

Recent alum donates first paycheck to Oakland University

Samantha Wolf (CAS '14) made good on a promise to OU and literally paid it forward.

On Sept. 4, Wolf donated her first paycheck – for \$741.96 – to her alma mater.

“I had committed to it,” Wolf said. “While I was here I had an incredible experience. I not only got scholarships to help me pay for school, but I was able to become super involved on campus and was able to see what being around the students could do for you. Those experiences have helped me get my job and will help me in the future. I felt like I had to show my thanks to OU.”

Wolf, who was hired by Rock Connections in August, graduated in April with a major in communication and a minor in applied leadership skills and international relations. In June, before an audience of the University’s top donors, Wolf had promised to donate her first paycheck to OU.

“Once I get my first real world job, and the paycheck that follows, I hope to be able to donate it to Oakland University to benefit students that need a little help from others,” she said. “I would like to donate my money to start a fund to expand the student union building, the Oakland Center.”

Wolf, a former Honors College stu-

dent, thanked the donors who established her scholarships. “1,422 days,” she said. “That is equivalent to 3 years, 10 months, and 23 days. That is the amount of times that I have been a Golden Grizzly. 1,422 days is also the amount of days that I would not have received if it was not for your generous contributions to Oakland University.”



Through the Donna and Walt Young Study Abroad Endowed Scholarship Fund, Wolf was able to spend 70 days in the Semester At Sea Shipboard program for global study in Morocco, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Malta, France, Spain, Portugal and England. The Donald Hildum Endowed Scholarship in Communication and the numerous alumni scholarships “allowed me to not only devote my time to the community but also to my University.”

On campus, Wolf was an orientation group leader, a member of the Summer Student Campus Corps, travel director on the Student Program Board, student representative on the Student Life Lecture Board, president of the Student Congress and (Cont. on page 2)

SECS outreach programs boost engineering interest in youth

Oakland University’s School of Engineering and Computer Science (SECS) provides a great place for students to learn more about the field of engineering—and not just those admitted into the program.

From camps, to field trips and special “engineering days,” OUSECS has a variety of outreach programs to get children and teens interested in engineering and related fields.

“My favorite part (about outreach) is watching the students get excited about what they’re doing,” said Chris Kobus, director of outreach and associate professor of engineer-

ing. “I used to do a majority of the material, but now I have a staff of students and I get to watch and see the progress of the students. The kids are very happy — it’s a great feeling.”

The hands-on activities started about 4 years ago, when the school started offering general engineering and computer science exploration summer camps.

A relationship began with Pontiac Schools, and gradually, camps expanded from general exploration camps to more focused programs. (Cont. on page 2)

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Student Liaison to the Board of Trustees. Off campus, she was an AmeriCorps representative in the Pontiac Schools, working with children at Michigan School for the Arts.

Being president of Student Congress in her junior year and working on the Oakland Center expansion project stood out among Wolf's campus experiences.

"OU prepared me for anything and everything," Wolf said. "My time at the University may have been short compared to the time that is in front of me -- and I owe everything that is in front of me to OU."

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After positive feedback from the parents and kids, the camps have expanded greatly — providing more options and facilitating an increase from 100 to about 700 attendees in the summer alone.

"From mid June to mid-August, the students are here all day, everyday," Kobus said.



STEM camps take place on OU's main campus, the OUInc business incubator and the Macomb County satellite Anton Frankel Center. OU engineering undergrads and other local engineering students lead the camps, instructing the hands-on activity, which they plan with direction from Kobus.

While the camps benefit the communi-

ty, they also help the program grow. With jobs increasing in the engineering field, more graduates are needed, so gaging students' interest — and indulging and encouraging them in those interests early on — is crucial.

"Around 7th and 8th grade, parents start talking to their kids about what they want to do," Kobus said. "Having an opportunity to come out to a STEM camp — either a focused camp or general exploration camp where they learn a bit of everything — helps kids get acquainted with what the substance is, and get excited because now they get to decide what math and science courses they might take next year, and into high school. If they want to be in the STEM field, they'll need to take a certain pathway to get there, so this both prepares them and lights their fire for the subject."

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) camps focus on hands-on, project-based learning. Students have the opportunity to apply material and themes to real-world situations, through experiments and projects, for a unique learning experience.

Noelle Rossetto, who is home-schooled, found out about STEM camps from her sister. Attending them was enjoyable for her, and the work she did made her more interested in engineering and computer science.

"It was really fun," Rossetto said. "I did a lot of stuff that I haven't done before, and that I honestly didn't think I could do. Making web pages was my favorite, because I liked writing the code. I would definitely come back again."

Rochester Hills resident Kristin Schreck enrolled her children in STEM camps for the first time this summer, and said they will attend again next year.

Abby Schreck, 11, and Nate Schreck, 9, both took part in an Engineering Exploration week and had a great time learning new things.

