



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN BROWNE  
New leader: Gary Russi is the third president of the 1990s.

## Growth, Russi put OU on a new path

BY SANDRA ARMBURSTER  
OAKLAND COUNTY EDITOR

Two forces are steering Oakland University toward the 21st century: unprecedented growth and new president, Gary D. Russi.

That's the general assessment of those who manage, teach and study at the university.

### OU'S FUTURE

But, that expansion has come with its own share of growing pains, they agree.

"Oakland University sat still for so long," said Susan Forgan, president of UAW Local 1925 which represents 250 clerical/technical staff there. "Now it's a boom time. It will make OU a better place, but they have to think of the people, too."

First the growth.

Impact of the 1996-2005 Strategic Plan is becoming evident on campus with a science and engineering building to open this April, general renovations throughout the university, a recreation center, more on-campus housing and classrooms, and a recently announced state grant for a business building. The Oakland Center, a gathering spot for students, will be renovated to make it more functional and new has a new food court.

Oakland's "changing image means the university no longer looks like some buildings stuck in the lawn," said Susan Aldrich, assistant vice president for capital planning and design.

These brick and mortar improvements would be just so much sand if it weren't for curricular changes. Some of those changes can't be contained within brick walls. Distance learning programs, for example, are now in place by which students can study across the country and internationally in Europe. And virtual reality technology is bringing an art gallery in Russia to campus. Technological innovations for an improved learning environment, are all designed to produce a "much improved graduate," Russi said.

Beyond all that, said communications professor Shea Howell, is the need to get students "thinking about the world in imaginative ways" for the 21st century.

To help make Oakland continue to grow, OU will continue to "plead its case in Lansing" and seek grants and private gifts by touting its graduate programs and research efforts, Russi said. Rex Schlabach, chairman of the OU board of trustees and a Birmingham resident, said it will take more grants before the university's research programs — significant in the biological sciences as well as auto fields — are recognized as on a level with Michigan State University or Wayne State.

Agreeing is chemistry professor Paul Tomboulion. "We're not funded well," he said, adding that with better funding, the university could

See FUTURE, A7

Oakland University opened its doors in 1957 with plans to become the "Harvard of the Midwest." But in the last two decades it has often been confused with Oakland Community College. Here is a look at what the university and its new leadership are doing to manage its unprecedented growth and raise awareness of the doctoral institution in our back yard.

# University lobbying for bigger share of the pie

BY TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

Oakland University is attempting to emerge from the pack of regional universities to a place closer to the top of the prestigious list.

President Gary Russi has told lawmakers OU deserves to be reclassified as a "doctoral" university, with Michigan Tech and Western Michigan.

"OU has grown from a relatively small, little-known university in northern Oakland County to a major force in the region," said Russi, citing its Rochester address in Michigan's high-tech corridor near Chrysler

## OU AND THE LEGISLATURE

Technology Center and Oakland Technology Park.

Enrollment in master's and doctoral programs has soared 26 percent since 1990. It offers doctoral degrees in four areas, more than enough to qualify for Carnegie Foundation ranking as a doctoral university.

But a Carnegie upgrading wouldn't automatically mean more state money because key lawmakers are wary of tying funding to a Carnegie ranking — or any other formula.

"We are equally concerned that OU is the only growing public university not to receive a special (state aid) adjustment in recent years," Russi told lawmakers. "As a result, we rank 15th (of 15) in net percentage increases in state appropriation in both five-year and 16-year comparisons."

Russi last year asked for another \$5 million tied to OU's growth and graduate school emergence.

"The Oakland County delega-

tion is trying to do that," said Democratic Sen. Gary Peters of Bloomfield Township. "The Detroit delegation is very effective in lobbying for Wayne State University. There's no question OU is a major institution. We have to become a very aggressive delegation."

