

Fall 2021

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

DEFINING MOMENTS AT OU

The mentors, classes and achievements that helped shape our alumni's futures.

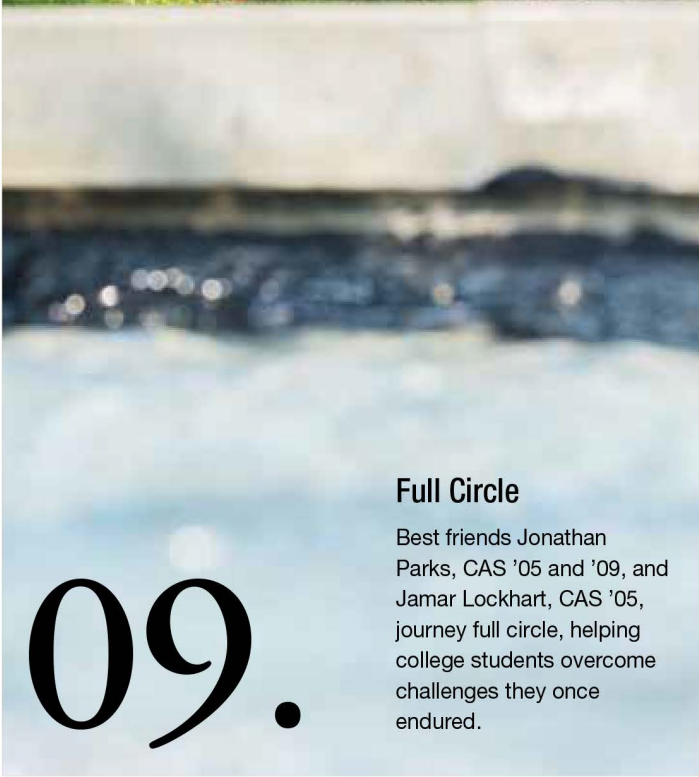




*OUSC Tailgate
Party at Homecoming*

Homecoming 2021 welcomed alumni to campus with sunshine, warm weather and a week full of activities. Saturday, October 9, the Oakland University Student Congress (OUSC) hosted a tailgate party, where folks gathered, ate and chatted with old and new friends before heading over to watch the Club Football game. ➤

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Full Circle

Best friends Jonathan Parks, CAS '05 and '09, and Jamar Lockhart, CAS '05, journey full circle, helping college students overcome challenges they once endured.

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DEFINING MOMENTS

Connecting with alumni to uncover stories of camaraderie and community.

By Kelli M. Warshefski ✍️ Kevin Fales 📷 Robert Hall

Every alumnus has that moment at Oakland University. The one that helped shape their future. As an alumnus myself, I can vividly recall my moment — in the spring of 2012 as a journalism student, being chosen for a storytelling project to travel, write and photograph Oakland's alumni. That moment started a path that led me to where I am today: editor of the Oakland University Alumni Magazine.

As readers will notice, there has been a significant shift in the look of the OU Magazine. Alumni expressed their desire to read more stories about fellow alumni, learn about research and discover what's happening on campus. We made some key changes to better serve our readers. While the core of the OU Magazine has remained the same, we've re-centered

the print and online magazines around one simple idea: engaging more meaningfully with you.

The OU Magazine team has spent the past year defining the purpose of this publication. And that got us thinking: since we're defining what the magazine means to you, we want to know how you were defined by your time at Oakland University.

"I still remember sitting in my first journalism course in East Vandenberg,"

says Kaniqua Welch, CAS '04, communications officer for the Kresge Foundation. "Sally Tato was the instructor and I remember thinking, 'I'm going to be like her someday — leading a thriving journalism career and teaching the next generation of journalists.' Not only did I go on to become a reporter for a daily publication — The Oakland Press — I also kept my promise to come back to OU and teach the next generation of journalists. In the very same classroom!"

We heard amazing stories from alumni about their defining OU moments. No matter how big or

small the moment was, there was a depth of gratitude in every story. And that's what makes Oakland University special — the shared experiences and camaraderie that connects us all.

"There is a thread of humility that runs through the alumni base that manifests itself as a quiet sense of satisfaction and gratefulness,"

explains John Stoll, CAS '00, strategic communications advisor.

"My defining OU moment was when I walked out of the advising office in Vandy and felt like I would never graduate because of all the credits I still had to amass; even after years of bouncing from college to college," Stoll recalls. "I stopped outside the Oakland Center, looked at all the students walking around and said 'if they can get through it, I can get through it.' I went home and told my parents I was quitting my job to focus on school."

In this issue, we'll explore the moments that first brought

alumni to OU. For example, John Springfield's desire for freedom at the newly developed Oakland University, fed an ambition that led to bicycling across the country. Some moments kept alumni moving forward, such as two best friends who pushed and leaned on one another to overcome academic challenges. Other moments brought alumni back to campus, like Stacie Behler who uses her legal and political expertise to help contribute to civic engagement on campus. And some moments completely reshaped alumni paths; including a single mother who, with support from a professor, established a fulfilling career while maintaining a work-life balance. These are the moments that have defined

our lives. And while we continue to grow and take shape after graduating, our OU moment started the journey.

"It is instinctive, almost second nature, to stay connected to the university,"

says Robynn Diamond Gamble, CAS '87, court administrator for the 30th District Court. "For me, OU provides a sense of community, commitment and camaraderie. The university serves as a vehicle for me to take permissible rides, throughout the year, down memory lane by engaging with fellow alum." ➤



LETTERS

Two-time alumnus and OU Mag editor Kelli Warshefski in her cozy home office.

