

Germer retires; Neal appointed

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Layout Editor

Changes are taking place all around the OU campus, many of which are among the faculty, staff and administration.

One of the largest changes this year will be the retirement of President Harold D. Germer, and the appointment of Dr. John Neal, Vice President for Adult and Professional Studies, to President Designate

Germer has been with Ottawa for over 20 years. He came to OU from Harvard in 1969, spending four years here as a faculty member in the religion department. He came to OU because it was an American Baptist university and because he wanted close ties between academic programs and the church, which he felt OU had.

In 1974, Germer became Academic Dean of the College. He spent four years in this position before moving to Phoenix to open the OU branch. Germer resided in Phoenix for another four years, also serving as dean there.

After an eight year absence, Germer returned to OU as vice-president in 1989.

In 1992, Germer was appointed

to his current position as the 15th president of Ottawa University.

As president, Germer has faced being accountable for the entire university, handling all relations with the Board of Trust-

many of the complaints about OU.

"We don't always do everything right...we fix the things that need to be fixed," said Germer.



President Designate Dr. John E. Neal addresses students at Opening Convocation. Previously in the ceremony, held in the Chapel on August 24, Neal's appointment to President Designate was announced by Board of Trustees member Patty Wolfe.

Photo by Nicole Knight

ees, taking charge of capital resources and as Germer says, getting "the right people in the right places." As president, Germer also must deal with

Germer has been instrumental in many changes that OU has seen over the last few decades.

Germer was involved in the planning of the core programs.

He felt this "Ottawa distinctive" was valuable for common experiences, for faculty as well as students. All locations of OU currently have the core program, which began in 1970

Germer has also been involved in much of the planning and preparation during the building on campus for the last 18 months. In his eight years as president, Atkinson, Taub Jones, Martin Hall, Mabee Center and Wilson Field House have all seen major renovations. New Hall was built just this year. It is the first new building on campus since Germer came to OU in 1969

Germer's contributions to the university by finding many valuable faculty members and spearheading large fund raising campaigns have led to OU's current success in his view.

"A college has to be part of a university to be successful," said Germer.

In Germer's years as president, many of today's faculty members and department heads, whom he feels are a valuable part of the university, have been added.

Germer has also balanced OU's budget and presided over surpluses.

For the future, Germer would like to see the university continue raising expectations

"The college is becoming more selective, turning more admissions down," said Germer. "There are 16 Presidential Scholars on campus: people who draw the education programs up, raising expectations"

After his retirement, effective Dec 31, 2000, Germer will move with his wife Laura back to Phoenix. Germer then plans

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to travel to Oxford University in England. They will study at Regents Park College, one of 36 colleges that comprise Oxford.

Taking Germer's place as President will be Dr. John E. Neal, Vice President for Adult and Professional Studies.

Over the summer, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted Neal to become President Designate. The decision was announced to the university during the Fall Convocation ceremony.

Neal has been with OU for three years as the Vice-President for Adult and Professional Studies.

Before coming to OU, Neal served as Vice President for Institutional Advancement. He also served as assistant professor of behavioral and social sciences, associate professor of communications and Dean of the School of Communications

for Webster University in St. Louis.

Neal's current responsibility is for all of the OU centers outside of the residential campus in Ottawa, including Kansas City, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the teaching sites in New Orleans and Wilmington, Del. These campuses account for 95 percent of the student body of OU, with over 8,000 students. Eighty percent of the revenue and the entire surplus of the university are generated by these sites, which cover the campus' deficit and system-wide administration.

The constitution requires the vote for president of the university to occur formally while a meeting is in session. To avoid delays, the Board voted to elect Neal President Designate. As President Designate, Neal will make the transition into President after a formal

vote from the Board of Trustees in Oct.

A presidential selection committee recommended Neal to the Board of Trustees. The committee began looking for an internal candidate with sufficient merit to fill the position. Neal was the only candidate interviewed.

After several weeks of interviews with different members of the committee, students, faculty, alumni and the American Baptist Church, the committee recommended Neal.

Neal would like to see OU gain more visibility in the world of higher education. He would like OU to be viewed as an "innovative, high quality school with a strong Christian commitment." He sees OU doing this by focusing on what Christian institutions should do, not by claiming Christian commitment by enforcing rules on students. Neal would like to hold

a series of forums, university wide, to discuss what the Christian mission should be and how to fulfill the newly adopted mission statement for OU.

Neal, his wife of 21 years, Gwen, and children, Abby, 18, Grant, 14, and Caroline, 3, will be moving closer to campus. He hopes students will feel comfortable speaking with him about issues and feel he is accessible to them. Neal hopes the move will make him more visible and accessible to students.

Germer is pleased with the Board of Trustees appointment.

"I'm delighted to hear they picked Dr. Neal. I like the youthful energy he has. Ottawa will be a better place because of that," said Germer. "Plus he knows what he's doing. He has the advantage of knowing Ottawa and what it's about."