



Friday, July 19, 2002

OU president thanks campus community

The following letter from OU President Gary Russi was sent to all OU employees on July 19, the day after U.S. President George W. Bush and Poland President Aleksander Kwasniewski visited campus:

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday, we were honored to welcome the President of the United States and the President of Poland to our campus . . . to host them as they presented their views to the world. First, let me say how much I appreciated the patience and understanding shown by our campus community as our routines were interrupted.

This was a major international event, watched closely by many other countries. It was one of only four official state visits that will occur during President Bush's term of office, and it was the first visit of a sitting president to our campus.

But, for OU, it meant something more.

We took the opportunity to show off our beautiful campus and our Recreation and Athletics Center, and to tell the world what a special place Oakland University really is. During our portion of the program, I was honored to share the dais with a recent OU graduate, Ania Matuszewska, a journalism major with a special emphasis in public relations and a minor in marketing. More than anything else that happened yesterday, Ania's address to the 3,500 guests spoke volumes about the great strength of the Oakland experience. Her poise and her inspired message about the value of her Polish heritage, her education and her opportunities left those who know us with a sense of pride, and those who don't with a sense of curiosity.

And, the event revealed something else about us.

We talk a lot about teamwork. But, we don't often have the opportunity to see its results so visibly and on such a grand scale as we did on Thursday. When first we learned about the possibility that the presidents might visit us, some 10 short days prior to the event, we put a core team of people together to plan our involvement and to assist the White House and State Department advance team with their challenges and tasks. Our group included:

Rochelle Black, Director of Government Relations
Jo Hairston, Administrative Assistant, Office of the President
Denise McGee, Athletics Facilities Coordinator
Jack Mehl, Director of Athletics
Virinder Moudgil, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Rusty Postlewate, Associate Vice President for Facilities Management
Ann Ruppenthal, Media Relations Assistant
Dallas Schneider, Interim Chief of Police
Geoff Upward, Director of Communications and Marketing
Joy Williams, Executive Events Consultant to the President

I doubt the core team had any real sense of how much work this visit would ultimately entail, but the group by necessity quickly fanned out to include many, many others. And the results we all saw Thursday were a testament to our employees' tenacity, their pride in their university and their work, their dedication to showing the world that Oakland is a university of distinction, and their commitment to teamwork in the real sense of the word. I was privy to some of what they dealt with, but by no means all. They will have many stories to tell, and probably some about security measures that they cannot.

But one thing we can all say to our friends and co-workers who helped stage this spectacular day and who made our university shine in the world spotlight: Thank you so much. We are proud to serve beside you.

Be sure to check out the great special Web page about the presidential visit, which you will find on The News @ OU site (click on the photo in the right hand column). There is much there already, and I believe more will be added as the stories unfold.

Gary Russi

SUMMARY

Oakland University President Gary Russi sent all OU employees this letter on July 19, the day after U.S. President George W. Bush and Poland President Aleksander Kwasniewski visited campus, to thank those who helped stage this historic event.

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