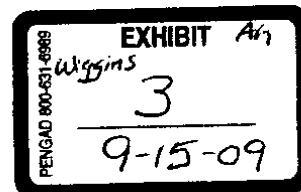




Office of the Dean

School of Education and Human Services
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August 28, 2007

Dear Colleagues:

You may be aware that, for the past four years, we have had a unique special education program as part of the Oakland University learning community. It is a program designed for students with cognitive impairments who are beyond high school age but still eligible for special education services. The original program is operated by Rochester Community Schools and the Oakland University campus has provided an age appropriate setting for these students as they transition into the responsibilities of adult life.

Beginning this September, the program has been expanded with two additional components. First, the Waterford School District will be operating a similar program on our campus for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Second, the School of Education and Human Services has created its own program for students who are no longer affiliated with a public school district but want to continue an academic education.

The students in each of the three programs will be enrolled as Continuing Education students. Although these students are not pursuing a degree, their presence on campus allows the programs to offer something that is not available in other post-secondary programs for students with cognitive disabilities. In addition to an emphasis on community living skills work experiences, these programs provide an academic focus through access to college classes. Another important aspect of these programs is regular contact with age appropriate peers through peer mentoring. Over the past four years, many regular O.U. students have both assisted, and personally benefited from acting as program volunteers. These peer mentors support students in a class, assist them in getting around campus, initiate them in the social life of the university, act as "study buddies" or just offer their friendship.

There are some key people operating these programs and I would like to use this letter to introduce them to you. Many of you may already know Brynn Lawrence, who has been the on-campus facilitator from Rochester Schools for the past three years. She is now joined by Kristen Ashley, the on-campus facilitator from Waterford Schools and Lea VanAmberg, the Director of Oakland University Transitions.

In order for these programs to be successful we are asking for your support. If you are a professor or instructor, we hope you will provide the transition students access to your classes where appropriate. Despite their cognitive impairments, each of these students has shown particular interest in, and knowledge of a variety of disciplines. We are also seeking opportunities for transition students to get work experience through volunteer and paid

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employment on campus. Finally, we ask everyone's help in identifying additional OU students who would be willing to serve as peer mentors for the Transitions students.

If it has not happened already, it is very likely that one or more of the three program leaders will be contacting you in the near future to discuss opportunities you may have available for the Transitions students.

We are proud of the success of the post-secondary transitions program over the past four years and are pleased to be increasing the number of students and the scope of this ground breaking program. It is a real feather in Oakland University's professional hat to be leading the state and country with this type of innovative community partnership to promote learning.

Please feel free to contact me at wiggins@oakland.edu or extension 3095 if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions.

Thank you in advance for your support of this expanded venture.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Wiggins
Associate Dean

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