

State of the University Address

Delivered by Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President, Oakland University
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WELCOME

Welcome and thank you for joining us at our annual State of the University address.

Unlike previous years when we came together at the Oakland Center for lunch and a discussion of significant accomplishments and challenges, this year, the State of the University Address is delivered virtually. Of course, that's hardly surprising given the realities of the pandemic and the need to do all we can to be safe and healthy.

In this video, we offer an overview of the past 12 months. For more information of the key moments, accomplishments, and our plans for the upcoming year, please visit the website on the screen.

While the pandemic requires us to take critical precautions, including wearing a mask and social distancing, we have not been deterred, dissuaded or kept from maintaining a deep commitment to our students, faculty, staff and community.

APPRECIATION

As we consider the state of our university amidst one of the greatest public health crises in our nation's history, there is no looking past the social realities, political climate and economic changes swirling around us. While these uncertain times test each of us, we must not lose sight of the many inspiring examples of hope.

Over these past eight months, I've witnessed the power of persistence and the resilience of the human spirit. I have admired and been inspired by so many of you. Oakland University is a remarkable community of compassionate and selfless people.

I'm so appreciative of the OU community and the heroic efforts of the Covid-19 Response Team members. Together, we are working with state, county and local agencies to support vital services, including the delivery of food to those in need.

The Grizzlies Engagement, Action and Thoughtfulness (GrEAT) recognition program is a way OU employees reward their peers for outstanding community service.

Download the app and give credit to a deserving colleague.

Here are few examples of OU employees being recognized through the program:

- Since I've known Dawn, she has always engaged the community in creative ways and is a beacon of light.
- Lindsay is an amazing person and adviser. She always goes above and beyond for her students and as a coworker is a positive force.
- Cindy is always looking for ways to help our neighboring K-12 schools by donating supplies, and volunteering.

Take a moment to reach out, fill in the form on the Carrot app and show your appreciation to those making Oakland such a special learning community.

A prime example of the strength, perseverance and resourcefulness of our students, faculty and staff is the manner in which they have continued to adjust and cope.

In less than a week after the state of emergency was imposed in mid-March, Oakland made the transformation to exclusively remote and online learning. The OU faculty and students did a remarkable job as classes were modified. And, we made sure we continued to support students in every way possible.

My deep appreciation to the faculty. I like to extend my appreciation to my talent cabinet, and of course, to the COVID-19 Response Team who works tirelessly.

There are others who want to share their appreciation.

< APPRECIATION VIDEO >

NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I am so proud of our students, faculty and staff for showing such great character and perseverance.

A key part of the State of the University Address is to share notable accomplishments of the past year.

The accomplishments and initiatives undertaken in the past 12 months reflect our collective will to act with integrity, treat one another with respect, pursue the truth in our quest for knowledge, and foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive learning environment.

Since last October's State of the University Address, we have made measurable progress toward our strategic goals.

Because of the pandemic, we were uncertain about the impact on student enrollment and retention.

Whereas enrollment is down as much as 17 percent at some community colleges and is significantly lower at many state public universities, we are pleased with our summer and fall enrollment figures.

Enrollment for both summer terms was up. And this fall, there was only a minimal decrease in the number of students, placing Oakland among universities with the smallest change while the total number of credit hours was down slightly by 2.5 percent.

Maintaining our student population has been a top priority for us. The number of returning undergraduates is up 1 percent with an increase of 1.2 percent in credit hours.

And the rate of returning graduate students is up 1.7 percent with a 2.5 percent increase in credit hours. And once again, I am proud to report Oakland is the top university in Michigan for transfer students – an objective indicator of the great work of our enrollment team and those who work tirelessly to build our reputation.

I believe the strong enrollment and retention figures demonstrate that OU students are committed to their education and believe the best option is to remain in school and pursue a degree.

Of course, the ultimate indicator of our success as a university can be measured by the success of our students, academically, and in their careers.

So, how are Oakland graduates doing...

- OU's bachelor of science in Information Technology ranks in the top 25 IT programs.
- OU's mechanical engineering graduates' median annual salary is the third highest in the nation after only Stanford and MIT.
- Graduates of the Master's of public health and the related bachelor's program earn among the highest median salaries for graduates in those fields.
- Graduates in health sciences have a median salary second in the nation only to Johns Hopkins University.

And it's worth noting that our outstanding nursing program is ranked 44th in the nation.

Our student athletes continue to excel in their respective sports and lead in the Horizon League both athletically and academically.

In a difficult economic year, I'd like to extend my appreciation to our Advancement team. Last year, the All University Fund Drive had a good year, and we're making progress toward our \$150 million goal.

OU students are the backbone of the Michigan economy.

