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## Provost delivers State of Academic Affairs address

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

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Virinder Moudgil delivered his State of Academic Affairs address before a large audience of students, faculty and staff Dec. 8 at Meadow Brook Theatre. Moudgil referenced OU's vision 2010 as a framework for the address and referred to the plan as the "guiding principle for OU's educational mission."

The address reviewed many of OU's academic accomplishments over the past year, touching on its academic programs, inspired faculty, research initiatives, technology advancements, and visionary gifts and programs. Moudgil also addressed the university budget.

Among the quality academic programs Moudgil cited were the eighth annual Charles Dickens Symposium and other related campus events, which attracted scholars from around the world; the expansion of Kresge Library's electronic holdings; the Center for Executive and Continuing Education; and the growing number of doctoral students in the School of Health Sciences.

"One of the most impressive academic achievements to me is the ranking the School of Nursing and Beaumont Graduate Program of Nurse Anesthesia received," Moudgil said. "In its 2004 edition of 'Best Graduate Schools,' 'U.S. News and World Report' ranked this program sixth in the nation. This clearly shows we are receiving national recognition for our achievements."

Moudgil made reference to dozens of inspired OU faculty members who had numerous achievements and earned various honors over the past year. In particular, Moudgil noted Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering Sayed Nassar, who received \$3.8 million in funding for the opening of OU's new Fastening and Joining Research Institute.

"Nassar's achievement is indicative of what OU faculty can accomplish," Moudgil said. "When faculty need support for scholarship, many have thought 'out of the box' and looked outside the institution for funding. Though OU does not always have the funding to support all research proposals, Nassar's example shows that faculty can put their minds together and find support."

Moudgil followed up this point by highlighting the significant number of research proposals that received external funding. Of the 196 proposals that were submitted in 2002-03, two-thirds received funding. This phenomenal success rate equaled \$12.4 million in funding – a record number for OU.

Moudgil reminded the audience that ultimately students should be the beneficiaries of OU's research initiatives. He cited MERCK, Meeting of Minds and the provost-sponsored University Research Scholars programs as those that allow students the opportunity to conduct and present research under the guidance of faculty mentors.

"The MERCK program allows students to work with a faculty mentor from biology and chemistry," Moudgil said. "This interdisciplinary approach is a wonderful opportunity for students to perform research from two different perspectives."

With regard to the achievements of OU students, Moudgil cited a number of examples, many of which involved research. Among them were senior chemistry major Jennifer Froelich, who was selected to be a U.S. Homeland Security Scholar; senior political science major Robert Hillman, who received a prestigious internship at the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C.; and students in the OU affiliate of the Society of Automotive Engineers who finished 13th out of 140 teams at the 2003 Collegiate Design Series Formula SAE competition.

Moudgil also spoke of various gifts and programs, such as the Barry M. Klein Endowed Chair in Culture and Globalization and the Barry M. Klein Endowed Scholarship benefiting Honors College students.

"The endowed chair is the first of its kind in the College of Arts and Sciences," Moudgil said. "The gift will allow the college not only to hire another professor but also recruit an exceptionally high-caliber scholar who can contribute to national and international dialogues on issues such as religion and world tensions as well as economic systems and democracy."

Among the technology advancements Moudgil cited were the growth of wireless technology on campus, the improvement of critical infrastructures and the implementation of e-billing. He also spoke of the need to form community partnerships, and

referenced OU's formal agreement with the City of Rochester, the initiative with the Oakland County SmartZone, partnership with Cooley Law School and degree programs at the Macomb University Center, among others.

Moudgil also took time to address discussions on the growth of the university and its relation to quality education.

"A common thread throughout our visioning has been the idea that growth offers opportunities –opportunities for academic program enhancement, expansion of student services, new and advanced academic research and support facilities, and corporate and community outreach," Moudgil said. "As we have in previous years, we continue to post increasing enrollment numbers while maintaining impressive quality standards."

Regarding the financial state of the university, Moudgil noted that despite deep budget cuts over the past two years, faculty strength has not been significantly impacted and OU was able to reallocate nearly \$3 million for new and replacement faculty positions in this year's budget. The university successfully made up a budgeting shortfall and ended the year balanced while keeping its funding priorities focused on instruction, research and academic support. In addition, when the state cut less funding from Oakland than expected, the university showed a commitment to its students by rolling back its tuition increase and returning \$850,000 to faculty.

As for the future, Moudgil spoke of new initiatives, such as a new English as a second language endorsement program for certified teachers with the first cohort beginning in the winter 2004 semester, the Honors College's plans for a new residential component, and a partnership between the School of Health Sciences and School of Nursing to seek National Institute of Health funding for projects concerned with diabetes and other high-impact health issues.

Moudgil closed his address by encouraging the OU community to continue finding creative solutions to old problems before joining those assembled for refreshments and conversation.

The State of Academic Affairs address may be read in its entirety on the [VP of Academic Affairs and Provost](#) Web site.

#### **SUMMARY**

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