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OGLs help incoming freshmen succeed

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

The transition from high school to college isn't always easy for students and their parents. In many cases, the issues are larger than simply finding a classroom building on campus.

Some of the tasks freshmen face are choosing classes, managing time, building new relationships and getting involved in campus activities. Parents often seek information on university policies and procedures and deal with financial aid issues.

To help students and their parents ease into this transition and into campus life, Oakland University's **Office of New Student Programs** has a dedicated team orientation group leaders (OGLs) – student leaders who create a welcoming atmosphere for incoming freshmen and their parents during orientation periods. Besides helping freshmen make the adjustment to college, OGLs also reinforce that OU is the right choice for them and motivate students to succeed.

"Our OGLs serve as role models. They help freshmen learn about university culture and expectations, promote school pride and spirit, and make them feel a part of Oakland University right from the start," said Dawn Aubry, director of New Student Programs. "They also give some good advice on how to be a successful student and provide strategies that work. They promote the advantages of on-campus living, but they also give information on certain services that help commuters enrich their college experience."

Freshmen can choose either an overnight or one-day orientation program. In both sessions, OGLs are the first point of contact for the students.

OGLs meet with students in the morning in groups of 10 to 15 for introductions then conduct campus tours where freshmen learn about OU history and the student services available to them. OGLs help freshmen prepare for their individual academic advising sessions, assist them with setting up and using their free OU e-mail accounts, and perform humorous skits that provide opportunities to discuss issues such as academics, diversity, finances, time management and campus involvement. OGLs also serve as greeters and ushers at convocation and staff information tables during Welcome Week.

OGLs also address transition issues during parent orientations by answering questions about the parents' role in their son or daughter's education, speaking of their own relationships with their parents as college students, and inviting them to become partners with Oakland.

"I wanted to be an OGL because of what I learned from them as a freshman," said Steven Townsend, a junior biochemistry major, who worked last summer as an OGL. This year, he's helping to recruit, select and train OGLs as one of five orientation assistants. "I came to Oakland as a very shy, quiet guy. But freshman orientation helped me learn to open up and how to meet people. That broke the ice for me and I wanted to return the favor."

OU has 17 OGLs who are chosen through a rigorous five-phase selection process. OGL candidates must display a strong desire to help students and their parents, a positive attitude and strong OU spirit, a desire to develop communication and leadership skills and a willingness to work irregular hours during orientation periods. The hiring process begins in January. Those selected students then receive eight weeks of extensive training prior to meeting with the first orientation group.

Over the summer, OGLs work with nearly 2,000 freshmen and 1,300 transfer students. Besides being university ambassadors and helping others, OGLs receive a \$1,500 stipend, \$200 meal card, free residence hall room during spring semester and the orientation period, and have the chance to develop close friendships.

"As an OGL, it's really fun being with a group of diverse people and making them into a team," Townsend said. "Freshmen orientation also teaches students how to relate to different people and move out of your comfort zone. I remain in touch with a lot of the students who were in my groups last year."

"Being an OGL is a really valuable experience. It's one of the best kept secrets about Oakland University."

For a schedule of student and parent orientations and information on becoming an orientation group leader, visit the **New**

Student Programs Web site or contact them at (248) 370-3260 or nsp@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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