

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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Honors College students recognized for ingenuity

This past week, two students in Oakland University's Honors College were recognized for showing exceptional ingenuity outside the classroom. Alexa Ruhfass and Brian Neumeyer each received awards sponsored by Shinola, the Detroit-based company known for its handcrafted products, including watches, bicycles and leather goods.

"Shinola is without doubt an exemplar of ingenuity," said Dr. Graeme Harper, Dean of the Honors College. "As a company they're resourceful, they're inventive and they're creative. It's both appropriate and very exciting that these fabulous student awards are sponsored by such a brilliant company, a company that is based right here in metro Detroit."

Shinola Ingenuity Award

Ruhfass, who received the Shinola Ingenuity Award, has displayed ingenuity through her gifts as a textile artist. Each semester, the liberal studies major expresses her "thoughts, opinions, feelings and learning outcomes in knitted forms." Her inspirations for these creations include her volunteer experiences at the Student Organic Farm and Hoop House on OU's campus, as well as a liberal studies course focused on the challenges facing the city of Detroit.

The Detroit-inspired creation – a turquoise shawl – is especially close to her heart.

"This is truly my favorite, like the city I choose to be my second home," Ruhfass wrote in a letter to the Shinola Ingenuity Award Committee. "I like to express a 'second look beauty' with my artwork, the same astonishing beauty Detroit evoked in me 22 years ago when I came here from Germany."



Honors College Dean Graeme Harper is flanked by Shinola award winners Brian Neumeyer and Alexa Ruhfass.

Star Ingenuity Award

Neumeyer, a senior mechanical engineering major, received the Star Ingenuity Award for his work at Dataspeed Inc. in Troy. With a knack for increasing efficiency, Neumeyer has contributed to numerous company projects, including the Baxter Mobility Base, an intelligent mobile robotic platform capable of observing its surroundings and moving with a payload autonomously.

In one of his most recent projects, Neumeyer redesigned and manufactured a part for a water jet, which uses high-pressure water and abrasive to cut through materials.

In a letter of recommendation, Neumeyer's employer wrote, "When designing a component, (Brian) considers not only how it will work, but how it could possibly fail ... along the way, he optimizes the part so that the end result is a high-quality component."

With their awards, Ruhfass and Neumeyer will meet with Shinola executives, tour the company's facilities in Detroit and also receive Shinola products.

"Detroit and this region have an incredible legacy of ingenuity, and we're happy to play a small role in helping recognize these talented students who will no doubt go on to advance our community and the world through their work," said Jacques Panis, president of Shinola. "We look forward to welcoming Alexa and Brian to our headquarters and factory in Detroit to meet our team and show them our operations and learn more about their skills and interests."

Learn more about OU's Honors College at oakland.edu/hc.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Pedal to the metal: Library among first in state to offer 'FitDesk'

Oakland University students can now finish a workout while they're finishing their homework with the addition of desks that double as exercise bikes at the Kresge Library.

The two stationary bikes, called "FitDesks," arrived in mid-January and now sit on the second floor of the library near the University Technology Help Desk offices. Students can use the gadgets in the exercise function and read, study, or use their laptop computers on a platform mounted to the bike's handlebars.

Stephen P. Weiter, dean of the University Libraries, said staff decided to experiment with the FitDesks after reading about their adoption at other libraries across the country.

"We've seen reports of a lot of research lately on the negative impacts of extended sitting, so this may be one way to mitigate those effects," Weiter said. "The Kresge Library wanted to try them out as an alternative, health-oriented work station, in keeping with the wellness goals of Oakland University."

Oakland is one of the first academic institutions in Michigan to offer the desks as a study and exercise platform in a library. Weiter said the goal of the experiment is to try to offer multiple types of seating and a diverse study environment to meet student needs for studying and for health and well-being.

According to InsideHigherEd.com, Clemson University – one of the

early adopters of FitDesks – observed that students who used the bikes showed improved sleep patterns and other potential positive health outcomes.

The bikes had no negative impacts on students' study habits or academic performance, according to officials at Clemson. Higher Ed also said other modern desks, such as standing desks or treadmill desks, have the same positive health effects – and that the data set for just how many positive effects is growing by the day.



Oakland students have been testing the FitDesks since they were brought to the library Jan. 15, said Weiter, adding he is looking for feedback. If they are being consistently used and appreciated, a few more will be purchased for the library.

"We're excited about the potential here, and hope the students will see this as a valuable addition to the library," Weiter said.

For more information about the Kresge Library, visit library.oakland.edu.

OU students help children celebrate diversity at Auburn Elementary

This past Friday, a group of international students from Oakland University took part in the third annual Diversity Festival at Auburn Elementary School in Auburn Hills. This year's festival,

themed "It's a Small World," featured a variety of activities to teach K-5 students about countries and cultures around the globe.