96% of our graduates are employed in the state, and are earning a median full-time salary of \$52,000. And, as a university, Oakland contributes nearly \$1 billion of economic impact in the region.

Our commitment to our communities is reflected in the research conducted at Oakland. Research is one of our strategic goals. Oakland University faculty continue to perform creative and scholarly activity that contribute significant in a variety of domains. Last year, they attracted \$10 million in external funding for sponsored projects.

FINANCIAL STRONG

At last year's State of the University Address, we discussed the fundamental changes reshaping the higher education landscape.

Trends include the declining number of high school graduates attending college, decreasing support of public funding, and, the growing skepticism about the value of a college degree.

At last year's State of the U, we discussed key financial figures that showed Oakland as among the most financially healthy public universities in Michigan.

I'm proud to report that a year later despite the pandemic, we remain strong, and one of the most fiscally sound higher education institutions in the state.

We approved budgetary reductions, including hiring and construction freezes, travel restrictions, and we imposed a temporary salary decrease on some employees.

Because of better-than-anticipated fall enrollment and sound fiscal management, we have fully restored as of October 1. Furthermore, Oakland has had no reduction in force... and we do not project a budget deficit. And, considering the financial hardship imposed on many families during the pandemic, we did not increase tuition this fall.

Thank you to everyone for coming together like family to accept your fair share of the sacrifice and working for the best interests of this university that we love.

There can be no greater conversation than how we must respect one other at Oakland University, in our regional communities and in our broader national discourse.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

At Oakland, we strive to foster a more fair, just and humane world. At the heart of our endeavor is to build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive campus.

We begin each calendar year with the "Keeper of the Dream," an homage to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In recent weeks, I've established an endowed scholarship for social, racial and environmental justice. I hope this is one of the many significant actions that reflect Oakland's commitment to being engaged and working for a better world.

< DIVERSITY VIDEO >

GLENN MCINTOSH: The spirit of "Keeper of the Dream" is an inspirational reminder that we must work together for greater diversity in all areas of the university.

During this past year, underrepresented student enrollment increased to 14.1 percent. 102 educational programs were developed for faculty, students and staff. We raised awareness of unconscious bias in a campus-wide training. And, trained 347 members of OU community to support the LGBTQ community.

And as further proof of our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, OU has more than 1,800 accommodations for students with disabilities...and for the sixth consecutive year has retained gold status ranking as a veteran-friendly school.

In addition to increasing underrepresented minority students, we are also committed to increasing the numbers of underrepresented faculty and staff. This year, 21% of faculty hires were URM. That's an all-time high for Oakland, and a sign of our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Along with improving access to college for students, we must focus on making higher education affordable. The Golden Grizzlies Graduate program addresses student debt, and has set the mark as an innovative initiative that offers timely financial support.

Understanding how to help students succeed means understanding the financial challenges facing students. Our advocacy for our students and the future of Oakland University does not end at the campus boundary.

LEADING ADVOCACY FOR STUDENTS, HIGHER EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT

In February, we embarked on "Strive for 45," a campaign that drew critical acclaim and statewide attention to the pressing need to better fund higher education. The campaign goal was to raise public awareness of inequities in the way the state funds public universities.

While the pandemic refocused the state's and Oakland's financial priorities, our voice and appeal remain clear: We will continue to stand up for higher education as an essential investment into our students' future, and the future health of our communities.

Higher education represents a noble ideal – inherently, it is the belief that the pursuit of knowledge leads to the betterment of an individual's life and our shared prospects.

We are advocates for the truth, the power of science. And we believe an educated populace leads to a more civil, just, informed and compassionate society.

That's the mission of the OU Center for Civic Engagement, which in the past year, held a forum on women in elective politics, hosted a talk with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and presented a discussion with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lech Walesa.

And on campus, OU students are stepping up.

This past year, OU received a gold seal for achieving a student voting rate of nearly 50 percent.

Just as the OU Center for Civic Engagement offers a venue for public discourse, we are always looking for ways to engage and make a difference in our communities.

DEAN JUDY DIDION: Oakland University continues to have a major impact on the region's healthcare community. In addition to education the next generation of nurses, OU fosters a network for healthcare professionals administers, educators and scholars with events such as the annual Nightingale Awards for Excellence. We not only educate... We lead.

Our community engagement initiatives are a fundamental part of Oakland's identity and strategic goals.

ORA: We are deeply grateful for our partnership with Pontiac, and the many valuable learning and research opportunities it has provided to our students and faculty.

KEVIN: Through the OU-Pontiac Initiative we have made connections with 400 people and 75 community organizations. Together, we are working on more than 50 community revitalization projects to promote education, healthy living, civic engagement, economic and workforce development, arts and culture, and helping to build the capacity of neighborhood nonprofits.

OU LEADERSHIP

Throughout the year, there have been key departures and additions to the leadership team.

