

OU: commuter school asks research status

It should be ranked with the big research universities. Instead it is looked at as a commuter school, a regional university, and is shorted on library space and laboratories.

It has no "big-time" athletic teams. But students think their instructors are accessible, well prepared and doing a good job of teaching.

That's the profile of Oakland University which emerges from its own self-study for accreditation purposes. At 32 years of age, OU has 832 faculty and more than 12,000 students.

But it suffers from "a lack of recognition commensurate with (its) achievements," in the words of Sheldon Appleton, review coordinator.

OU IS DUE for a visit March 15 from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. That's when eight consultant-evaluators — presidents, deans and department heads from mid-sized, middle American universities — will be on the Rochester campus to inspect its operations.

Appleton, of Birmingham, joined OU's political science department in 1980 and now is associate provost of undergraduate studies. He is coordinating the self-study, whose work is being done by 15 major committees and subcommittees.

The North Central team will use the self-study as a blueprint in deciding whether OU is accredited for another 10 years and what improvements to recommend.

OU's job, dating back to 1966, is "an emphasis on academic quality concentrating on . . . a broad liberal education (to) . . . non-elite students, and an institutional willingness to render appropriate scholarly, cultural and public service," Appleton wrote.

THE UNIVERSITY shows frustration, however, at its lack of recognition as a research institution.

In value of grants received, OU stands behind the big three and Michigan Tech, but well ahead of such regional universities as Eastern Central, Western and Northern Michigan.

But OU doesn't get the kind of state appropriations voted to the research schools. "These limitations, in turn, contribute to an erosion of morale among the faculty and staff," Appleton wrote.

Other "concerns" in OU's self study: Library collections and computer support are inadequate. Classroom space is short, and laboratory equipment isn't up to par "in a high technology era."

Strong and well-publicized efforts to attract minorities — faculty, staff and students — haven't

reached their goals.

STUDENTS SEEM to like the place, the study group found. Some 84 percent of undergraduates agreed with the statement that "most professors are well prepared for the classes they teach." OU graduate students gave faculty even higher marks.

More than 80 percent of undergraduates and 87 percent of graduates were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with teaching and less than 4 percent "dissatisfied," a better showing than in most comparable institutions.

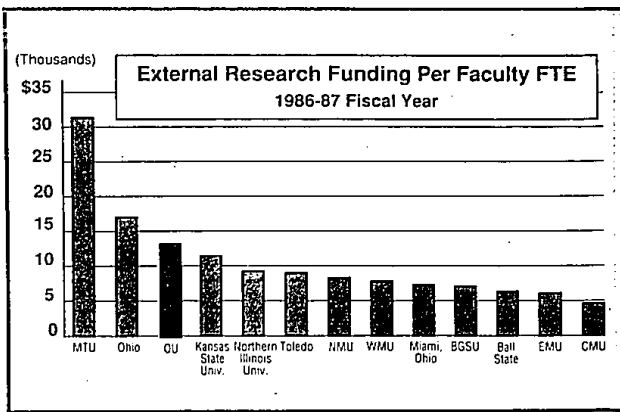
The OU student is likely to be a "first generation in college" person. Forty percent of undergraduates transferred from other schools, usually community colleges.

"About a fourth are 25 or older, and over 40 percent work more than 20 hours a week," Appleton reported. The results: no major sports, fraternally or sorority activities.

Student advising was seen as a soft spot, but Appleton noted "a considerable improvement" from 1978-87.

A STRONG spot, the self-study showed, is faculty and student public service.

OU plays a strong role in southeastern Michigan's economic life, doing consulting for auto companies and offering short courses on how to do business and China. And it has been a catalyst in the development of the Oakland Technology Park, a nationally known high technology development.



Oakland University faculty attract more external research funding than most other Michigan University and published by OU.

Another bright spot, they found, was OU's advancement of culture through the Meadow Brook Festival, Theatre and Art Gallery and Meadow Brook Hall "among the premier cultural attractions in the state."

Students sponsor blood drives, volunteer in nursing homes and youth facilities, and assist the poor and elderly with tax returns.

THE self-study team found: 90 percent have published articles. Half have published books. More than three-fourths have published within the past two years. Many faculty serve on governing and editorial boards of scholarly groups, Appleton wrote.

Fessler tapped own Senate fund for county race

Richard D. Fessler dipped heavily into his state Senate campaign fund to pay for his unsuccessful bid for Oakland County prosecutor last Aug. 2.

Fessler, in the middle of his second four-year Senate term, spent a bit more than \$42,000 in seeking the prosecutor nomination. He was elected to the Senate in 1986 to a term that ends in 1990.

His Fessler for Prosecutor Committee received more than \$26,000 — or 63 percent of the total — from his Citizens for Fessler Committee in Lansing.

Fessler, R-Union Lake, ran last in a four-way contest for the Republican nomination.

who spent \$238,000 in his bid to succeed L. Brooks Patterson on the Republican ticket. Thompson spent less than \$42,000 in outdistancing the Democratic contender in the Nov. 8 election. He was sworn in Jan. 1.

Fessler, a last-minute entry in the primary, was a surprise candidate and raised few big contributions in his bid for prosecutor. Most came from friends, Lansing contacts and legislative colleagues.

Some prominent Democrats kicked in \$50 apiece — former House Speaker Gary Owen and Rep. Curtis Hertel, chair of the House Transportation Committee, with whom Fessler worked on public transportation and road tax bills. Robert Naftaly, former state budget director, was listed as giving \$100.

Nature group meets tonight

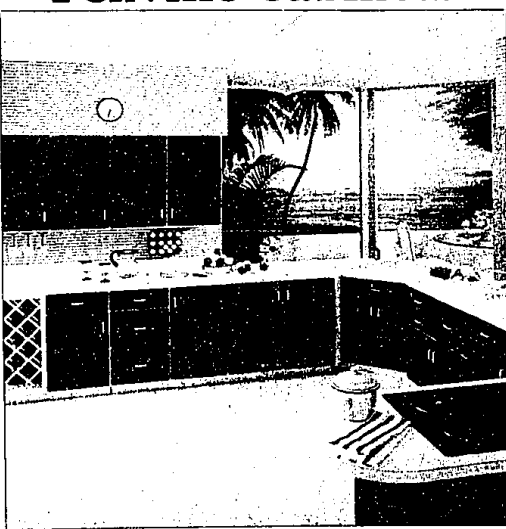
The Nature Conservancy, a state environmental protection group, will hold a general informational meeting at 7:30 tonight at Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills. It is free and open to the public.

TNC's 25-minute documentary film, "The Garden of Eden," will be shown. TNC state director Tom Wolwode will show slides of TNC nature preserves.

TNC has purchased, for \$147,500, about 130 acres west of Elizabeth Lake in Waterford Township with one of the last old-growth oak forests in southeastern Michigan, rescuing it from potential residential development.

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