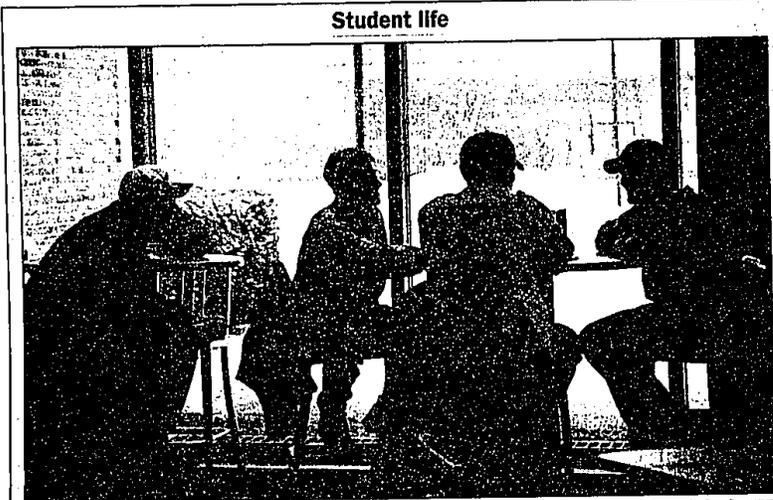
Republican Sen. Mike Bouchard of Birmingham agreed. "We in the Oakland County delegation are doing more to try to assist OU in Lansing. I've tried to take the lead to show OU's impact on change, on the public it's serving, on graduates who stay in the community."

Reps. Penny Crissman, R-Rochester, and Nancy Quarles, D-Southfield, have met Russi and are giving him a sympathetic ear. "I think they'll make it (doctoral status) — they should be there now," said Crissman.

Most Oakland politicians are resigned to being a permanent "donor" county — getting back less for roads, schools, the community college and the university than they send in taxes. But they do intend to get a better deal, starting with OU.

OU's new lobbyist is Rochelle Black, formerly on Gov. John Engler's communications staff.

See LEGISLATURE, A7



On campus: Since 90 percent of OU's students commute to the Rochester Hills campus from nearby suburbs, most socialization occurs between classes at places like the Oakland Center shown here.

## Oakland stepping up to Division I

BY CHRIS MAYER  
STAFF WRITER

It's time for a change. No, make that a quantum leap.

Oakland University is making the extraordinary step from Division II to Division I athletics. The move became reality Feb. 6 when the OU Board of Trustees approved upgrading the university's athletic program from NCAA Division II to Division I-AA.

It's a bold move for the budding Rochester-based university, one that has drawn ample opposition. But most embrace the decision from the student body all the way up to OU President Gary Russi.

According to Athletic Director Jack Mehl, Oakland will formally apply for Division I membership before June 1, 1997. University officials expect Division I-AA competition to begin in the fall of 1999, undoubtedly in a new league since OU will no longer compete in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. The Midwestern Cities Conference, which includes the University of Detroit Mercy, or the Mid-

### ATHLETICS

Continent Conference are possibilities.

The Pioneers will be an inactive Division I participant for the next two years while completing a transition period required by the NCAA. This means they can't win any league championships or compete in NCAA postseason tournaments. However, they currently enrolled athletes will lose a scholarship and Oakland will grant an unconditional release to any athlete desiring a transfer during the transition period.

OU is no stranger to success at the Division II level, albeit in relative obscurity. The powerhouse men's swim team is the three-time defending Division II national champion and Oakland's women swimmers earned five straight national championships before capturing runner-up honors the last two years.

The men's and women's basketball teams continue to post 20-win seasons and men's soccer coach Gary Parsons has led the Pioneers to the national finals



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HOFFMEYER

Ruffing it: Guard Courtney Ruffing (5), shown here during the Pioneers' 81-50 women's basketball win over Gannon University Thursday night, is one of many affected by the move to Division I-AA.

The move means more scholarship athletes at Oakland. Add in a state-of-the-art recreation and athletic center, which is scheduled to be completed by the fall of

1998, and OU strengthens its ability to enhance its reputation, increase its fan base, and attract more attention and even better athletes.

"It's a good move, it really is," said senior Todd Covert, who prepped at Orchard Lake St. Mary's and plays on the men's golf team. "It gives the athletes an opportunity to play some of the bigger schools, go to the bigger tournaments and travel to places like say California and Texas. As a Division II school, that's something you might not be able to do."

