

## **2009 Student Liaison Report**

Tawnee S. Milko

Distinguished members of the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff: Thank you for allowing me the honor of representing the students of Oakland University. From a multitude of interactions throughout the year and through some examples, I hope to give as accurate a reflection of their thoughts and feelings as I can.

Students are increasingly proud to be Golden Grizzlies, and rightfully so. As several of our sports teams have captured league titles and seen NCAA playing time, many of their games have had record fan turnouts, and school spirit and morale have rarely been stronger.

Off the field, excitement surrounding the developing William Beaumont School of Medicine is exceedingly prevalent in student sentiments. Many pre-medical students that I have spoken to, in particular, say that it is one of the primary reasons they were drawn to OU. Board projects such as the conclusion of the new Kresge Library Technology Center and several laboratory and classroom renovations have additionally helped students expand the scope of their researching abilities and have enhanced their safety and comfort.

Students have also enjoyed greatly expanded Housing opportunities, and the Honors College, exploding out of its given spatial seams, is preparing to welcome a freshman class of over 200 students next fall. To echo the words of some distinguished university members, it has never been a better time to be a student at Oakland University.

The current economic climate, however, has made this year one of the most difficult for students as well.

This university prides itself on being affordable for all interested in attending, and, indeed, it is with grateful recognition that the students of this school acknowledge the Board and administration for all they have done to contain costs, provide scholarships, and create student job opportunities. But I encourage continual vigilance about this in the future.

As students, it would be tempting but naïve to argue against a tuition increase, given Michigan's dire financial situation and dwindling state appropriations. I ask, however, that the Board please remember the main reason we are all here: to best serve the students of Oakland University. Without them, this school and these positions would not exist.

Many of these very students have expressed significant fears about the fate of their education and way of life in the coming years. I recently acted as the student representative on the Honors College Scholarship Committee. The applications we

received described some of the most talented students with heart-wrenching financial needs. Essays revealed students who were solely responsible for paying for their entire college education, who had severely ill relatives with high medical costs, and whose parents had lost their jobs and were trying to support and educate several children.

Yes, in today's brutally competitive business world, students will likely continue to pay whatever is asked of them for a college education, but at what cost? Is it reasonable to expect students to simultaneously work three or more jobs and parents to sacrifice much of their life savings for an "affordable" college education? Should constant – and legitimate - concerns about how to pay for required classes extract all joy from the learning process?

I humbly suggest that these questions be kept at the forefront of deliberations when considering the extent to which the next fiscal year tuition will be raised.

In conclusion, I, on behalf of Oakland University students, am incredibly grateful for your commitment to this university. A simple thank you is not enough to encompass the immense dedication, time, passion, and concern that you as a Board have shown and continue to show for university betterment and student welfare.

Thank you for considering my words. It has been a great privilege to learn from you and serve with you this year.