



Monday, July 21, 2003

OUTAS program continues its success

After nine years of existence, Oakland University's Trustees Academic Success (OUTAS) program continues to be one of the most successful recruitment and student retention programs in the country. The program is designed to create an ethnically and culturally diverse group of high-achieving students and leaders.

OUTAS, administered by the **Center for Multicultural Initiatives**, formerly the Office of Equity, differs from many other student retention programs because it focuses on providing scholarships to a diverse group of students who experienced academic success in high school and meet the university's admission requirements but need support adjusting to campus life. Many student retention programs focus solely on non-regularly admitted (at-risk) students. OUTAS also continually fosters cross-cultural interaction by encompassing Caucasian, African-American, Native American, Asian Pacific Islander and Latino students.

"The OUTAS program has demonstrated its significance as a vehicle for allowing students to build their cross-cultural functioning skills," said Gloria Sosa, director of the Center for Multicultural Initiatives. "The program has been very successful in expanding the cultural horizons of all students to enhance their understanding and ability to function across gender, racial, national, ethnic and cultural lines. It also prepares students for employment in an increasingly multicultural world."

Recent statistics illustrate the program's effectiveness. At the end of the fall 2002 semester, the program continued to maintain a significant retention rate of 86 percent. During the 2002-2003 academic year, 119 program scholarships were awarded and 30 OUTAS scholarship recipients graduated, bringing the total to 102 since 1994.

OUTAS students also have successful post-graduate careers. One graduate is in his third year at Yale medical school, five are in law school, 18 are working on a master's degree, five have completed a master's program, three await word from medical school admissions, and three others await acceptance to various doctoral programs across the country. Ninety-eight percent of OUTAS graduates are employed or in graduate school.

"We have many OUTAS graduates who have gone on to do great things," Sosa said. "Ralph Williams II, a biology major, graduated from the Detroit Public School system and entered OU when he was 16. One of the reasons he came to OU was because of OUTAS. He founded the United Fronts magazine, which was a forum for African-American students to reflect upon their educational experiences. He also co-founded the Men of Umoja, a student organization that provides peer mentoring for African-American males. He's a great writer and very involved in the community. As a sophomore, he won a Keeper of the Dream scholarship. He decided he wants to be a cardiologist and will be attending Wayne State Medical School in the fall.

"OUTAS created an incentive for Ralph to attend Oakland, and he was able to learn how to better negotiate cross-cultural relationships. He's just one example of many students who have benefited from the program."

The Center for Multicultural Initiatives is pursuing expanding OUTAS programming by creating an alumni mentoring initiative and endowment program and is exploring external corporate sponsorships for additional student scholarships.

"We also want to introduce the program to other educational institutions by serving as consultants," Sosa said. "Our mentoring program already has been successfully replicated at Kettering University in Flint. We really want students to have the valuable experience of coming from a homogeneous environment and developing their understanding of interracial and cross-cultural relationships."

For more information on the OUTAS program, visit the **Center for Multicultural Initiatives** Web site or contact them at (248) 370-4404.

SUMMARY

After nine years of existence, OU's Trustees Academic Success program continues to be one of the most successful recruitment and student retention programs in the country. The program is designed to create an ethnically and culturally diverse group of high-achieving students and leaders.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Monday, July 21, 2003
Modified by Heather Mattiello (heather.mattiello@caretech.com) on Friday, November 7, 2008
Article Start Date: Friday, October 3, 2003

