

Wednesday, October 7, 2015

Pontiac high school students connect with OU Student Congress

Thirty-six students from Pontiac High School and Pontiac International Technology Academy came to Oakland University at the end of September with great attitudes and curiosity about how college student government works. They left even more inspired.

The Pontiac students, members of their high school student councils, took OU Student Congress office tours, participated in ice-breaker activities and took part in a memorable event planning exercise among the day's activities. The students' advisors were thrilled with this opportunity and say they plan to make it an ongoing tradition.

"Events like this demonstrate a perfect example of combining Oakland University resources with Pontiac student needs. I have no doubt that this relationship between our student government and Pontiac High School and Pontiac International Technology Academy will grow over time," said Robert Maxfield, former dean of the School of Education and Human Services at Oakland and special assistant for the Oakland University/Pontiac Initiative.

Annie Meinberg is an OU senior Elementary Education major and current student liaison the Oakland University Board of Trustees. As former Student Congress president, she helped organize the program and said, "Aside from learning and practicing student government skills, the students from the two high schools had the unique opportunity to come together for the same purpose. These student leaders looked beyond the fact they are rival schools and discovered that they are more effective and creative when they work together. Watching these eager students learn not only from OUSC leadership, but also from each other was a powerful experience. I'm confident that these high school student leaders will take the tools we gave them and transfer them to their own schools to collaboratively create positive change that benefits all students."

Anders Engnell, Sophomore double major in creative writing and mathematics and OUSC Diversity and Inclusion Director who helped coordinate this year's event added, "A Day in the Life of Student Congress was all about imparting student government skills to high school student councils in the Pontiac School District. The event is one of two bi-annual workshops that will be hosted at OU each year. The workshops are a part of the brand-new Pontiac School District Student Government - Oakland University Student Congress Partnership."

All of the participants seem to agree that the most successful part of the program was the first activity of the day: Budget and Judge It. Hypothetically, groups of four students were given \$10,000,000 and asked to plan an event, complete with a budget, timeline, tasklist, and marketing plan. Each group then presented their event to the all of those in attendance.

Thinking big, if these student council members planned high-budget events at OU, we could all expect to see Kanye West and One Direction on campus in the near future!



