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OCC student reps link up with board

BY RALPH R. ECHTINAW
STAFF WRITER

Oakland Community College administrators have embarked on a project to establish a link between the student bodies at OCC's five disparate campuses with the seven-member board of trustees that runs the college.

Think of it as a human fiber-optic cable that will join everyone together through a good, old college try into one big happy community.

"I think it's a great idea," said OCC Chancellor Patsy Fulton. "After all, students are what OCC is all about, and one of the best ways to keep the college responsive to their needs is to have direct student participation in the college's governing authority, the board of trustees."

The project, begun by the board of trustees, took human form last month when five students were named representatives of their respective campuses. Scott Vereen of Rochester Hills now represents the Auburn Hills campus, Claudette Harris of Detroit the Southfield campus, Paul McCullough of Highland Township the Waterford campus and Sahara Zora of Oak Park the Royal Oak campus.

The Farmington Hills campus will be covered by one of OCC's non-traditional students, Southfield resident Tyiame Brown, 39, an already successful mother of three who will also speak for the entire 30,000-member student body at future board meetings.

OCC board Chairman Dave Hackett said it's high time the students had a representative when trustees gather. "I think it's something we should have done a long time ago," he said. "We don't know exactly how it's going to work. If anyone can make it work, (Brown) can."

These five nascent facilitators were chosen from a group of 17 students who applied for the jobs. They are each expected to network with leaders of student groups on their respective campuses, then meet with each other every other week to decide what matters should be brought to the attention of the board of trustees.

Their first project, Brown said, is a survey of students to see what OCC issues they're concerned about. Survey results are expected no later than Dec. 7.

"I'm concerned about the future of OCC," Brown said. "I want it to be there for my children."

Brown and her husband, James Anthony Brown, have been in business since 1978. Together they have owned a jewelry store, a brokerage firm and now a hair salon. Professionally, Brown has worked as a commodity broker, account executive and insurance agent. Currently she's a substitute teacher at Oakland Technical Center and a reservation sales service specialist at United Airlines.

Formerly a University of Detroit student, Brown switched to OCC because "U-D was too expensive for me.

OCC, she said, "has the flair of a larger university" and is a terrific place to get an education.

Among Brown's ideas for OCC's future is to get teachers and students together in social settings. Although the camaraderie between faculty and students is already strong, Brown said, a greater bond may form if they get together over dinner or something and talk about such things as sports or television programs.

Working together: *Southfield resident Tyiame Brown (center) became Oakland Community College's first student liaison to the board of trustees after she was sworn in last month. Here Brown enjoys a moment with (from left) student Sahara Zora and trustee Janice Simmons.*

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