



Friday, October 5, 2001

Hispanic Celebration participation increases

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

Oakland University's Hispanic Celebration 2001 concluded Friday afternoon with closing ceremonies in the Oakland Center's Fireside Lounge. Visitors were treated to refreshments and the winners of the inaugural Hispanic Celebration Essay Contest were announced.

For the essays, students were asked to explain in 500 words how they would recruit and retain Latino students to OU and why it is important to do so. Junior Joi Olden won a \$500 gift certificate to the **OU Bookstore** for first place. Senior Lani Morgan won second place and a \$100 gift certificate.

Mary Beth Snyder, vice president for student affairs, addressed the university's interest in diversity issues in her closing ceremony remarks.

"This is a time in the United States when we need to understand other cultures and not retreat," she said. "Our university stands for the understanding of other cultures. We are very much committed to increasing the number of Hispanic students on our campus. Hispanic Celebration month is a wonderful way to show our commitment, but it should be 365 days per year."

Snyder closed by encouraging OU students to speak positively of the university when coming into contact with middle school and high school teachers and Hispanic students.

Lisa Dillon, CAS '99, advising assistant for the Office of Equity and chair of the Hispanic Celebration Committee, said the events were well received across campus.

"We saw an increase in participation over last year," Dillon said. "For example, last night we had about 60 students in the residence halls participating in the Latin Crafts Night. There were so many participants that by the end we ran out of materials. For our first event (Latin Rhythms Night on Sept. 13), we had over 100 students taking salsa dance lessons. It was well received by a mix of people, not just Hispanic students."

Other Hispanic Celebration 2001 activities included a tastefest featuring a variety of ethnic dishes; discussions on Latinos in higher education and Latin politics; a presentation on children who grow up in bilingual homes; and a panel discussion on what the term "Hispanic" means to students.

Dillon said OU faculty members helped to increase awareness of the events.

"Professors announced events to their classes, and in some cases, offered extra credit to their students if they attended," she said. "It's great to see such participation dedicated to issues surrounding Hispanic culture. It shows that there is an importance placed on diversity on our campus."

SUMMARY

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