

Champagne tells panel: OU needs money

By Tim Richard staff writer

Joseph Champagne was emphatic about Oakland University's top priority.

"Senator, if I had \$5 million more, about \$3.8 million would immediately go to (new) faculty to reduce the student-faculty ratio from 22-1 to 18 or 19-1," the OU president told a state Senate Appropriations subcommittee.

"Our primary weakness is insufficient numbers of faculty," Champagne told the panel headed by Sen. William Sederburg, R-East Lansing.

OU, LIKE the other 14 four-year colleges and universities across the state, is slated for a flat 5.4 percent increase in state aid in Gov. James J. Blanchard's fiscal 1987 budget.

Champagne argued that the Rochester Hills-based university should get more for two simple reasons:

- During the last decade, while college enrollment statewide has shrunk 11.4 percent, OU's has grown 7.7 percent.
- Since the recession began in fiscal 1980, college funding changes have been pretty much at a flat rate. Result: OU's student-teacher load is the highest in the state.

Repeatedly Champagne used terms like "seriously underfunded," "seriously disadvantaged" and "unfair."

OU's testimony came near the end of an afternoon of testimony in the second set of hearings held by Sederburg. A Senate staff member, asked privately if any other colleges paint



Joseph Champagne

ed such grim pictures, smiled, "Oh, yes. All."

CHAMPAGNE, Gov. James J. Blanchard and many state officials agree in theory on the answer to some money woes: program-driven formula funding, rather than flat increases.

Blanchard's budget message revealed that state school officials are working on such a formula and had suggested one to his office. But in a cryptic remark that hinted at internal disagreement, the governor said "more work" is needed and opted for this year's 5.4 percent hike.

In the fiscal year that started last Oct. 1, the state gave OU \$27.4 million plus a \$500,000 cut of a \$25 million state research fund.

This year Blanchard proposed \$28.0 million plus \$500,000 for research. Champagne asked for a total of \$32.8 million.

Enrollment is expected to rise to 9,040.

OU's current state aid is \$3,011 per student, nearly \$400 below the state average. Champagne asked to be raised to the average, if not immediately, then gradually over a period of years.

SEDERBURG voiced his suspicion that big appropriations increases would allow most universities to hold down tuition rather than for other priorities.

That was when Champagne said his first priority was adding more instructors to a faculty that has 379 full-timers and 177 part-timers.

Sederburg, whose district includes the Michigan State campus, asked about OU's image as an affluent school in the heart of Oakland County's high-technology boom district.

"Seventy percent of our students work," Champagne replied. "Many take five years to earn their degrees."

He was supported by Wilma Blesso, OU vice president for student affairs. "Our students can afford the tuition, but at enormous sacrifice. Our average age is 28 years. These are not 18-year-old silk-stocking students."

Moreover, said Champagne, OU's enrollment of nearly 9,500 full-time equated students translates into a head count of 12,000, requiring more overhead expenditures on counselors and parking lots.

Current undergraduate tuition for Michigan residents is \$1,705. Champagne said there would probably be an increase for the fall semester, "but it won't exceed the governor's 4.3 percent ceiling."

WHILE OU ranks with the smaller regional schools in terms of faculty teaching loads and space per student, Champagne said it deserves to rank in the "Big Five" in terms of

its research.

His charts showed OU ranks with the University of Michigan, Wayne State, MSU and Michigan Technological University in terms of state and private research grants generated.

Asked what programs would be enhanced in the year ahead, Champagne cited:

- Computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing — \$400,000.

- Financial management information systems — \$300,000.
- Labor education and economic development — \$150,000.
- Academic computers — \$400,000.

Despite his tough questioning, Sederburg publicly praised Champagne's management and OU's contributions to the state's economic recovery through the Oakland Technology Park.



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OCC president ties to help industry sell goods in Orient.

By Tim Richard staff writer

An educator who spent a decade in Japan as a social worker now wants to help Michigan industrialists sell goods in the Orient.

"We're exploring joint sponsorship of a program for small businesses who want to go into the export business," Oakland Community College President R. Stephen Nicholson told trustees recently.

Nicholson said he is exploring with Macomb Community College setting up such a program. He spoke last month to a luncheon group of administrators and business people on Macomb's South Campus.

THE OCC president speaks fluent Japanese, collects Oriental art and can even write poetry in Japanese literary styles.

He became president of the four-campus institution last year as the state of Michigan renewed its efforts to build up exports to — as well as imports from — Japan. Meanwhile, this week state Commerce Director Doug Ross and Labor Director Elizabeth Howe are in Japan on such a mission.

"We need to place more emphasis on knowing who our neighbors are," Nicholson contends. "It's rather amazing to me that the colleges in Michigan have been so slow to pick up all of the opportunities to begin to

qualify people for jobs in these international areas.

"They are excellent jobs, they're fulfilling jobs, but they're jobs that require that we speak other languages."

HE WENT ON: "We can't allow ourselves to be shut up by novice reporters and novice senators and representatives who go down for three days and come back and tell us what is going on. It takes more time than that."

The role of community colleges, Nicholson said, can be to help business people make the transition from local to international markets.

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