



Turning shovelfuls of dirt for Ohio Christian University's student center are (from left) Philip Tipton, OCU Board Member and Project Architect; Rev. Joe Duvall, OCU Board Member; OCU President Dr. Mark Smith; U.S. Congressman Steve Austria; Ula Jean Metzler, County Commissioner; Ryan Scribner, Pickaway Progress Partnership Director; and David McKnight, President of The McKnight Group.

# GROUND BREAKING



Ula Jean Metzler, Pickaway County Commissioner

## Congressman Austria Attends Student Center Groundbreaking Ceremony August 15<sup>th</sup>

ADAPTED FROM ARTICLE BY NICK POWELL FOR THE CIRVILLE HERALD  
PHOTOS BY ORVIL PEABODY, JR.



Congressman Steve Austria honors President Smith for leadership.

It's easy to realize something special is going on at OCU... a vibrant, growing university that is committed to the community.

RYAN SCRIBNER  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR FOR THE PICKAWAY PROGRESS PARTNERSHIP



OCU's Administrative Council

Ohio Christian University (OCU) broke ground for its new student center August 15, 2011 as community leaders and dignitaries vowed to improve the educational status of Pickaway County. The \$5 million, 30,000 square foot edifice is scheduled to open in December 2012 and initially will include a cafeteria, cafe, bookstore, intramural gymnasium and offices.

Classrooms, offices and a banquet hall on the second floor will be completed at a later date, according to Hank Kelly, university Provost. OCU has seen its on-campus and Online enrollment grow from 400 to 2,300 students in a relatively short period of time, and thousands of area residents also come to the Lancaster Pike facility annually for a variety of meetings, shows and athletic events, he said.

"This building is part of a three-phase project we first started in 2006," Kelly said. "The student center will connect to the Maxwell

Center, which was completed in 2007, and the Science and Logistics Center we opened one year ago."

U.S. Rep. Steve Austria (R-Beavercreek) said the university's presence is an integral part of Pickaway County by helping grow the local economy, attract new businesses and create jobs that properly-educated individuals can fill. "As we work in Washington to turn around the economy, our universities provide the education that's needed to prepare students to go into the workforce," Austria said.

Ula Jean Metzler, Pickaway County commissioner, told the crowd of about 100 people that the 2000 U.S. Census figures paint a dismal picture about residents' education achievements. "Pickaway County has lost jobs in the past because of the lack of a highly-educated workforce," she said. "People over the age of 25 who have

bachelor's degrees account for only 11.4 percent of our county's population. That's well below state (21.1 percent) and national (24.4 percent) levels."

Dr. Mark Smith, OCU president, said, "We must get (the county's) number up to 20 percent. It's not an option. I see a bright future for this area as the university moves forward."

OCU has made a strong effort in developing academic programs that target the county's educational needs, according to Ryan Scribner, economic development director for the Pickaway Progress Partnership.

"For people who drive by the campus on U.S. Route 22, it's easy to realize something special is going on at OCU," he said. "They see a vibrant, growing university that is committed to the county and connects with community leaders to promote economic development."