

Milestone

Campus marks birthday

Continued from Page 1

AS OU celebrates its silver anniversary, the school's backers tout vast achievements.

They cite steady student growth and program expansion and the fact that only four Michigan schools attract more research money. Last year, its professors brought in \$4.5 million for research projects, coming in just behind the Big Three and Michigan Technological University.

Through the adjacent Oakland Technology Park, the university is helping its home county attract high tech firms to the area.

Champagne calls these accomplishments "nothing short of a miracle."

"I'm very optimistic, very bullish on the university," he added firmly.

Detractors, though, contend OU was supposed to be a very different place.

They say the institution — dubbed by an early public relations man the "Harvard of the Midwest" — has lowered its academic standards, moved away from liberal arts to professional and technical offerings, and even added sports programs. As evidence, they cite the fact that OU once was so tough that half the first class dropped out before the year's end.

THE SCHOOL has changed over the years. And like most 25-year-olds, it's still changing — and will probably be much different by mid-life.

But the school's goals today aren't that far from what the founders intended.

"The original intent was to have a balanced institution here. And by the 1980s we achieved that," said Keith Kleckner, senior vice president for university affairs and provost.

A brainchild of the Oakland County Planning Commission, Michigan State University-Oakland was to offer professional programs in business administration, education and engineering.

All programs would be "infused with the spirit and substance of the liberal arts" and "characterized by devotion to basic academic principles

rather than immediate job application."

Continuing adult education was to be closely linked to credit courses and there were to be no "extracurricular distractions" such as ROTC, fraternities and sororities, and intercollegiate athletics.

Striving for a "rigorous academic tone," Oakland was kiddingly known as "Egghead U." Students laughed about spending all week in the library and heading to Michigan State to party on the weekends.

The institution took pride in the facts that all its courses were taught by teachers with doctorates, and almost half of the courses were mandatory. To be "well rounded," everyone took music, art, science and math and a language.

ACTUALLY, MOST of those liberal arts graduates also left OU with very practical teaching degrees. That fact escapes most folks who bemoan the shift away from the "ivory tower."

"Throughout the 1960s, most of our graduates looked like liberal arts majors — but really they were education majors," said David Beardslee, director of OU's Office of Institutional Research.

They were preparing for professions.

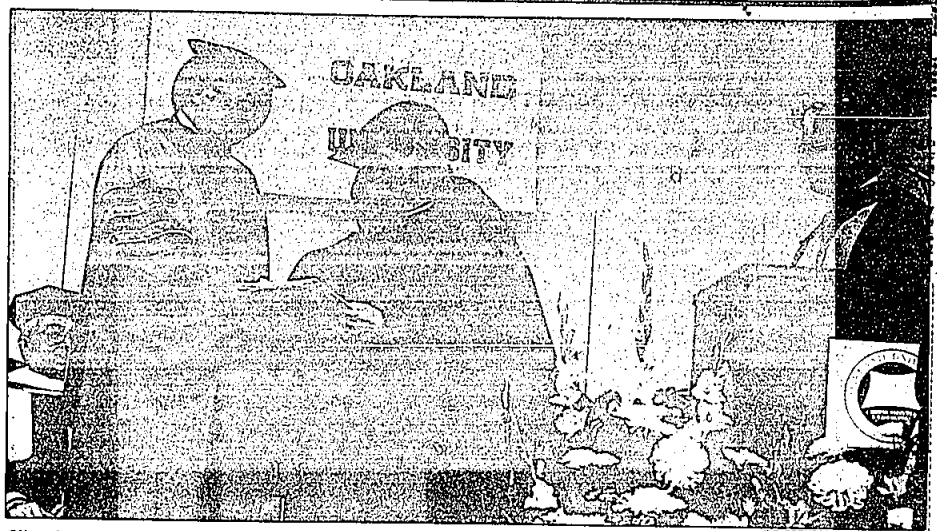
Through the 1960s, more than half of the university's grads left with teaching degrees.

"The myth grew up that Oakland was a liberal arts school," recalls Beardslee, in his 25th year with OU. "Statistics prove otherwise, but statistics don't undo myths."

THE NEXT decade brought the most change to OU, which gained independence in 1970. In a hard-hit economy, the country university became an attractive place for area students to drive to.

Oakland Intermediate Schools Superintendent William Keane calls it a "beautiful blend" of commuter and residential school.

"Many, many kids go to community college and then transfer. It offers commuter students a residential school setting. Rapidly expanding enrollments, a



OU senior vice president for university affairs Keith Kleckner (left) awards an honorary doctor of laws degree to Gov. Blanchard during exercises for 800 graduates Sunday. Marvin Katko, a charter OU

trustee and OU Foundation president, received an honorary doctor of humanities degree. OU president Joseph Champagne is at right.

more diverse student population and pressure to offer "more relevant" courses resulted in an "educational smorgasbord."

There was a shift in student values to more immediate job concerns and an opening of opportunities for women.

Once a traditional school attracting mostly young men straight out of high school, OU's typical student became a woman living in the tri-county area.

"What some people see as vocational orientation and selfishness, really was realism," Beardslee said of the shift to skill courses.

Champagne, though, thinks OU — like many other colleges — steered too far away from its original goals.

"It was an educational cafeteria with everyone getting educational indigestion. Instead of educational nutrition, they were getting junk food."

LIKE MOST universities, OU has been hard hit by cuts in state education funding.

While Gov. James J. Blanchard's 11-percent increase to higher education this year was welcome, the fact that

the additional money was tied to a tuition freeze caused a problem for the university.

The freeze allows schools to increase out-of-state and graduate tuition. But 90 percent of Oakland's students come from Oakland and Macomb counties and the majority are undergraduates.

