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New Future Students Web site launched

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University recently launched a new **Future Students** Web site to provide information students, parents and counselors want to know about OU's academic programs and services and how to apply for admission.

Information on the site is organized in an easy to navigate format and categorized in pages directed toward freshmen, transfer students, graduate students, individuals seeking a second degree, international students, newly admitted undergraduates, guest students, parents, high school and community college counselors, and lifelong learners.

Through the new **Ask OU** feature, site visitors can find answers to nearly 300 commonly asked questions stored in a knowledge base — a comprehensive database that expands upon traditionally offered Frequently Asked Questions pages. Future students also may complete an application checklist and apply for admission to OU directly from the site.

"The Web site is obviously important as a recruiting tool and for generating applications," said Pete Nacy, OU director of admissions. "We know that the Web right now is the number one marketing tool for prospective students. It's important that we have a site that contains the information they need and has the ease of navigation they have come to expect."

Research compiled by noted Web Consultant Michael Stoner shows that students rate Web sites second only to on-campus visits as the most important source for information on universities. Students also rate Web sites as more important information sources than contact with current students, letters from admissions counselors and publications such as the "Newsweek Guide to Colleges."

As students go to the Web for information, they expect university sites to deliver. Stoner's research indicates that content and site organization are the two most important characteristics of an effective university Web site — a finding that was not lost on those who collaborated on the development of OU's Future Students site.

"It was important to coordinate all the various university offices that deal with future students and have them send a consistent message to ensure we help fill students' needs in terms of their use of the Web," said Robert Johnson, vice provost for Enrollment Management. "Our coordinated efforts improve our ability to deliver services via the Web. One of the most important assets of the site is the Ask OU feature, the site's knowledge base, which we want to further implement as we move toward broader base knowledge management. The site definitely puts us in a position to steer more students toward the Web to find the information they seek about OU. I think the site will have a big impact on both freshmen and transfer students."

Visitors may access the new Web site by clicking on the **Future Students** button from the Oakland University home page, www.oakland.edu, or from the main top navigation throughout OU's Web site.

SUMMARY

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