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ACE Fellow program eye-opening experience

Bob Wiggins, associate professor in the School of Education and Human Services, is spending winter, spring and summer semesters with Oakland University President Gary Russi behind closed doors, in high-level meetings and at university events.

He's shadowing President Russi as part of his experience as an American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow. The ACE Fellowship program is a prestigious appointment providing a select group of faculty and senior administrators an internship in higher education administration.

"It's been an eye opening experience. It's given me overall institutional perspective instead of just the School of Education," said Wiggins. "I spend my days with Dr. Russi, seeing who he interacts with, the types of problems he is faced with, and who he calls on for assistance.

"Being an ACE Fellow is giving me the unique opportunity to get on the inside and see if a position like this could be right for me."

As an ACE Fellow, Wiggins is working on a number of special projects for the university, including examining general education programs throughout the country, and working with the provost to create a distinctive undergraduate experience. He also is gathering information about information technology on Oakland's campus and at other schools to expand his personal knowledge base about how universities operate.

Throughout the year, Wiggins visits other campuses and attends a variety of conferences sponsored by professional organizations. He also meets with other ACE Fellows attending three weeklong seminars on higher education issues.

About 35 people are chosen annually from colleges and universities throughout the country for the Fellowship Class. Each applicant submits a resume and written statement for review by the ACE staff. A six-member committee consisting of university presidents and senior administrators interviews finalists.

OU has a long history of supporting the ACE Fellowship. Former ACE Fellows include Russi; former OU President Sandra Packard; Susan Awbrey, vice provost for undergraduate education; Mary Otto, dean of the School of Education and Human Services; Mark Ludorf, director of the Information Technology Institute; and Dagmar Cronn, professor of chemistry.

In addition to being on the OU faculty for eight years, Wiggins' background includes a 20-year career in public school education, including 10 years as an elementary school principal. He served as the president of the directors and representatives of Teacher Education Programs and is a member of the Elementary Education standards Revision Committee for the Michigan Department of Education. He has bachelor's and master's degrees from Queens College of the City University in New York and a Ph.D. in education from the University of Illinois.

As part of the ACE Fellow program, Wiggins spent this past fall semester at Northern Kentucky University, working closely with President James Votruba. The one-year internship concludes in August, when Wiggins will return to his faculty position at OU.

SUMMARY

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