

Launch

President's Message

Dr. Mike O'Neal

August 25, 2010

Good morning and welcome to the launch of a new year. A special welcome to those of you who have joined the OC family since this time last year. It is wonderful to have everyone back from summer activities as we eagerly anticipate the blessings of serving our students and one another.

As we begin Nancy's and my ninth year with this community of believers, I am more optimistic and certain about the future of this University than ever. The academic and spiritual blessings are legion, and the human and fiscal resources are the best in OC's history. Though the world is in a recession, the OC mission is NOT in recession. I have never seen so many grassroots initiatives, collaborations, teamwork, can do attitudes, and exceptional accomplishments! My prayer as I come to work each day is "Lord, don't let me mess this up!"

In every arena there are great things happening on this campus. Pound per pound our students, alumni, faculty, and staff continue to perform at a higher level than their counterparts at other universities in almost every way. Every week I hear reports about our students' and faculty's national and regional achievements, about what good employees they make, and how they serve the community and one another.

I would love to share with you all of the achievements and recognitions of the past year, but time will not allow me to do them justice. I hope you are reading the daily email announcements, Alumni News, Vision, and the public website to learn news about your colleagues and students. We have made a concerted effort over the past several months to improve our internal and external communications. Knowing what one another is doing is so important to being community and to our ability to be good ambassadors for that community. May I encourage you to visit this website

<http://www.oc.edu/president/documents/OCAccomplishmentsedit.pdf> and read the nine pages of accomplishments of this OC community during the just the past year. I am confident you will be astonished. Whenever you can, share that list with others. No doubt we missed items that should be on the list, so as you think of others, please send them to Dr. Garrett or me.

In a few minutes Dr. Garrett will share several academic accomplishments. Let me just mention a few honors, milestones, and accomplishments in other areas that you may have missed over the summer:

- The August graduation marked the tenth anniversary of our very successful and highly respected MBA program. During that time, almost 1,000 students have graduated, with many of those working in the OKC area today. Will you join me in expressing our appreciation to Ken Johnson, Don Drew, Phil Lewis, and all their great faculty and staff. (applause) August also marked the first graduation for of our master's of science in engineering program.**
- Your university was named to the 2009 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll in recognition of its commitment to volunteering, service-learning and civic engagement. OC was cited for a number of community service programs, including our students' work with Western Village Elementary, nursing students conducting health fairs, 350 students participating in "Day in the City" to clean up distressed areas of Oklahoma City, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and at the Capitol Hill Church of Christ, sports and recreation for children with disabilities, Special Olympics, and many others.**
- Wishing Well, in addition to its work in Africa joined a coalition of several other nonprofits to provide relief and rebuild water systems in Haiti following the earthquake.**
- Ten students formed Rwandans4Water and flew to Rwanda this summer to drill water wells in 15 communities. This project will transform the lives of thousands of people of Rwanda that are lacking clean, accessible water. These students created a business plan to develop hundreds of wells in other locations.**
- Our athletic program had an outstanding year, finishing eighth in the nation and first in the Sooner Athletic Conference in the NAIA Director's Cup, which ranks all of the athletic outcomes for the year. More importantly is the amazing academic record of our athletes with 12 of 13 teams having an average GPA above 3.0 (the 13th was 2.97) and the overall GPA exceeding that of the OC student body. Please congratulate our coaches for a banner year.**
- The campus has seen significant improvements this summer. Many facilities such as Language & Literature have been refreshed with new carpet and paint, the new Noble Science wing is completed, there are new seats and carpet in Hardeman Auditorium; the Murcer Baseball Training Facility is under construction; we're in the process of planting more than 1,300 trees throughout the campus, thanks to the indefatigable Pen Woods;**

International Programs is getting a new and spacious home; sidewalks and landscaping have been upgraded; the embarrassing mailboxes have been replaced and expanded to better serve our students; the barn has been completely revitalized inside and out and is now a functional and attractive part of the campus; the assisted living center at Tealridge Manor is almost finished; new lamppost banners have been hung; and even the Phase I apartments have been given a new home!