More than 300 Auburn students and their family members joined with OU students and faculty to create booths and tables where they learned about Native American cultures, as well as different countries, including Spain, France, Italy, Macedonia, Lebanon, Greece, Poland, Germany, Scotland, Mexico, Australia, Africa, Nepal, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and India.

Each elementary student was given a "passport" and received a stamp for every booth or table they visited. While making each stop on their "world tour," students learned about the currency, national symbols, children's games, and holidays of the different cultures on exhibit.

The evening was designed to highlight the sights, sounds, and tastes of cultures that students may not otherwise have a chance to experience. Activities included making sushi, folding origami, painting henna and writing Chinese calligraphy.

In addition, students had the chance to sample food and beverages from other nations like homemade tacos, tamales, baklava, hareeseh, pizzelle (waffle), chrusciki, and more. Many of the booths also featured music in their displays, and several instruments, such as steel drums, didgeridoo, cuica, m'bwata, berimbau, djembe', m'bira, keyboard, rhumba box, and balafone, were available for the students and their families to try.

STATE AND NATIONAL HEADLINES

Ariz. State U. program seeks to boost number of women in STEM fields

Arizona State University's new Center for Gender Equity in Science and Technology is using three strategies to support and advocate for more minority women to enter jobs in science, technology, engineering and math. Officials say they're working to help women of color graduate and enter such fields as engineering, or to become college professors.

MarketWatch
February 6, 2016

State Support on the Rise

State support for higher education is up 4.1 percent this year, according to a new report.

The Grapevine report, released today, shows a slow but steady increase in state funding over the last few years. Between the 2015 and 2016 fiscal years, 39 states reported increases in state funding, while only nine reported decreases.

Inside Higher Ed
January 25, 2016

Universities Push for More Investments in Higher Education

Alabama lawmakers have a busy session ahead, one of the biggest topics up for discussion is funding for education. That issue is bringing together universities from across the state.

Student Government Association Presidents from all 14 of Alabama's public universities, along with the Higher Education Partnership group came together outside of the state

house, all for one message.

They say funding for Higher education in the state is vital for the future of the state. The Education Trust fund suffered a 34% decrease between 2008 and 2012, but there will be a 382 million dollar increase this upcoming year in the fund, but SGA presidents say it's important for lawmakers to continue to invest, especially for those in rural counties.

The education partnership group also says investing more in higher education can result to a 20 billion dollar impact for the state.

Alabamaneews.net
February 4, 2016

More college credit in high school may be a way to boost on-time four-year graduation rates - The Hechinger Report

One educational mystery is exactly why it's so much harder to graduate from college in four years these days. Back in the 1970s, almost 60 percent of eventual bachelor's degree recipients graduated within four years of finishing high school. By the 1990s, that had dropped to under 45 percent. Recent analysis conducted by two scholars at the College Board, the organization that administers the SAT and Advanced Placement (AP) tests, along with a professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, suggests that the latter researchers may be correct, and that granting more early college credit while students are in high school might help.

The Hechinger Report
January 4, 2016

Oregon higher ed fiscal improvement tops nation

A recent national report revealed that Oregon improved more than any other state in the nation last year. The state's public universities and community colleges received \$779.4 million in 2015, a hike of 16.1 percent. The national average was a 4.1 percent improvement, though a few states bucked the trend.

East Oregonian
February 11, 2016

Idaho economic study shows higher education expenditures are really investments

In past years, individual colleges have done economic impact studies, but this is the first in memory that includes all the publicly supported higher education schools in Idaho.

"I really think it helps make our case that appropriations for higher education are an investment and not an expense," said Matt Freeman, state board executive director.

For years, colleges and students have watched as a greater share of the cost of higher education was pushed onto tuition as the state dealt with other financial demands, from Medicaid to prisons. This study shows paying for higher education is not just a money-out-the-door proposition, state board leaders say. "This report shows a return on investment the state makes," Freeman said.

Idaho Statesman
February 18, 2016



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State and National Headlines *CONTINUED*

IN: State higher education agency launching 'go back' plan

This week, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education launched a new campaign called “You Can. Go Back,” which targets adults who have earned some college credits but have not completed a degree. Program officials estimate that there are over 750,000 adults in Indiana who fall into this category, and the goal is to see 200,000 of these individuals earn degrees by 2020. Fewer than 35 percent of the state’s nearly 3.4 million working-age adults have earned a two- or four-year college degree, though many predict 60 percent of jobs will require education beyond high school by 2025. The commission is working closely with Indiana colleges on the initiative, with many institutions offering incentives including flexible class schedules, online courses, college credit for work and military experience, grade- and debt-forgiveness and scholarships and tuition discounts. Additionally, the state is providing up to \$7.5 million to award \$1,000 grants to qualifying students.

Tribune Star
February 12, 2016