

New head named for OCC campus

BY RALPH R. ECHTINAW
STAFF WRITER

English literature aficionados will be happy to learn that one of their own has become president of Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills. The job pays \$83,000 a year.

West Bloomfield resident George Keith, whose specialty is 17th century English literature, was named campus president by the college board of trustees Thursday. He was scheduled to begin his new job Friday.

"George is a very very bright guy," said college spokesman George Cartsonis. "He's a very enjoyable guy to talk to. He's got a good personality. I think he's well suited to that campus."



George Keith

Formerly the Orchard Ridge director of academic services, Keith replaces interim president George Mergner, who will continue as the campus director of administrative services. The immediate past president is Daniel Jackson, who was promoted to vice chancellor.

Complementing his OCC duties, Keith has also been the straw that stirs the drink in the West Bloomfield Library's book-discussion club for more than a decade. "He really does a community service here," said library director Clara Bohrer. "His sessions are very well attended and he does a great job. He has quite a following. When he reviews a book we can't keep it on the shelf."

Keith, 50, started with OCC in 1967 as an English teacher at Orchard Ridge. Two years later he was named department chairman. In 1984 Keith became the dean of

academic services at the Royal Oak campus. From 1989 to 1991 he was also the executive dean of academic services for the whole college.

Keith moved back to Orchard Ridge as dean of academic services last January.

Keith earned his bachelor's degree in English from the University of Detroit in 1964, his master's degree from U-D in 1966 and his doctorate from Wayne State University in 17th century English literature in 1990.

Keith is married and has three children.

The Orchard Ridge campus is one of OCC's largest with 7,000 students, representing 23.5 percent of total enrollment (30,000). Orchard Ridge students are the youngest in OCC with an average age of 27 years.

Bouchard berates Kalkaska closing

In Kalkaska, the teachers union and school officials held a rally to bash state government for the early closing of local schools.

In Lansing, the state Senate last week fired back by passing a bill to enable a state financial manager to take over the northern Michigan district.

"A grave disservice to the school children... an affront to the citizens of Michigan," Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham, said of Kalkaska's action, which included a rally and public relations campaign.

As chair of the Senate Education Committee, Bouchard sponsored the amendment to the

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1978 school code, which goes to the House. It would add failure to operate schools for 180 days to the list of reasons the state may take over a local district. The Senate agreed, 36 to one.

"The most irresponsible action I've seen in 20 years," said Michigan Education Association lobbyist Al Short.

Kalkaska has a budget of \$8.8 million, but local officials claim a shortfall of \$1.5 million.

Rather than cut programs, they chose to close 40 days early.

Bouchard argued that when Kalkaska's postclosing spending on retirement and unemployment compensation was figured in, the actual deficit was a manageable \$300,000 to \$400,000. With \$1.2 million in new revenue due next year because of a natural gas pipeline, Bouchard said, the district could borrow against it and balance its budget

both years. Bouchard said the district gave teachers 6 percent increases for three straight years and opened a new building, too.

Kalkaska levies a property tax rate of 27 mills, 22 percent below the state average of 34.6 mills. Voters repeatedly rejected 7-mill proposed hikes.

The Kalkaska rally was highlighted by Keith Geiger, former Livonia math teacher who now is president of the National Education Association and prominent in the Democratic Party. "Michigan's archaic and inadequate system of school finance — that's the problem," said Geiger.

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