

## 2020 Golden Celebration Video (50<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion)

### Remarks for 15-minute script

- Welcome Oakland University alumni! And a very special welcome to the Class of 1970 who are celebrating 50 years since graduation.
  
- It may have been some time since you were on campus.
  
- So, here are a few photos I think you'll find interesting :
  - Here's an aerial shot from 1968
  - And a recent aerial photo, and PHOTOS of relatively recent additions to OU's landscape: 2012-Human Health Building; 2014-Engineering Center; 2014-Oakview Hall; 2014-Elliott Tower; and, 2018-Hillcrest Hall.
  - Here's Fitzgerald Hall in the late 1960s
  - And here are a few of the residence halls today of Hillcrest and Oak View
    - By the way, Hillcrest is suite-style living for four people sharing a private bathroom. It has in-room kitchenettes with microwaves and a refrigerator. There's a 400-seat dining center, and a convenience store along with expansive lounges, community kitchens and laundry facilities.

Fifty years ago, you got a bunk bed, a dresser, a desk – and a roommate.
  - Last, here's a shot of the Oakland Center around the time when you attended OU...

- And here's a recent photo of the Oakland Center

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- I think we can all agree that there have been many changes in the last five decades, and time has moved quickly...
- Fifty-plus years ago, when you were at Oakland University, and when you looked out at the future, you saw the many possibilities for your life. That's a trademark of education – it stirs the imagination and inspires thinking about possibilities.
- At the time, the leadership here also shared many possibilities for our university. We were committed to becoming the best possible university – a world-class institution of higher learning.
- We still are. Some things haven't changed.
- Compared to today, the world in the 1960s and 1970s seems to have moved at a slower pace, although the social and political changes were profound and lasting.
- Today, more than ever, students, communities and businesses need an educated, informed response to meet current challenges.
  - Universities, however, face a long list of imminent challenges, including declining enrollment projections, reduced public funding, and a skeptical public that questions the value of a college education.
  - That skepticism is alarming, especially when looking at the economic devastation of the pandemic, particularly on people without a college education. The road ahead could be for those

without degrees as businesses come to grips with a profoundly different economic landscape.

- Your presence at Oakland University’s Golden Celebration – virtual as it is – is a testament to your ardent belief in the essential need for universities to educate the next generation.
- As members of our earliest classes, you were among the generation that played a pivotal role in Oakland University’s formative years. And you are part of legacy that defines the depth and range of the OU community.
  - We value your support.
  - And we look forward to hearing what you think of our progress and plans for the future.
- You are an integral part of OU history and vision, which is... to unlock the potential of individuals and leave a lasting impact on the world through the transformative power of education and research.

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- Many of you in the class of 1970 attended the Eighth Annual Commencement on April 25 of that year.

When you did, you listened to OU Chancellor Emeritus “Woody” Varner deliver the commencement address. You walked in to the ceremony as “Man of La Mancha” played, and exited to the sound of John Phillip Sousa’s “The Free Lance March.”

- There were no selfies. No social media posts. No walk-up song playing in your ear buds. It was a solemn occasion, which was followed

probably by a party or two or three....Okay, some things haven't changed about the college experience.

- Like your journey over the past five decades, Oakland University has been shaped by core values, a clear mission and timely strategic goals.
  - Taken together, our values, mission and goals illuminate the path we are taking to make sure we have the programs, policies, courses and degrees in place for students to succeed...
  - ...for research conducted here to engage faculty and students and benefit our communities...
  - ...for strong partnerships to flourish with communities from Pontiac to Detroit, partnerships that foster improved education, health and economic opportunity...
  - ...and last, our values, mission and goals allow us to be steadfast as we seek to be the finest example of diversity, equity and inclusion.

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- Fifty years ago, you walked on the campus where today just over 19,000 students stroll. Back then, let's just say your choices for a major were limited.
- Today, OU's College of Arts and Sciences, for example, offers more than 100 majors, and is comprised of 16 departments devoted to teaching and researching liberal arts, including the humanities, social sciences, visual and performing arts, and mathematical and laboratory sciences.

- Today, Oakland's colleges and schools include the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business Administration, School of Education and Human Services, School of Engineering and Computer Science, School of Health Sciences, OUWB School of Medicine, School of Nursing and the Graduate School. In addition, we have an Honors College that attracts academically exceptional students from around the region and a School of Music, Theatre and Dance.
- And how are we doing?

