

OCC expands 'mission' to new economy

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Teaching individual students who enroll used to be the sole mission of two-year colleges.

Now Oakland Community College trustees are pondering a major, double expansion of their mission statement — as a major provider in Michigan's re-industrialization, and as a catalyst for long-range planning.

"We need to expand our view of the community," said OCC Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson. "Once our community was just students. Now it involves corporations, the churches, the agencies."

HOW OAKLAND County will change — and where OCC fits into the process — occupied seven elected trustees, the chancellor and the four campus presidents for a full Saturday recently as they held a workshop with a business consultant.

The consultant was Dale Ward, a Portland, Ore., resident who quit law school 16 years ago to become what he calls a "process consultant." Banks and airlines are among his clients.

Nicholson, chief executive for the last year, set up the workshop because OCC needs a mission statement by which the North Central Association accrediting agency can judge its success — "and so you can make sure the policies look like the blueprint."

OCC already has changed through its 25 years — from providing the first two years of an academic education, to career education, to serv-



'Once our community was just students. Now it involves corporations, the churches, the agencies . . . We will become more knowledge oriented, not degree oriented.'

— R. Stephen Nicholson
OCC chancellor

ing "non-traditional" students such as older adults and those with learning problems.

AS ITS LEADERS threw out answers and ideas over nearly six hours, however, it became apparent that corporate customers and community planning are likely to be added to the mission-and-goals statement.

In a nutshell, OCC will be more concerned with spreading knowledge than granting formal degrees, Nicholson said.

The chancellor expects to have the new statement ready at 8 tonight when the board meets in 4-409 of the Orchard Ridge Campus, 1-696 at Orchard Lake Road in the heart of

national institutions, said Auburn Hills President Christine Gram. OCC has made "joint partnerships — developed tailored degrees for specific employers."

And OCC is closer than the other 28 Michigan community colleges to the high technology belt while the county is home to 41 of the "Fortune 500" largest corporations.

By the year 2000, said academic Vice Chancellor Richard Thompson, "We will be in an industrial setting almost as much as in a campus setting. We'll have journeymen electricians teaching students."

Nicholson agreed: "Educators will lose their monopoly on information and knowledge. The faculty will have to link with business and industry so they know reality."

"We'll be a 24-hour college," predicted board vice chair Sandra Ritter. Added Gram: "We'll teach in new time frames. We'll schedule to meet the needs of people. We'll be leaders in new curriculum delivery systems — such as television."

MULTIPLE careers and lifelong learning will become commonplace, said Daniel Jaksen, president of the Orchard Ridge Campus. Community colleges as a group have been assigned the key role of job training by Gov. James Blanchard's administration, where "the emphasis is on jobs."

Nicholson underscored the point: "Community colleges have more students with BA and master's degrees

than all the graduate schools."

He quoted a Chrysler Corp. executive as saying the automaker will employ 20,000 people next to the Auburn Hills Campus by 1990, suppliers will employ another 6,000 or 10,000, and "I don't see that we (Chrysler) will build an enormous training unit. We want to work with you and Oakland University."

tion as having a role in solving economic problems. Southeast Campus President James Davis, who came to Royal Oak this semester from central Washington, noted wryly: "In Washington, universities and community colleges are seen as part of the problem."

THERE WAS SOME disagreement over whether OCC could or should become a cultural hub.

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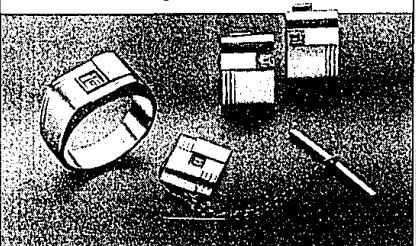


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