

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

SEMCOG GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

October 26, 2023

PRESIDENT ORA HIRSCH PESCOVITZ'S REMARKS

- First, please join me in applauding SEMCOG....
- We all can learn from SEMCOG's leadership and approach of looking beyond the boundaries of cities, townships and counties, and thinking about the region as a whole, undivided in our common economic, cultural and infrastructure interests.
- In these days of divisive government and partisan politics, we must align ourselves with the common interests of the communities and people of the region, and we must understand the vital role of higher education in the region's forecast developed by SEMCOG.
- SEMCOG's recent forecast released in March projects a 30-year analysis of the change in population, jobs and land use, and the subsequent impact of those trends on infrastructure, environmental quality along with community and economic development.
- In reviewing the forecast, it's clear that we must respond to the challenges of the "new normal" – persistent inflation, high employment and the ongoing changes of the state's bedrock industry, automotive manufacturing, and the growth in "knowledge-based" industries.
- Among some of the key demographic features of southeast Michigan is the rapid growth of our senior population, declining age of the school-age population, and a labor shortage whereby full-time compared to part-time employment could decline by 10 percent.
- An impact of these trends is leading to an increase in healthcare services, which is one of several areas where Oakland University is responding with many partners. One example is Corewell Health to increase the number of nurses in the region.
- And we can all do much more... we must increase the number of teachers, engineers and other professionals.
- Furthermore, the trends in SEMCOG's 2050 forecast also raises a red flag to public universities who must plan for a decreasing pool of college students and lower tuition revenue.

- In the context of the “new normal,” Oakland University is distinguishing itself as, what I call, the university of choice in the region.
- According to The Wall Street Journal’s assessment of best colleges in America, Oakland ranks as the “best investment” among our peer institutions in the state, first for enhancing students’ social mobility and second after only UM-Ann Arbor in preparing students for careers.
- The Wall Street Journal’s recognition reveals an impressive reality: OU is making college affordable and accessible as an invaluable investment for a person and community’s future.
- So much of SEMCOG’s work is focused on the future.
- Today, the fall general assembly is focusing on “creating places that work for people.”
- Those “places” are physical places as much as they are cultural places.
- As an institution of higher learning, our mission is to feed the imaginations of our students, and inspire our communities to collectively reimagine and reinvent our shared places.
- At Oakland, we believe that we are Stewards of Place. In that regard, we are dedicated to strengthening the connection between people and the places they share. A prime example of our success is the important work being done among Oakland University and the civic, business and cultural leaders in Pontiac.
- The OU-Pontiac Initiative is making a significant difference by making key connections with Pontiac schools so Pontiac students are on a path to successful careers.
- We are increasing civic literacy, developing stronger private-public economic development partnerships and a well-prepared workforce, and crafting a comprehensive healthcare education plan.
- And by the way, in June, the OU-Pontiac Initiative was recognized as a national community engagement model by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.
- We feel like our work in community engagement is just beginning.
- In the upcoming months, we are looking to reach communities throughout the region as we work together to further collaborate in education, economic development and healthcare.
- From an economic standpoint, a striking way Oakland is contributing to the region’s health is by providing the region’s most productive “talent pipeline.”
- Our Career and Life Design Center reports that 72% of OU graduating seniors are employed within a year and 98% of those

graduates work in Michigan, mostly in southeastern Michigan.

- It's among the reasons The Detroit News reported that Oakland is the leading "brain gain" public university in the state, which is a reference to a university's proportion of graduates who remain in Michigan after graduation.
- Over the past decade, there has been a physical and infrastructure evolution of our campus. To complement that physical transformation, we are embarking on several timely and transformative initiatives, including:
- A refresh of the University's Strategic Plan
- Expanding our role as a strong Steward of Place, not only in Pontiac but throughout the region
- Establishing the OU Center for Sustainability, a step toward becoming a more sustainable university, and....
- Creating an artificial intelligence taskforce to prepare us for the latest technological revolution that will impact our campus and communities.
- The future is rushing toward us...and we are embracing it with open arms.
- More than ever, higher education must be the force that shapes the path ahead
- So, today, as you consider how to make southeast Michigan a more welcoming place for residents, businesses and visitors, we want you to know how excited and proud we are that Oakland University plays a prominent role in the region's future.
- And... we are so proud to stand with SEMCOG in working to improve the lives of all people in our region.
- Thank you.