

Parking tight around college

By Craig Plechura
staff writer

With 8,300 students and more than 10,000 parking spaces on the grounds of the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College, parking shouldn't be a problem.

But it is, according to many students at the college. Even though the majority of students attend night classes and many attend classes part-time, parking is a particular problem most mornings at the Farmington Hills campus.

Students complain that the only open parking spaces to be found are on the far east end of the sprawling campus while most classes are conducted on the west end.

Other students gripe that their colleagues aggravate the congestion by parking on roadways, grassy medians and even the steep hill leading to the lecture halls. Illegal parkers impede their search for legal spaces, say some students.

Some help may be forthcoming, according to public safety officials who note that additional parking on the west side of the campus is being striped and should be ready soon. The lot was built to accommodate traffic from an expanded gymnasium built on the grounds.

But many students are pessimistic about the prospect of improved parking. The good spots go fast, they say, leaving late-comers scrambling to get spaces as close to their classes as possible.

THE PEAK HOUR for traffic congestion seems to be between 9 and 10 a.m. every day but Friday. Full-time students searching frantically for the best spaces make the campus lot a frustrating maze for anyone pressed for time trying to make it to class. Traffic isn't usually a problem on Fridays because many students arrange their schedule to give themselves a long weekend and Fridays off.

On Monday a red Camaro sat parked on a grassy median near the steep hill on the west side of the campus. The car belongs to Pat Kenney, 23, of Birmingham, who explained he parked illegally

because it's unreasonable to expect him to park at the first available legal spot located more than a quarter of a mile from his lecture hall.

"You could park way back there legally," Kenney admitted. "But who wants to walk 20 miles to class, especially in the dead of winter?"

Kenney says he'd park on the far east end if there was a shuttle bus available to transport students to the school.

"It's not so bad today but in the winter there's a 90 mile an hour wind coming off the freeway when you're trudging up the hill and a lot of old people go to school here too," Kenney says.

Another student, Cindy Flisman, 19, of Brighton, says the college could add hundreds, maybe thousands, of parking spaces simply by removing the grassy medians and converting the space into parking spots.

WHILE STUDENTS such as Kenney complain about campus police and Farmington Hills police ticketing their vehicles for parking infractions, other students say not enough citations are being issued.

"If I had a ticket book I'd love to go one-by-one down the row," says Jim McNellis, 19, of Westland. "Monday-through Wednesday early in the day they drive all over the median. It's ridiculous. They park next to the curb. There are three (cars) illegally parked right next to each other right now. I never see anybody ticketed down here."

Jim Havney, a 20-year-old student from Addison Township says campus police should do what he did when he worked for a year as a security guard at Ford Motor Co. He would plaster "no parking" stickers on the windshields of illegally-parked cars instead of issuing the drivers parking tickets.

"They are a bugger to get off," Havney says of the stickers. After struggling to get the stickers off their windshields, Havney says illegal parking would decline drastically.

While admitting she doesn't like walking far to classes or up the steep hill, Cherish Joseph, 18, of South Lyon,



photos by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Issuing tickets to illegally parked cars receives a low priority at OCC.

wonders why "nothing's said" about illegal parking.

CAMPUS POLICE perform every function a regular police officer does, says Dr. Joseph Maeri, director of public safety for OCC, and can't spend all their time writing traffic tickets.

"Our priority on ticketing is keeping space open for emergency vehicles," Maeri says.

Anyone who doesn't believe the campus police or Farmington Hills Police issue tickets for parking illegally is in for a rude awakening, according to public safety officials.

One student who was ticketed last year complained to 47th District Court Judge Michael Hand that not enough parking spaces were available which causes students to park illegally.

The judge ordered a study of the parking situation and results showed that at its busiest time of day there are a minimum of 1,000 parking spaces available on campus.

"You can't open your car door at the school door but there are more than enough spaces," Maeri says. "Maybe it's not as convenient as students would like but at any given time you can find legal spaces."



The grass covered islands in the parking lot are popular alternatives to the parking stalls.



Some drivers know how to turn half of a parking space into a whole one.



It's a tight squeeze when the car parked next to yours is only 12 inches away.

Age Zone Controller from Charles of the Ritz. A lightly textured fragrance-free moisture complex, scientifically proven to reduce facial lines by an average of 37% in only two weeks. Worn under other moisturizers and foundation, it's your first step to smooth, beautiful skin. 12.50. In the Aisles of Beauty at Hudson's.

Face-Up to Beauty, yours for just 12.50 with any 8.50 or more Charles of the Ritz purchase. Colors for soft daytime and dramatic evening looks, all in one portable, mirrored compact. Includes 6 eyeshadows, 2 eye accent sticks, 2 blushes, 2 lipcolors, 2 eyeshadow applicators, 2 lipcolor applicators and a blush brush. 1875 units while they last.



hudson's aisles of beauty



ORDER BY PHONE: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In Metro Detroit, call 569 2454. Elsewhere, order toll free 1 800 233 2000.