By forgoing a 5-7 percent tuition increase, OU's 11 percent actually became just 5.5 percent more money. The university started off the school year with a \$525,000 operating deficit.

The problem is compounded by the young school's lack of endowments. "Institutions must be able to raise the revenue they need. Otherwise we will be rolling huge deficits," the president believes.

Expanding or adding programs means new facilities, particularly in expensive high tech areas.

Though relatively young, OU is at the point where the physical plant needs work in areas like steam pipes and electricity.

THE UNIVERSITY has tried to keep enrollment increases at 1-2 percent. It

lightened up admissions standards in such hot areas as computer science, health sciences, engineering, and management.

A university proposal calls for even more tightening of admissions standards. If approved this month, it will require incoming students to have more math, English and science background. SAT scores and proficiency exams will also be used more in evaluating newcomers.

The college also increased its general education course requirements to 36 hours. Champagne would even like to see more liberal arts courses demanded, but admits it would not be practical to go back to the early requirements.

"The ability to think rationally and logically is as important as the ability to do something careerwise," the president explained.

"But if 50 percent of their college time were spent in humanities, students wouldn't be able to get jobs."

"We're in the strange position of the enrollment wanting to grow and at the same time not having the resources to do it," explained Kleckner, who pre-

dicts enrollment will drop 1-2 percent each year for the next eight years or so.

"This university is probably as big as it will be."

IN THE 1980s, OU expects to focus more than ever on community outreach.

While the university has become known for its cultural programs, Champagne wants it to be recognized for "academic" richness as well.

His administration hopes to do that by upgrading standards, offering even more educational services to the community and by helping area economic development.

In turn, he believes the surrounding community would support the school even more.

"Our greatest shortcoming is that we haven't translated the enthusiasm for the Meadow Brooks into enthusiasm for the university," he contends.

"We have the resources and are going to make it despite the financial picture. But it takes a lot of community awareness of what we're all about."

Celebration includes a series of seminars

By Tom Panzenhagen
staff writer

Oakland University's 25th-anniversary celebration features activities that look to the Oakland County school's future as well as celebrate its past.

One such activity is the Meadow Brook Seminars Revisited, which borrows from traditions of the past to examine the university's role in the burgeoning technological age.

"The seminars are related to bringing the university more into the high-tech area," said OU history professor George Matthews, who helped organize the seminars.

"Once you get through the fun and games (of the anniversary celebration), we ought to have a serious look at ourselves, and perhaps lay down principles for the next 10, 15 years," he said.

THE SEMINARS are in the tradition of the original Meadow Brook Seminars on Higher Education held 36 years ago to help form the Rochester-area university. The year was 1958 and the university had yet to admit a student or hire faculty.

"Those seminars were designed to set down guidelines, to set the tone for the development of the university, the general framework and thrust of the university was very strongly influenced by the seminars they had," Matthews said.

The theme of Meadow Brook Seminars Revisited is "Humane Values in a Technological Civilization — The University's Role."

Nine seminars are planned, each focusing on a major academic component such as health sciences, graduate studies and continuing education, and each featuring a prominent guest speaker from business or education.

"THEY'RE NOT jazzy subjects," Matthews noted, "but we hope to get good crowds of campus and off-campus people."

Most of the seminars involve Monday evening and Tuesday conferences. They run from Sept. 24 to Nov. 30.

The theme of the first seminar will be "Humanity and Technology — The Challenge of Compatibility in the Modern University."

Keynote speaker for that seminar will be Glenn S. Dumke, chancellor emeritus, California State University and Colleges. He will speak 8-9:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 24, in the Oakland Center.

OTHER PUBLIC lectures, all slated for 8 p.m. Mondays in the Oakland Center, are as follows:

Oct. 1: "The Arts and Sciences — An Ancient and Lively Tradition" with Christopher Lasch, professor of history, University of Rochester.

Oct. 8: "The Public University: How Best to Serve?" with Paul Miller, professor of science and humanities, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Oct. 15: "Excellence, Equity and Economy in Education" featuring an open discussion with participants including Harold Hodgkinson, senior fellow,

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the Institute for Educational Leadership, and director, National Institute of Education; and David Imig, executive secretary, American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education.

Oct. 22: "Research and Scholarship — Keys to Institutional Excellence" with Philip H. Abelson, editor of Science magazine.

Oct. 29: "Humanity and Technology — The Challenge for Management Education" with Stanley Klion, executive vice chairman, Peat, Marwick and Mitchell International.

Nov. 12: "The Technological University of the Future" with Thomas W. Butler Jr., newly appointed dean, OU School of Engineering and Computer Science.

Nov. 19: "What Have We Learned: What Should We Do?" with Keith R. Kleckner, senior vice president for university affairs and provost.

AN ADDITIONAL lecture will be at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 7, also in the Oakland Center: "Health Care Interdependence in a Changing World" with Victor W. Sidel, M.D., professor of social medicine, Montefiore Medical Center, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and president-elect, American Public Health Association.

The Monday lectures will be followed by Tuesday panel discussions, most of which are closed to the public.

Matthews said the speakers will be familiar with problems and concerns peculiar to Oakland University.

"We sent out materials that some of the speakers asked for," he said. "Others already know us because the academic community is relatively small."

WHILE SPEAKERS will concern themselves with the future of the university, "we can expect a certain amount of criticism, too," Matthews said.

He described the last seminar — "What Have We Learned: What Should We Do?" — as "a turn inward — a time to summarize what has transpired in the last couple of months."

A closed panel discussion Tuesday, Nov. 20 will include provost Kleckner, representatives of the university Senate and Congress, the Commission on Excellence and the academic deans.



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