Another Oakland senior soon to finish his collegiate career is swimmer Raffi Karapetian. Karapetian starred at Bloomfield Hills Andover and transferred to OU from University of Southern California, a Division I-A school.

"There's a big difference between a Division I school and a Division II school, athletically," Karapetian said. "It seemed like at the Division I school, and I'm coming from an athletic standpoint only, athletics in general got a lot more recognition from

See ATHLETICS, A8

## Openness

### Judge orders OU vice-presidential search open

BY PAT MURPHY  
STAFF WRITER

Reporters for The Oakland Post were to cover interviews with candidates for the university's second highest position after a circuit judge agreed with the Oakland University campus newspaper's contention the sessions were subject to the Michigan Open Meeting Act.

The ruling by Oakland Circuit Judge Edward Sosnick threw a wrench into plans to hold the interviews in private — something the newspaper contended was contrary to the open meetings act.

Because of the ruling late Friday, OU was required to tell the newspaper the time and location of the interviews and to open the meetings to the public.

"We'll be there," said Heidi R. Hedquist, chief editor of the newspaper and a plaintiff in the motion aimed at the OU administration and the search committee formed to interview prospective candidates and narrow the field before making a recommendation.

"The judge gave us exactly what we asked for," said Hedquist, a senior journalism student at OU who graduated from Troy High School in 1993. "The interviews are in Room 201 at the Hilton (at Detroit Metro Airport) beginning at 6 p.m. The last of the 12 interviews was scheduled for 5 p.m. Sunday."

"We've assigned a reporter," said Hedquist. "And I'll be there in person."

OU President Gary D. Russi, who formed the search committee to screen candidates, was unavailable for comment Friday afternoon. Neither Russi nor OU officials returned phone calls.

That the interviews were conducted at all was a compromise between university officials, represented by Charles A. Duerr Jr., and the newspaper and Hedquist, represented by John N. Ronayne III.

One provision of the open meetings act is public notice of the intended meetings at least 18 hours in advance. Ronayne said his clients agreed to waive that specific provision as long as the interviews were open.

If his clients hadn't waived that requirement, said Ronayne, "the interviews could not have been held."

"We didn't want the interviews canceled," he said. "We just wanted them open to the public. We want the public's business conducted in public."

In the hearing before Sosnick, Ronayne suggested the OU board of trustees was attempting to circumvent open meetings.

The requirement that interviews for top executives at a university had already been established in a number of court rulings and decisions, Ronayne said, included one made in 1995 by another Oakland Circuit Court judge in reference to OU's search for a new

See SEARCH, A7

### The Board

Oakland University is one of 10 universities whose governing boards are appointed by the governor.

Last year Gov. John Engler appointed:

- Henry Baskin, Bloomfield Hills resident and known divorce and entertainment lawyer.
- Dennis Pawtly, Clarkson, Chrysler's executive vice president of manufacturing. OU BA in human resource development in 1982. Director of the OU Foundation in 1993.
- Louis Grech-Cumbo, Novi, director of operations for Powers Distributing, a beverage company.
- Holdovers are:
  - David Doyle, Okemos, a political operative. He was GOP executive director and then party chair until 1995.
  - Rex E. Schlabach, Birmingham, attorney for Dykema Gossett.
  - James Sharp, Detroit, former Flint mayor, now VP of City Management Corp.
  - Ann Nicholson, Grosse Pointe Farms.
  - David Fischer, Troy, president of Suburban Motors.

### History

OU was born in the 1950s as MSU-Oakland, a branch of Michigan State University, and was built on a 1,500-acre estate donated by Matilda R. and Alfred G. Wilson. It soon became OU. A 1977 effort to change the name to Meadow Brook University failed out.

OU has about 14,000 students in 73 undergraduate programs, 27 master's programs, educational specialist and four doctoral programs. It is best known for its engineering links to the Oakland Technology Park and its Meadow Brook Theatre and Music Festival.

<b>Full/Part Time</b>	13,956 total students
53% Full time	47% Part time
<b>Under/Grad</b>	13,956 total students
10,886 undergraduate	3,070 graduate
<b>Male/Female</b>	13,956 total students
36% Male	64% Female

### Where students live

Fall '96  
13,956 students  
2,270 from other areas