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College students make plea for better communication

By DIANE LAW

During a break from speeches and seminars, a group of students gathered in the lounge Saturday afternoon at Oakland University Center.

When asked why they were there, they agreed that Brian Raymond of Michigan State University summed it up well.

"We hope to get communication going with different schools to work out problems that all schools have."

Judy Layne of Western Michigan University added that she was interested in seeing whether schools would unite to support an idea.

"In matters affecting student interest, we can work better together."

Lee Hobria, also from Western Michigan University, said she would like to get new ideas to offer to Western that other schools might have.

COMMUNICATION. Cooperation. Learning together.

That's what Oakland University's first annual "awareness conference" was all about.

Approximately 60 representatives from Michigan's colleges and universities attended the three-day seminar on the Rochester campus entitled "Students Governments In Michigan Higher Education: Where do you fit in?"

Concerned with lack of communication and flow of ideas among campuses throughout the state, the OU Congress (student governing body) initiated the conference to provide student government leaders a chance to exchange ideas and discuss problems facing Michigan colleges and universities.

OU Congress President John Lawton and Congress Ombudsman Tom Hawn, organizers of the program, agreed that the major problems facing the state's higher learning institutions are:

- Lack of organization on a statewide level as well as on the school level.
- Lack of cooperation among schools.
- Inadequate funding for Michigan's universities.

According to Lawton and Hawn, it's not that Michigan schools have purposely stayed out of contact with one another but no one has made any effort to open up lines of communication. They felt that by working together, state campuses could conserve their limited resources and join in pressuring the Legislature for more state aid for universities.

"It's an exciting new concept," said Lawton. "I feel it has a lot of potential, and I hope it's the start of a viable force for positive change in this state."

"I want to emphasize that this is a very positive thing, not a radical thing. We're trying to work within the system."

Getting the conference together was made easier with the cooperation and support received from the OU administration, said Lawton. "The administration deserves a lot of credit, particularly the president's office, which helped us line up speakers, and Dr. James Pequetie, director of student organizations and activities, who advised us and put in a lot of time and effort."

Along with workshops and seminars covering such topics as student-administration liaisons, student unionization and group motivation, the conference included speeches by U. S. Rep. Donald Riegle (D-Flint) and William Merrill, former associate special Watergate prosecutor.

HIGHLIGHTING the program was keynote speaker Secretary of State Richard H. Austin.

Incorporating the "Where do you fit in?" theme of the conference in his speech, Austin compared the responsibilities and roles of statewide government to that of student government.

He encouraged students to keep abreast of current news, to combat apathy by becoming involved and to take their roles in student government seriously.

"The strength and vitality of a nation must come from its people. If we are to overcome obstacles, it depends on you. Experience in student government should prepare you for the future and to make valuable contributions. Your involvement will affect public service."

"I want to encourage you not only to continue your work in student government but to continue through with the real thing."

Austin viewed the weekend program as "a very innovative type of conference."

He hoped his address to the students gave them a greater realization of "the importance of taking advantage of their experience in student government in deciding on how best to impact on and serve in established government of every level."

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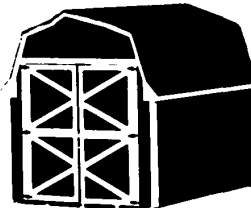
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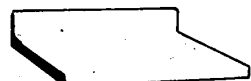
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