institutions. He described the various programs, policies and initiatives OU has installed to deal with this concern, such as the **Office of New Student Programs, Supplemental Instruction, Academic Skills Center, Placement and Career Services**, the **Career Resource Center, Academic Advising, Graham Health and Counseling Center**, OU's Trustee Academic Success Program (OUTAS) and the Wade McCree scholarship program.

As for the university's growing enrollment, Russi said that changing demographics in OU's primary and secondary markets have been one factor. About 77 percent of OU students come from Oakland County, which continues to grow. In addition, the university is meeting the needs of a changing and more demanding undergraduate student body. OU has added 29 graduate degree programs and certificates and one undergraduate major since 1995. That same year, the university also added an enrollment management model that has contributed to a more effective and efficient admissions process.

Among the OU Day at the Capitol activities was a panel discussion on term limits. Two of the featured panelists were State Senator and Republican gubernatorial candidate John J.H. Schwarz, M.D., and Dale Nesbary, associate professor of political science and director of the Master of Public Administration program at OU.

Later in the day, Senator Mat Dunaskiss, [R]-Lake Orion, and Representative Robert Gosselin, [R]-Troy, introduced the group before the Senate and House, respectively. Smaller group visits with Senators Gary Peters, [D]-Bloomfield Township, and Ken DeBeaussaert, [D]-Baltimore Twp., and Representatives Michael Bishop, [R]-Rochester Hills, and Clarence Phillips, [D]-Pontiac, also were held. These officials were selected because the university is in their district or because they graduated from OU.

Participants were invited to join state elected and appointed officials and their staff for a buffet luncheon sponsored by University Student Congress. OU Alumni Relations also sponsored Congressional Insight, an informative and fast-paced computerized program that shows participants what it's like to be or work for an elected official and give participants a better understanding of the complexities and factors involved in making political decisions.

"The day went very well and I really enjoyed the luncheon," said OU Student Body Vice President Vesna Saveski. "I enjoyed having the opportunity to speak with the House and Senate representatives and meet with members of the OU administration on a one-on-one basis."

For other news and information on OU's relations with the Michigan State Government, visit the **Office of Government Relations** Web site.

SUMMARY

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