- **4-Star Debate With General Tommy Franks. The Academy of Leadership & Liberty took 24 young American students to King's Academy in Jordan as guests of King Abdullah, where they pair with 24 bright Middle Eastern students for a week of training, analysis, and debate over the right solution to the Palestinian problem. Let this short video to give you the highlights of that program.**

There have also been a number of exciting initiatives implemented at OC recently and others soon coming off the drawing board.

- **Church Relations is undergoing a major re-commitment. We must serve churches better and encourage them to send their young people to Oklahoma Christian. The Church Demographic Strategic Issue Group under Dr. Goad's leadership and with input from many departments, made many excellent recommendations to strengthen our ties with the Churches of Christ. Dr. Nathan Mellor has jumpstarted the effort as Director of Church Relations. The College of Biblical Studies under the leadership of Dean Alan Martin has taken a renewed role in connecting us with our fellowship. Joining Dr. Mellor and Dr. Martin are Beau Bailey and Dr. Lawrence Murray who will also be spending half of their time helping strengthen OC's connection to churches throughout our region. These men will join the ongoing faithful efforts of Bob Rowley, Kent Allen, Stafford North, and others who have worked voluntarily for many years to keep us close to the churches. Expect great things from this outstanding team. You have already heard about the plans for Quest. Please encourage your congregations to turn out for this great lectureship.**
- **This fall we are welcoming two additional initiatives in the College of Bible—the Center for Global Missions, led by alumnus and missionary Ben Langford, and the renewed emphasis on training quality preachers with alumnus and gifted preacher, Ronnie White.**
- **Another important initiative underway under the leadership of Ron Frost is the branding campaign designed to raise OC's profile among our various constituencies in Oklahoma City, other strategic areas, both on campus and elsewhere. If you've flown into or out of Will Rogers Airport recently,**

I hope you saw our 16 foot sign that greets travelers with the message: “Highest CPA pass rate in state.” That sign and other billboards and media will rotate with messages of other accomplishments that our friends need to know about. Many are contributing to this branding effort.

- I want to make special mention of the excellent work being done by Stephen Eck and Cree Gathright on the Remember OC campaign. They are finding many people who want to exercise their Christian stewardship in ways that favor OC through planned gifts or estate planning. Let me encourage each of us to talk to them about how we might also bless this wonderful place with a portion of what God has blessed us with, as well as introduce them to people who can help OC in this way.

God has blessed this University with an incredibly talented faculty and staff that gets more done with limited resources than any other place I know. The tremendous progress we are experiencing is being accomplished in very difficult times for private, faith-based universities.

I would like to turn from past and ongoing accomplishments and talk briefly about a couple of things on the immediate horizon.

- I am happy to announce today for the first time, that we have completed the funding of the new walking trail that will meander throughout the campus and connect with the city of Edmond’s trails. The trail will not only help to beautify the campus, but will contribute to our fitness initiatives. Will you join me in thanking Neil Arter for his untiring efforts to make that project a reality.
- I know we are all eager to hear about this fall’s enrollment. Though it is a few days too early to be certain, it appears that this will be a healthy enrollment, surpassing our earlier projections. Current undergraduate numbers are 508 FTC’s—an increase of 37 (8%) over last year, and 1,894 total enrolled. Graduate headcount is currently 294, or 40 above this time last year. Let’s express our thanks to Dr. Don Drew, Risa Forrester, and their staffs for their great work.

Last spring the University adopted five strategic priorities for the next few years. While these are expressed in general terms, several colleagues are in discussions about specific goals and objectives necessary to accomplish them. I hope every department will set goals to accomplish these priority objectives.

- Nurture teamwork through trust, empowerment, and accountability.

- **Focus resources on mission-centric programs of distinction.**
- **Recruit and retain quality students, and provide high quality student experience.**
- **Strengthen relationships with alumni, community, and Churches of Christ.**
- **Strengthen the financial and human resources.**

I don't know but a fraction of what is in store for this year. I do know this—that the days ahead will be glorious if we remain focused and true to our mission. I truly believe you are the most prepared and mission-centered faculty and staff that Oklahoma Christian has ever been blessed with. Parker Palmer said that “Good teachers teach who they are,” and that describes OC's faculty, but also its staff in the way you serve and conduct your business cheerfully and competently, day in and day out all year long.

