

# Presidential Remarks

## Alumni Awards

**June 24, 2021**

- Thank you, Mike...and thank you for bringing us together again after not holding the awards last year because of the pandemic restrictions.
- My deep appreciation to the Oakland University Alumni Association for your tireless work to reach across Michigan and the country to connect OU graduates.
- Thank you for your passion.
- Thank you for proudly representing Oakland University.
- And thank you for advocating for the active engagement of all graduates in the broader Oakland community.
- As we all know, after this past year, there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction, and in-person connections.
- So, once again, we gather to pay a timely and well-deserved tribute to the Oakland University Alumni who demonstrate a remarkable dedication to their communities, outstanding leadership, and exemplary volunteer service to the university.
- When you are an OU alumni, you are part of a community...a community bound together by the “OU experience”... which puts students first, a faculty that works tirelessly to foster students’ lifelong learning practices, and a tradition that takes great pride in all those who have passed through our gates.
- In many ways, OU alumni are ambassadors and shining examples of possibilities of an Oakland University education.
- There can be no doubt that when OU graduates succeed, we, as a university, succeed.
- The compelling narrative of Oakland University comes from the composite of the stories of our students and alumni....
- The pride that each alumni has in OU plays a crucial role in building pride in our university, and spreading the OU story.
- And there are many impressive stories reflected in the recipients of this year’s Alumni Awards.
- Tonight, we honor Nicole Lindsey, Class of ’14, who is creating sustainable communities in the city of Detroit.

- We honor Holly Franson, Class of '09, a certified registered nurse anesthetist, who, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, demonstrated tremendous leadership.
- We honor Gary and Elspeth Coats from the Class of '95 and '91, respectively, for their exemplary volunteer service to the university.
- We honor Avinash Konkani, a health care technology management researcher and patient safety advocate, for his tireless pursuit of “virtue and knowledge.”
- We honor Allen Gough, who was instrumental in the successful launch of OU’s largest fundraising campaign in 2018.
- We honor Joanne Gerstner, an award-winning sports journalist, for her advocacy for the study of sports concussions and challenging journalists to meet the highest professional standards.
- And, we honor Bryan Barnett, Class of '98, who is the longest serving major in Rochester Hills’ history, and a former president of the United States Conference of Mayors.
- Bryan is the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Service Award.
- In a few minutes, you will learn more about these honorees and their accomplishments.

While they have made their individual marks, collectively, they represent the finest examples of dedication, hard work, selflessness.

Through their accomplishments, they are having a major impact on their professions, communities... and university.

- I am so proud of how each of you along with OU alumni everywhere represent the promise and legacy of Oakland University.
- Thank you for being such wonderful ambassadors for the university we love.