OU's programs and degrees are among the best in the nation:

- OU's nursing program is listed at 44th in the nation. (Screen caption: Source: Study.com)
- OU's Bachelor of Science in Information Technology ranks in the top 25 best IT programs. (Screen caption: Source: ValueColleges.com)
- OU's mechanical engineering graduates' median annual salary is third highest in the nation (for mechanical engineers), ranked right after Stanford and MIT. (Screen caption: Source: Gradreports.com)
- OU's public health master's program and its related bachelor's program earn among the highest median salaries in the nation compared to other recent graduates in those fields. (Screen caption: Source: GradReports.com, April, 2020)
- OU grads in health sciences have a median salary second in the nation behind only Johns Hopkins University.

- These days, universities must think like entrepreneurs. And, I think you'd be proud to hear that we're up to the challenge with the innovative ways we are expanding.
  - In the past year, Oakland became the first Division I university in the state to add a varsity esports team to its athletic program.
  - We launched the Excellence in Academic Advising Initiative, an innovative program that helps students build on learning strengths.
  - And, we continue to find timely, effective ways to help students deal with debt.
    - The OU Golden Grizzlies Graduate program has set the mark among regional universities as an innovative, timely program that offers financial support and prevents students who are at risk of stopping out of college.
- As a major public university in Michigan, Oakland has a tremendous economic impact on the most populous region in the state.
  - As of 2019, Oakland University had a direct and indirect impact of \$960 million on the local economy. Not only are we a major employer in the region, we take great pride in being a catalyst for research along with community and economic development.

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- In these uncertain economic times with many financial challenges caused by the pandemic, I am very proud that Oakland has not

eliminated a single job, has not raised tuition, and does not project a budget deficit.

- And despite the apprehension and caution from COVID-19, there is only a slight decrease (1.5%) in headcount, and an even slighter decrease (1.3%) in credit hours. To put these numbers in perspective, the average headcount at community colleges is down 17.5%, and enrollment at most four-year public universities is also down substantially.
- Our advocacy for our students and the future of our university does not end at the campus boundary.
  - In February, we launched “Strive for 45,” campaign that drew statewide public attention to the pressing need to better fund higher education and address the fundamental inequities that hurt students, impose limitations on public universities, and diminish the future for all of us.
  - While the pandemic refocused the state’s and our priorities, our voice and appeal remain clear: Working with our peer institutions across Michigan, we will continue to stand up for higher education as an invaluable investment into our students’ future, and the future health of our economy and communities.
- During these uncertain times, I’ve been inspired by a remarkable community of compassionate, selfless, giving people at Oakland.
  - Many of these people are on the OU Engagement and Mobilization team, which includes students, faculty and staff. The team works with state, county and local agencies to deliver food and other items to those in need.

- We consider ourselves a caring, compassionate and collaborative university. Our impact can be measured by the strength of our partnerships and productivity with our communities.
- We are working together to find ways to support the Detroit Public School Community District, and former Marygrove College students in their undergraduate, professional and continuing education programs online and on campus.
- For the last six years, the OU-Pontiac Initiative has been a public university-municipality model of collaboration aimed at improving the education, health, economy, job preparedness, and overall quality of life of Pontiac residents.
  - Last year, three grants totaling \$670,000 supported talent development, healthy living, and a small business center.
- With the ongoing public discussion about race, community policing, and profiling along with race-based health and economic disparities, we, at Oakland University, consider ourselves as a prominent convener for civil, rational public discussion, which is the mission of the OU Center for Civic Engagement.
  - The center brings in prominent speakers, such as the former President of Poland Lech Walesa and former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, and provides a forum for a discussion of public affairs shaping our communities and world.
- At Oakland, we believe diversity, equity and inclusion are fundamental principles in the U.S. Constitution and a central tenet in Oakland’s mission based on serving our students and communities.
  - We take great pride in being among the most welcoming campuses for LGBTQIA in the state, and year after year, Oakland has received the top rating for its support of veterans.

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- Today, in the midst of the pandemic, our highest priority is on the safety and health of the OU community – our students, faculty and staff.
- Our vigilance never wanes.
- But we also have another obligation, and that is to make sure Oakland University continues to develop and grow as an outstanding higher education institution.
- Over the past year, we have been thinking deeply and often about the next chapter of OU's story.

We've been asking a fundamental question:

What must we do to be the university of choice – a university that is the top selection for students to attend, and the top place for faculty and staff to work?

- The answer to that question and the future of Oakland University requires imagination...
- It requires commitment...
- And it requires a community.
- Welcome back to Oakland University. We are so proud that you are joining us for your Golden Celebration, and again, congratulations to the members of the Class of 1970 on your 50<sup>th</sup> reunion.
  - May your dreams and our dreams come together in the future of this great institution...

- Thank you.