And, I believe these many successes are because each of you takes ownership of this sacred place as a steward of God. Ownership and embracing the mission with all our heart, mind, and strength is what it takes to maintain the excellence you have achieved. Thomas Edison said that “Talent comes and goes, but mediocrity accumulates.” My purpose in sharing that quote is not to imply that we are or that any of us aspire to mediocrity, but rather to remind us that Edison is describing the status quo, the power of inertia, the natural state of things if there is no intervention of the will. It is a law of nature that if we relax the quest for excellence, mediocrity will overtake us. I appreciate what Dr. Jim Baird said about you last year, “We are a team – we know God, we love God, we trust Jesus as redeemer, we hold the Bible as supreme truth, God is a real part of this environment. We have each chosen this place and these circumstances for those reasons to devote our lives to this work. We are here to make the reality of the spiritual environment better.”

Let me give you a sample of what I hear frequently about all of you. On Monday, Judy Davis, Director of Residence Life, sent the following email about the move-in on Saturday. “What an awesome day on Saturday!!! There was so much excitement in the air; everyone was pumped to be starting another year; and all those involved in helping our students have such servant hearts. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for pulling off one of the hottest and also one of the best move-in days! Admissions recruited as hard as they could and gathered a wonderful freshmen class; the Greeting Gang volunteers made our guests feel welcome by helping unload those very full cars/trailers/moving vans/U-Haul trucks; Security helped with

information and keeping our areas secure; Physical Plant jumped on every issue that needed addressed; the custodial staff helped keep our areas clean; Jerrod Dean and the grounds crews had this place shining; ConChita Wilkerson is a pro at the unloading zone area; Jessica Estes continued to shuffle and place the walk-in students as they arrived; and my housing staff...they accepted the challenge and they hit it out of the ballpark. I am confident the comments were positive and they helped us remember why we do what we do!”

Wow! That says it all, folks.

There is literally nothing we cannot accomplish with people like that and with God’s continued help. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your service to our Lord and to Christian higher education. OC would not be possible without your sacrifice and your devotion to serve Christ and our students with all the excellence you can muster.

I firmly believe there is a reason that you have been so successful in moving OC to increasing greatness. It is illustrated by a story involving our friend General Tommy Franks. When the World Trade Center was attacked by the terrorists, General Franks was in the air over Europe headed for the Middle East. He received an urgent message from Donald Rumsfeld, the then Secretary of Defense, to return to Washington at once. Rumsfeld asked him two questions: ‘Who do you think is behind this?’ and Franks responded, ‘Bin Laden. Al Queda.’ And his second question to the General was, ‘What are you doing to do about it?’ The greatness at OC—in the past, now and in the future—can be traced directly to the people of OC who when faced with danger, or challenge, or opportunity, ask themselves, ‘What am I going to do about it?’ For those of you who are joining the OC family this year, these are the kind of high octane people with whom you have elected to serve.

The apostle Paul in writing to the Ephesians described well what we are about at OC:

Eph. 4:12-13: “...to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

As long as we believe that and seek God's purposes, we can do all things. I confess to you that I do not pray often enough for OC, its people, its mission, its students, and its influence. Can I encourage us to do that more. In many ways we are preparing for battle with our culture. You may recall in 2 Samuel 5 that before David went into battle against the Philistines, he "inquired of the Lord." And God gave him the victory. As we experience challenges coming our way this year, let's encourage one another to "inquire of the Lord" what we should do about them and to make sure our plans are God's plans. I am so grateful that the Alumni office is calling us to pray for this year on Sunday evening at 7:30-8:30 p.m. in Scott Chapel.

I hope it is evident to you why I am so optimistic about the future.

Let me end where I began, and that is thanking you for being such a marvelous family and community. God has brought us here to do great things! Keep doing what you are doing; take ownership of this University; take bold initiative without fear of failure; keep doing what is right, and God will bless this place beyond all we can see or imagine. You are the best of the Lord's kingdom, and the best hope of our nation and the world. Thank you all for everything you do for Oklahoma Christian; thank you for your love of OC and your commitment to its mission. May each of you have a wonderful and rewarding year—may we hope in the Lord, so that He will renew our strength, so that we will soar on wings like eagles, so that we will run and not grow weary, so that we will walk and not be faint.