

# OU appoints Russi as president — without prior notice

By PAT MURPHY

As much as anything else, it was the on-the-job performance of Gary Russi as interim president that led to his being offered the top administrative post at Oakland University, according to the OU trustee who expects to begin negotiations on Russi's new contract as early as this week.

"The board has seen Dr. Russi on the job for 15 months," said trustee Rex E. Schlaybaugh. "And we liked what we saw."

Schlaybaugh and five other trustees set off shock waves on campus at the regular board

meeting Thursday when they unexpectedly offered the permanent job of president to Russi, who had been interim president since the resignation of Sandra Packard in January 1995.

The agenda made no mention of appointing a permanent president. The resolution authorizing board chair David T. Fischer to extend the offer of the presidency to Russi was handwritten.

The motion was made by trustee Louis Ross and approved 6 to 0. Trustee Howard F. Sims abstained from voting and trustee David Handelman was absent.

At least one official, speaking

on the condition of anonymity, said the board had violated its own procedures and predicted a "firestorm of protest."

Offering the permanent job to Russi was not totally unexpected, according to Jane L. Briggs-Bunting, a journalism professor and chair of the OU Rhetoric, Communication & Journalism Department. "Bumers (about Russi's appointment) have been flying around campus for months," she said.

"The board didn't break the law," said Briggs-Bunting, who is also an attorney. "It side-stepped

The OU chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Friday issued a press release congratulating Russi on being offered the job, but condemning the process in which it was extended.

"We wish him (Russi) success in the challenges that lie ahead, and (we) look forward to working with him," the release said. "Nevertheless, we deplore the process by which the offer was made. By neglecting to consult with the various constituencies that make up the university, the Board of Trustees has shown a regrettable lack of respect for academic tradition

at this institution, which they are charged with safeguarding."

Like other members of the OU community, AAUP had expected to have some input in selecting a new president. It, along with other groups, were part of a formal search committee that was part of a national recruitment drive for applicants.

That search was called off, however, and the committee disbanded, after Oakland Circuit Judge Gene Schmeitz ruled the search had to be conducted in compliance with Michigan's Open Meetings Act.

Insisting that qualified applicants would be reluctant to apply unless granted some degree of confidentiality, at least in the early stages, the board of trustees said it would not continue the search. Trustees said they would wait for either a ruling by the Michigan Court of Appeals or a new law from the state Legislature that allowed some degree of confidentiality for applicants.

The appeals court has not made any ruling, and the Legisla-

ture has not passed — or shown any indications of passing — any new laws.

After 15 months, the board decided to act, said trustee Schlaybaugh. "With applicants, all the board would have (as a basis for selecting a president) is a resume, recommendations and interviews. With Dr. Russi, we saw how he actually performed. We saw enrollment rise, we saw construction in progress and we saw a sense of community developing."

Asked why the board didn't list the selection of a new president on the agenda and then vote to offer the job to Russi, Schlaybaugh said, "We could have done that, but that's not the way the motion came up."

Russi, who came to OU in 1993 from Drake University, said being offered the top administrative position was a vote of confidence. Removing the term "interim" from his title will enhance his ability to negotiate with area businesses and industry on partnerships that would provide more opportunities for students.

## Crisis pregnancy center hosts info night

The Crisis Pregnancy Center of Rochester will introduce the community to its services at a special program at 7 p.m. Monday, April 22.

The center's Information Night will be at Mendowbrook Christian Church on Walton Boulevard,

just east of Adams Road, in Rochester Hills.

The Crisis Pregnancy Center at 426 West University in Rochester is a non-profit organization. A member of the local Community Outreach Resource Exchange (CORE), it works toward helping

people involved in a crisis pregnancy. Its staff works to encourage Christian-oriented attitudes toward sex and pregnancy.

The center provides several free services. These include pregnancy testing, peer counseling, a childbirth and infant care class for expectant single mothers, and support groups.

Support groups include Young Mothers, Post-abortion and Women's Issues. The Women's Issues class is for women suffering from past or present sexual abuse.

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