Last spring, Provost Jim Lentini moved on to become president at Malloy College in New York, and Chief Operating Officer Scott Kunselman retired. We greatly appreciate their hard work and dedication to Oakland. We miss them and wish them well.

This past year, we've welcomed Polly Boruff-Jones as the new Dean of Libraries.

Brady Randall has joined us as Dean of the Graduate School.

In August, Joshua Merchant began as Chief of Staff.

And through the end of the year, Michelle Piskulich will continue to serve as Interim Provost, a position that she has filled with passion, savvy leadership and an expansive expertise of academic affairs.

Our new Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost Britt Rios-Ellis begins January 4. Our new provost is an innovative, progressive leader dedicated to student success and faculty empowerment. She is a nationally recognized advocate for equity. We look forward to Dr. Rios-Ellis' leadership and welcome her to our community.

In August, Trustee Tonya Allen became the chair of the OU Board of Trustees, following in the footsteps of David Tull, whose insightful advice has been invaluable in helping us navigate the past several years. As president and CEO of the Skillman Foundation, Tonya Allen is recognized as one of Michigan's most passionate and visionary nonprofit-sector leaders.

In addition, I want to acknowledge the many contributions of outgoing trustees Richard Devore and Marianne Fey. We are tremendously grateful to Rick and Marianne for their vision and commitment to OU. In their place, I'd like to welcome two new trustees – Trina Scott and Reverend Joseph Jones.

Trina and Joe, who are both alums, bring extensive experience that will be beneficial to our university. We all look forward to working with you both.

GRIZZLIES PROTECT GRIZZLIES

One of the great pleasures that Dan and I have in our roles is having a front-row seat to the many lectures, exhibitions, concerts, athletic events and other inspiring gatherings at Oakland.

I very much miss being in the company of so many talented colleagues, scholars and artists.

And, I especially miss talking with the students, listening to their concerns...and talking about their dreams.

While Zoom, WebEx and FaceTime are efficient social-distancing substitutes for face-to-face meetings, I, like you, miss the sense of community only truly felt in the presence of others.

As we stand strong and together during the pandemic, we must trust and be accountable to one another.

Trust and accountability are at the heart of “Grizzlies Protect Grizzlies: Healthy Together,” our five-point plan to keep all of us safe and healthy.

The plan aims to limit the spread of the virus, lower the risk of outbreaks, foster compliance, modify the university learning environment and redefine the student experience on campus.

And, as we move into late fall and winter, I hope all of you take the time to get a flu shot.

If you plan to be on campus, take the pledge and daily health assessment.

And when you’re on campus, wear a mask. If you don’t have one, we’ll provide one.

Wash your hands frequently, and always stay at least six feet from another person. Think of social distancing as showing respect for others... and for keeping yourself safe.

Throughout the pandemic, I’ve been so pleased with the response from the OU community.

The Grizzlies Health Squad, a group of students, has stepped up to educate students on positive behavior during the pandemic.

It’s this kind of initiative and leadership that makes OU students so remarkable.

MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

And, I’d like to direct this message to our students...

I know this year isn’t the experience you expected when you thought about attending college.

But frankly, as you go through life, you will inevitably have to deal with situations you didn’t see coming your way.

If you are compassionate and open to learning, there will always be hope for a better tomorrow.

The pandemic will not last, but the character that each of us displays during these difficult times will sustain us in the days and years ahead.

And now... let's talk about the days and years ahead...

REIMAGINING OU: Learning. Leading. Empowering.

Last October, I appointed Deans Kevin Corcoran and Graeme Harper to co-chair "Reimagining OU," an initiative that rigorously examines where we're at as a university while considering where we need to go to become the university of choice for students, faculty and staff.

The continuous quality improvement endeavor looks to our strategic goals as a guide, and our greatest resource – our people – for input.

Earlier this month, the Reimagining OU team presented a report of what will be an annual exploration of the issues, challenges and proposals to keep us on the path of being a leading public university.

As a community of higher learning, inquiry and discovery, Oakland University values freedom of thought and expression that leads to responsible citizenship, fair-mindedness and a commitment to the ethical treatment of all people and the environment.

Our core values include: integrity and respect, compassion, inclusivity, collaboration, curiosity, creativity and stewardship. These values illuminate and inform our decisions and plans.

Let's hear more about Reimagining OU: Learning, Leading. Empowering." from the talented team.

< REIMAGINING OU VIDEO >

THE STATE OF OUR UNIVERSITY

There have been many lessons this year...

Perhaps the most striking is that Oakland University is a strong, vibrant, caring community of remarkably dedicated people.

This year, we have persevered because we realize the power of caring for one another.

In my view, the state of our university can be summed up as ... Compassionate... and thriving...