

Compare qualifications, views for OCC post

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Richard Blonde and Jay B. Shah like Oakland Community College and aren't mad at anyone or anything.

One will be elected June 11 to the college board of trustees for a four-year term to fill a vacancy. Voters will choose between two candidates who both attended community colleges and who are both likely to be supportive of OCC's course.

Two incumbent trustees are unopposed for re-election to six-year terms. They are: Sandra Ritter, board chair, a state Department of Education professional from Waterford and two-term veteran; and Douglas Wakefield, a one-term veteran and a high school librarian.

Voters must replace Edward Pappas, a Franklin attorney who was appointed to fill out part of the late Earl Anderson's term but declined to run for the remainder of the term.

HERE ARE profiles of the newcomers:

• Blonde, 35, of Rochester Hills,



Blonde



Shah



Ritter



Wakefield

ran in 1988. He has earned 92 credit hours at OCC toward degrees in business and data processing. The Bloomfield Hills Andover High graduate is an analyst specializing in data base administration for Ameritech Applied Technologies.

Shah, 43, of Waterford, is making his first bid for the OCC board. He is vice president for corporate development for the civil engineering firm of Spalding, DeDecker & Associates in Madison Heights. Shah is on Waterford's township planning commission and zoning board of

appeals, member of the Oakland County Economic Development Commission and Economic Development Corp.

Endorsers include County Executive Daniel Murphy and state Sen. Doug Cruse, R-Troy. In Bombay, India, he earned an engineering degree; his master's degrees in engineering came from Wayne State University and his master's in business from the University of Detroit. They were interviewed by newspaper for a cable television program arranged by the League of Women Voters.

Q. What needs do you see at OCC in the next few years?

BLONDE: "Make the public more aware of the funding needs. The physical plant needs upgrading. The public must be made aware it's an investment in their future."

SHAH: "The hiring of a new chancellor (to replace R. Stephen Nicholson, leaving June 1 for a post in the United Arab Emirates). On a long-term basis, the quality of education... keeping up with technology. OCC has a good program. However, an information campaign has to be instituted to let residents know what's available."

Q. Do you see a continuation of 5 percent increases in tuition annually?

SHAH: "The goal should be quality education without raising tuition. (Tuition is one component of college funding.) Seek private-sector grants and funding."

BLONDE: "We need to attract as much as we can from the state. Oakland is the highest-contributing county (to state revenues) in the state."

community Growth Alliance and Economic Development Corp. As a board member, I have been involved with its budget. I believe the process used by OCC is a good one. A long-term budget process is used."

Q. Do you have any problems interviewing candidates for chief executive under the Open Meetings Act—that is, with public interviews?

SHAH: "No. In my company, we interview candidates on a board level. We recently interviewed candidates... for the presidency of the company on a board level. On the planning commission, we recently interviewed candidates for consultant in a public meeting. I wouldn't have any reservations."

BLONDE: "The only way to interview candidates is in public. This is a public institution. I would like it if even more people were involved in the process and could aid it."

Q. Do you see a high turnover of students at OCC (relating to problems of student retention)?

BLONDE: "I see many of the same faces over and over each semester. However, many are there for a particular reason—maybe it's a computer course... or preparing for a new job. They come back when their needs change."

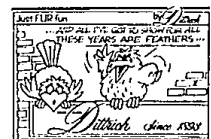
SHAH: "I can relate to that. Retention is a difficult thing to do where people are working. But when they see the light at the end of the tunnel, they stay and complete their requirement for a degree program."

Q. What experience do you have with institutional budgets?

BLONDE: "I have not dealt on a corporate level with budgets. However, I have reviewed the college's budget as a candidate two years ago and more recently reviewed the capital expenditures..."

SHAH: "I have the advantage of serving on the Oakland County Com-

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