

OU hires Russi as president, despite protests

BY SANDRA ARMBRISTER

OAKLAND COUNTY EDITOR

Despite an hour of protests from faculty members, the Oakland University Board of Trustees approved 5-0 a contract naming Gary D. Russi as the fifth president, ending his interim status.

Russi's contract is for a term of five years, with a salary of \$150,000, a car and other benefits commensurate with administrators.

Shoppers through the appointment was Lewis Russi, of Bloomfield Hills, who later resigned from the board. Also resigned from the board. Also resigning from the board. Also resigning from the board.

James Sharp of Detroit and Howard Sims of Bloomfield Hills, who had opposed naming Russi president at April board meeting. Sharp had criticized



Gary Russi, President

the move last month, but voted with the majority at that time. After his approval, Russi told the board that they wouldn't be disappointed in him. "Thank you for your confidence in me."

To the standing-room-only audience, composed largely of staff members, he said: "I'm very honored to serve with you. Together we can get it done."

The appointment brought a storm of protest due, according to many faculty members who spoke Thursday, to the "process" by which the appointment was made — without a national search and without consulting staff members.

Many asked that the decision be delayed until consultations could be made. Urging that the board be withdrawn was Barry Winkler, professor of business administration, who presented the board with a petition signed by 107 faculty members. Later, controversy erupted over whether department heads had told faculty members not to sign the petition.

Among those protesting the appointment was Garrick B. Landberg, who on Thursday was completing one year of service as a student liaison to the board. Noting that students should have been consulted, Landberg said he was "tough of guard, along with the rest of the community."

"I don't want to be taught by a faculty that feels slighted," said the junior history major.

James Huggins, professor of journalism and mass communication, called the appointment "a how to academic freedom and Constitutional freedom of speech." She said she would be speaking to the Oakland County prosecutor regarding possible

violations of the Open Meetings and Freedom of Information acts, as well as "exploiting off the board legal options."

In a later interview, Briggs Bunting said there is an ongoing complaint in regard to three previous dean searches, when it was thought there were secret meetings. She noted that the search for a new vice president of academic affairs should be done in public.

Anything that could be taken over Russi's appointment could be a lawsuit, it's unfortunate. It's not something we want to have to do."

Briggs Bunting said the OU board was "incapable of having to admit" the need to meet publicly, but she added that Russi appeared to be "entirely" to those issues, Russi, according to Huggins, could have been a "hero" had he insisted "let's have an internal search... no one else would have been a candidate, but there would have been a process."

During the meeting, Russi was called an excellent selection by

education professor Ronald Cramer, but Cramer said, "the faculty wants to be heard."

Cramer added that the board should trust and consult staff members, and with humor, he added, "Occasionally we have our fangs, but we seldom bite, unless, of course, it's a contract year."

Sharing the sentiments of other staff members, Brian Murphy, associate professor of English and director of the honors college, said he had "wide and enthusiastic support" for Russi, but he "disagreed the board" by which he was chosen.

He asked rhetorically, "How much more would it be if we were the other way around?"

Of concern to Norman Tripley, professor and head of the physics department, was that Russi's appointment appeared to be part of an ongoing pattern.

Carron Owens, special instructor in the school of education and human services, accused the board of violating its equal opportunity rules, which would allow others to apply.

post of associate vice president, Enrollment Management, and director, Administrative Services.

SCHOOLS School of Engineering and Computer Science opened MICAR, the Michigan Center for Automotive Research.

DECEMBER Board of Trustees approved final plans for \$28 million Recreation and Athletic Center. OU hosted the first in a series of quarterly government relations forums.

JANUARY 1995 School of Education and Human Services named Norman Tripley as new director of the American Coordinating Center for Beginning School Math. Russi delivered "State of the University" address with the theme, "Quality, Quality, Quality."

FEBRUARY Water enrollment increased almost seven percent.

MARCH/APRIL Board approved a new \$1.3 million food court and food service contract.

MAY The National Institutes of Health awarded \$1 million to Oakland University to help develop the use of the university's prepared \$3.4 million animal care laboratory in the new Science and Engineering Center.

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