"I think the most valuable part of the camp was that my kids were able to see a side of science and technology that they don't get a lot of exposure to in school," Schreck said. "The topics were current and relevant, and taught by experts in the field. Lessons were explained to them in a technical way, but in a way they could understand and get excited about and have fun with. The counselors were excellent too, and explained so much about OU's campus during the tours."



Kobus said the camps have continued to grow, and in turn, have boosted enrollment in the OU Engineering and Computer Science Programs.

He said he plans to continue adding more outreach programs each year — from STEM camps to field trips and visits to schools — because of the positive effects they have on everyone involved.

"The whole point is to get more students excited about STEM," Kobus said. "For every student who graduates, there's two or more job openings — we can't possibly fill them all without increasing enrollment. It (STEM) has done quite a bit for our enrollment. Since this program got rolled out a few years ago, our enrollment has almost doubled. From 2009-2014, we've almost doubled the number of students we have. We're growing this year — about 20 percent. You don't see that kind of growth in other units on campus. So what's different? The outreach program. We're getting the name out there. "For more information about the outreach program, visit oakland.edu/ouinc/outreach.

State and National Headlines

WV: State launches "15 to Finish" campaign

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission will launch a "15 to Finish" campaign this fall, an effort aimed at boosting the number of students taking 15 or more credits each semester in order to help them graduate in a timely manner. The campaign, which is underway in at least 15 other states, will involve college administrators, counselors and students.

The Charleston Gazette
August 16, 2014

Michigan League for Public Policy calls for more aid to older adults seeking college education

LANSING (WKZO) -- As more than 750 thousand Michigan college students prepare to start a new year, one group having a much harder time than the rest is older adults looking to expand their horizons. Gilda Jacobs, with the Michigan League for Public Policy, says that the state offers no financial aid grants to attend a public university for those who graduated more than ten years ago. That means older adults looking to remain viable in the job market can find themselves struggling.

"Back when we had the recession era cuts to higher education, several financial aid programs that used to help older students basically disappeared," Jacobs told WKZO. "So, we need to be taking a very hard look at what we need to be doing differently."

A new report from the Michigan League for Public Policy calls for several programs that were eliminated in 2010 to be restored. Jacobs

says that the health of the state's economy depends on keeping workers well trained, so to her, it only makes sense to invest in such programs.

WKZO.com
August 25, 2014

Education Is Worth the Investment

There is no greater financial investment in one's future than a college degree. While this viewpoint has its critics, the reality is the value of a degree has never been greater.

Despite public questions about a degree's worth, the pay gap between college graduates and those without a degree reached a high in 2013, even with the slow recovery from the most severe recession in seventy-five years.

According to new data, based on an analysis of Labor Department statistics by the Economic Policy Institute, Americans with four-year college degrees are not only equipped for a fulfilling adult and professional life but made 98 percent more an hour on average than those without a degree. And, the wage gap is only increasing, up from 89 percent five years ago, 85 percent a decade earlier, and 64 percent in the early 1980s.

College graduates are also more likely to be employed full-time than their less-educated counterparts, and are less likely to be unemployed, 4 percent versus 12 percent, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center.

The Huffington Post
September 4, 2014

OR: "Pay It Forward" financing fails to move forward

The Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission determined earlier this month that launching "Pay It Forward" college financing is not a top priority, compared with boosting state financial aid and operating support to public college and university campuses. Pay It Forward would allow students to attend college tuition-free in exchange for paying back a predetermined, fixed share of their income for an extended period after leaving college. Nevertheless, the commission will receive a report next month outlining how a Pay It Forward pilot program would work and its costs. Proponents have estimated that a pilot program consisting of 4,000 participants would cost between \$5 million to \$20 million annually for more than 20 years.

The Oregonian
August 15, 2014

Federal college-ratings could hurt minorities, Vandy professor says

The idea may seem reasonable enough — ensure that federal student aid is directed to colleges that deserve it.

But one year after President Barack Obama floated a college-ratings system that would grade schools on access, affordability and outcomes such as graduation rates and graduate earnings, the plan continues to find critics in the higher education world.

A main point of contention: If the system emphasizes students' ability to earn degrees, schools that serve higher percentages of African-



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State and National Headlines *CONTINUED*

American or Latino students would be unfairly graded and inadvertently hurt.

WBIR.com
September 8, 2014

Gambling on the Lottery

A growing number of states are using lottery money for college scholarships. But the politically popular lottery funds often fail to live up to their expectations, according to a new report from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

The report breaks down how 11 states have earmarked lottery revenue for higher education. Eight states, mostly in the South, use the money for merit-based scholarships

Lawmakers from both parties are drawn to the alternative funding streams, which are easier to tap for education than raising taxes. And trying to keep college affordable is a noble goal, according to the association.

However, the report describes possible unintended consequences from lottery-funded scholarships. They tend to supplant rather supplement general state support for higher education. And the money regularly does not help the neediest students as much as it does others.

Inside Higher Ed
September 4, 2014