

Reading program to start this fall

By JOLENE POWELL
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This fall YSU will kick off a reading across the curriculum program for all incoming freshmen.

Youngstown native Mel Watkins' book "Dancing with Strangers" will be the first book featured in this annual program.

Freshmen will receive the book while participating in the SOAR program. Those who don't attend SOAR will be sent a letter about where to pick up their copies, said Dr. William Jenkins, subcommittee chair.

Jenkins said Dr. Tony Atwater, university provost, launched the idea for the program.

Watkins' book will be used in various general education courses required for freshmen. Some of the classes include introduction composition courses, history, sociology, health and various other courses.

"The book will allow students to engage in discussion," said Jenkins.

Jenkins said each year the book chosen will address a topic that can be analyzed, from the viewpoint of each of the general education courses.

This year's book is about Watkins' life as a black man in Youngstown in the 1950s. "Race relations is this year's topic. A future topic may be ethics in technological advancements. We want topics that have intellectually appealing subject matters to cut across the curriculum," said Jenkins.

Mel Watkins will visit YSU on Oct. 9, to talk to students about the book. Jenkins also mentioned trying to get Watkins to visit some of the classes where the book will be used.

In addition to discussing the book in class, freshmen can participate in an essay contest with cash prizes.

Jenkins said the subcommittee developing the program wants to arrange faculty forums about the book to be aired on WYSU.

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All freshmen will receive the book free of charge. Jenkins said about 2,500 books will be purchased at \$7.70 a piece. University President Dr. David Sweet said, the books will be paid for from the Strategic Initiative fund that derives money from the university's general fund. This fund is a combination of state money and tuition money.

Sweet explained that the Strategic Initiative fund was created to aid program and curriculum enhancement. Campus community members were asked to suggest ideas for using the money from the fund. "We endorsed a number of programs that were consistent with our strategic plan. We didn't have enough money to support them all," said Sweet.

Freshman Reader's Dialogue was one of the plans accepted, added Sweet.

The strategic plan involves putting high priorities on "critical issues." According to The Centennial Strategic Plan of Youngstown State University,

the critical issues include enrollment/retention, programs/teaching, learning and research, diversity, community engagement, and others.

In a press release Atwater said, "Freshmen Reader's Dialogue is the university's effort to give the entering class a special value-added dimension to general education."

The breakdown of the general fund can be found in the Youngstown State University Fiscal Year 2003 Operating Budget for General and Auxiliary Funds book available in Sweet's office.

Subcommittee members include Dr. Ronald Shaklee, professor geography and director for the university scholars and honors program; Dr. Gary Salvner, professor and chair, English; Dr. Daniel O'Neill, professor and chair, communication and theater; Dr. Sherry Linkon, professor, English; Sue Davis, interim director, undergraduate admissions; Walt Ulbricht, executive director, marketing and communications.