



Friday, February 7, 2003

## State budget discussed at BOT meeting

A discussion of the state budget crisis, the announcement of a distinguished professor and the approval to finance Oakland University's new e-mail system through a low-interest loan highlighted the Feb. 5 **OU Board of Trustees** meeting.

President Gary Russi's report included a discussion of the state budget crisis and how it will affect Oakland University. One-time budget cuts for fiscal year 2002-2003 will be made with input from each university division within the next several weeks, in reaction to last December's 2-percent cut from the state, and the expected announcement by Governor Jennifer Granholm that will cut OU's state appropriation by an additional 1.5 percent.

Permanent cuts to base budgets for fiscal year 2003-2004 will be discussed this spring within the university community (including chairs, deans, the Senate Budget and Review Committee, Senate Planning Committee, vice presidents and student board liaisons) in anticipation of deeper cuts from the state.

Director of Government Relations Rochelle Black made a presentation that detailed the intricacies of the state budget situation, the causes of the current economic malaise, and some possible solutions that the legislative and executive branches of state government may put into action.

At the behest of the board, Director of University Housing and Food Service Eleanor Reynolds provided a first glimpse at the inaugural year in the student apartments. Apartment revenues should exceed expenses this year, Reynolds said, and the picture looks good for next fall as well. The apartments should be at or near full capacity as students move back onto campus next August.

Director of Purchasing and Risk Management Kate Lark gave a report that showed Oakland University at or below the median of similar institutions in terms of loss control and minimizing risk. This news was especially good considering the calamitous events that have occurred around the world over the past 18 months, Lark said.

The consent agenda was passed, with the most notable item being the approval of an honorary degree for Ashley Bryan, a distinguished author of children's books. Bryan, a professor emeritus at Dartmouth College, has authored many children's books that have enriched the African-American experience and added new dimensions to American culture. He served as a guest lecturer for Oakland graduate students in 1999.

Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Virinder Moudgil announced that Paul Tombouljian, a charter member of Oakland's faculty, has been named the university's newest distinguished professor. Tombouljian served as chemistry chair for 35 years, earned Oakland's first research grant and initiated the first undergraduate research program. The rank of distinguished professor is given to those faculty members who have demonstrated preeminence in scholarship, teaching and public or professional service.

The board then approved a measure that ratified editorial revisions to the School of Nursing's constitution to reflect operational changes in the SON since 1994.

The board approved the agreement between the university and the OU Unified United Professional Service Association-Michigan Education Association/National Education Association. This agreement will bring across-the-board salary increases to OUUPSA/MEA/NEA members this year and the two fiscal years to follow. The agreement also increases union members' retirement plan contribution by 1 percent.

The board approved the refinancing of a 1997 project lease with Viron Corp. This refinance will allow Oakland to purchase a new e-mail system at a substantially lower interest rate through Comerica Leasing. The university will save \$228,000 over a 52-month period under this refinancing arrangement.

Vice President for Finance and Administration Lynne Schaefer presented a proposal that would make Staples the preferred office supply vendor for the university. Schaefer said that of the five vendors who submitted proposals, Staples was the most cost-effective for the university.

The December employee of the month was Todd Hensel, a plumber in the Facilities Management Department. The January

employee of the month was Eddie Turner, equipment manager for the Athletics Department.

Dr. Moudgil recognized four faculty members for their outstanding work: Associate Professor of Nursing Christina Sieloff, and Assistant Library Professors Shawn Lombardo, Beth Kraemer and Dana Keyse.

The next working session of the board of trustees is Wednesday, March 5, at 2 p.m. in the Elliott Hall Auditorium. The next formal board meeting is at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, April 2, in the same location.

**SUMMARY**

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