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New office facilitates study abroad programs

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

To increase awareness of the numerous opportunities Oakland University offers its students and faculty to study and teach abroad, the university has created the International Education Office. Directed by Associate Professor of Rhetoric Margaret Pigott, the office serves as a one-stop international education center for students and promotes international faculty teaching opportunities and exchanges.

"Oakland was one of the first institutions in the nation to include international studies in its general education program," said Susan Awbrey, vice provost for undergraduate education. "We're all aware of the need for global understanding since Sept. 11 and the Iraq war. There's no better way to cultivate global awareness than to participate in a study abroad or exchange program. We want to promote our programs to OU students and assist faculty and departments involved in study abroad."

OU has a long-established consortium of study abroad programs in Rosario, Argentina; Vienna, Austria; Valdivia, Chile; London and Oxford, England; Angers and Orleans, France; Cologne and Oldenburg, Germany; Accra, Ghana; Athens, Greece; Dublin, Ireland; Macerata, Italy; Hikone and Nanzan, Japan; Morelia, Mexico; Denedin, New Zealand; and Granada, Oriedo and Segovia, Spain. Oakland also recently signed a scholar exchange agreement with the Foreign Affairs College in Beijing, China.

Possible study abroad sites that are being discussed include the Ukraine, Brazil and Scotland. Another idea under discussion is establishing a semester abroad requirement for **Honors College** students. Such a requirement might entail internships that allow students to work with a top scholar in their field of study.

"We'd also like to enable our students to take advantage of opportunities other universities offer in areas where we don't have a study abroad program," Awbrey said. "We're working on developing agreements with other institutions to increase these opportunities."

Pigott, who co-directs the **British Studies at Oxford** program, which has been associated with Oakland since 1975, was asked to be the director of the newly established International Education Office in January.

"The benefits to studying and teaching abroad are tremendous," Pigott said. "You get a different perspective on America and the world when you see it from another country."

"Some might say studying abroad is fun but not academically important. But in reality, study abroad courses tend to be site specific. For example, we offer a business administration course in our British Studies at Oxford program in which students study how British organizations are run, then travel as a group to the businesses themselves to meet with various employees. This gives students a real sense of how British business practices relate to American companies and the global economy, which could not be completely gained in the American classroom."

Pigott wants to promote the rewards of studying and teaching abroad, while at the same time, increase Oakland University's presence worldwide.

"My role is to facilitate the establishment of extension or degree programs abroad for OU students and faculty," she said. "We want to make it easier to bring together faculty who have the vision of OU as a global institution. I hope to have Oakland University become known as a 'division one' institution in international education."

Some goals Pigott has are to make studying abroad a requirement at some level, to raise money for student scholarships for studying abroad, and to set up student internships.

"There are ways to make studying abroad very feasible for students," Pigott said. "We have a lot of support from Oakland faculty, departments and students that have engaged in study abroad programs and want to use their enthusiasm to expand OU's global presence."

A comprehensive Web site giving details on all of OU's study abroad opportunities currently is being developed.

Visit the **British Studies at Oxford** Web site for information on study abroad opportunities at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. For information on the International Education Office, located in 322 Wilson Hall, and other study abroad opportunities for Oakland University students and faculty, contact Pigott at (248) 370-4131 or pigott@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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