Dear Readers,

We want to hear from you! Tell us about an OU magazine story that inspired you, a faculty mentor who helped shape your path, or an update on your life after graduation. We love hearing from our alumni. Enjoy the following letters we received from past issues.

All the best,

Kelli M. Warshefski, Editor

Note: by submitting an email or letter, we reserve the right to edit and publish it.



SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

at oumag@oakland.edu or to: Oakland University, University Communications and Marketing
Anibal House, Room 124, 630 Pioneer Drive, Rochester, MI 48309



Rather a surprise to see all those ghosts of Oakland Observer (OO) deadlines past. I was on the staff from Fall 1960 to April '64. In the left foreground is the editor-in-chief, Susan Bierstein; behind her, back to the camera, is Bill Hoke. I'm beyond him, typing. After two years as editor-in-chief ('63 -'64), I stayed in journalism, mostly as an aviation writer and am a retired senior public affairs officer at the Federal Aviation Administration. The OO wasn't pretty or a very good product (as I look at it now), but we loved it and worked hard at it.

Paul Turk, CAS '64

I am reaching out to you and your team with gratitude for featuring a story called "Epilepsy Warrior." I am an Oakland University graduate and am honored to serve as President of the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan. I have to tell you, seeing the word "epilepsy" in print means a great deal to our organization and, most importantly, to the epilepsy community we serve.

Brianna Romines, CAS '05



ALUMNI
Voices

“
My OU education informs me in the understanding that while we may not have common background or shared experience, there's much to be learned from each other ...

”

STACIE BEHLER, CAS '92
page 26

Oakland University alumni emit pride, empowerment and resilience. Your diverse careers speak to the wealth of knowledge instilled in all graduates. Despite varying paths, however, it's evident by your alumni voices that you took the tools you learned at OU and used this knowledge to become leaders in your fields.

DAY OF *giving*

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

February 2, 2022

Oakland University Day of Giving unites the entire OU community in a single mission: to rally behind the campus projects and initiatives that they love most at the university. With hundreds of worthy funds to support, we know that everyone has a unique reason to give to OU. Whether you're making a gift or inspiring others to join you in your support, we can help you find a way to make a meaningful impact.

Contact our University Advancement team to learn more about Oakland University Day of Giving today.

oakland.edu/dayofgiving | giving@oakland.edu



FULL CIRCLE

Two friends journey from being on academic probation to aiding those in similar situations.

By Michael Downes 📷 Robert Hall

Jonathan Parks, CAS '05 and '09, and Jamar Lockhart, CAS '05, met in high school, attended the same college and faced similar academic challenges. With help from each other and those they met through OU, they were able to overcome their struggles and are now giving back to those in similar situations.

Starting point

Lockhart's transition to high school was a difficult one. He was off to a brand new school district, not knowing anyone in his class.

"My first year of high school I was actually a sophomore," says Lockhart. "Being in a new school, not coming in with any friends that you know, it was tough. And then September, my parents passed." He took the next couple months off, but returned to Detroit's Communication and Media Arts High School (CMA) full time in January, where he met Parks for the first time.

"Jonathan was a jokester," Lockhart says laughing. "He would call me over to where he and some guys were sitting and he would play a prank on me and I'd fall for it every time, but he was always welcoming."

From there, the friendship grew. The next step was college and both quickly fell in love with Oakland University. It was the only university Parks visited his senior year, drawn in by the fact that Oakland was small enough for him to feel heard but big enough for him to feel like it was part of a bigger universe.

“My senior year our class took a field trip to OU,” says Lockhart. “It was my first time on a college campus. The atmosphere, the campus itself was gorgeous and from there I only had my sights on OU.”

Although the two friends were both accepted into OU, Park’s path to the university had an extra step.

Rocky start

In the summer of 2000, Parks was placed in Oakland University’s Student Success Services, a federally funded outreach program where students get acclimated to college life and courses and even earn college credits before the start of their first semester. After earning eight credits, he was officially a freshman at Oakland University, reuniting with Lockhart and setting off on a similar path.

“Initially my major was business administration,” says Lockhart, “but I fell in love with communications classes and the professors early on. From there I made it a point to focus on communications.”

“I wanted to go into business, I wanted to be a doctor and I wanted to teach,” Parks says with a chuckle. “It wasn’t until a meeting with an adviser who told me, ‘Well it sounds like you like talking — you should consider going into communications,’ that I shifted focus.”

Figuring out the right area of study wasn’t the only challenge these two faced their freshman year. Both recorded below a 2.0 GPA, landing themselves on academic probation. They had one semester to turn things around.

“Students have two semesters of being on academic probation; if they don’t get their GPA above 2.0, they are academically dismissed from the university,” explains Krista Malley, Ph.D., the director of student success for OU’s Office of Student Success. “Once a student is dismissed, they can either appeal and have a chance for reinstatement or apply for reinstatement consideration after two semesters pass.”

Lockhart and Parks, along with a friend from high school, Shay Bailey, started a study group with fellow students Michael Williams and Stefen Welch and began holding each other accountable.

“We had study sessions,” explains Parks. “Our study group started taking the same, or similar, classes and having competitions to see who could get the best grades, pushing each other and holding ourselves to a higher standard.”

“I took all art courses the next semester and that was done by design because art was something I was interested in,” says Lockhart. “I needed something I was interested in and good at to help springboard myself and my GPA.”

Having a strong nucleus of friends, faculty and administration was the push that both Lockhart and Parks needed. The two continued to lean on one another and got themselves back on track.



Jonathan Parks

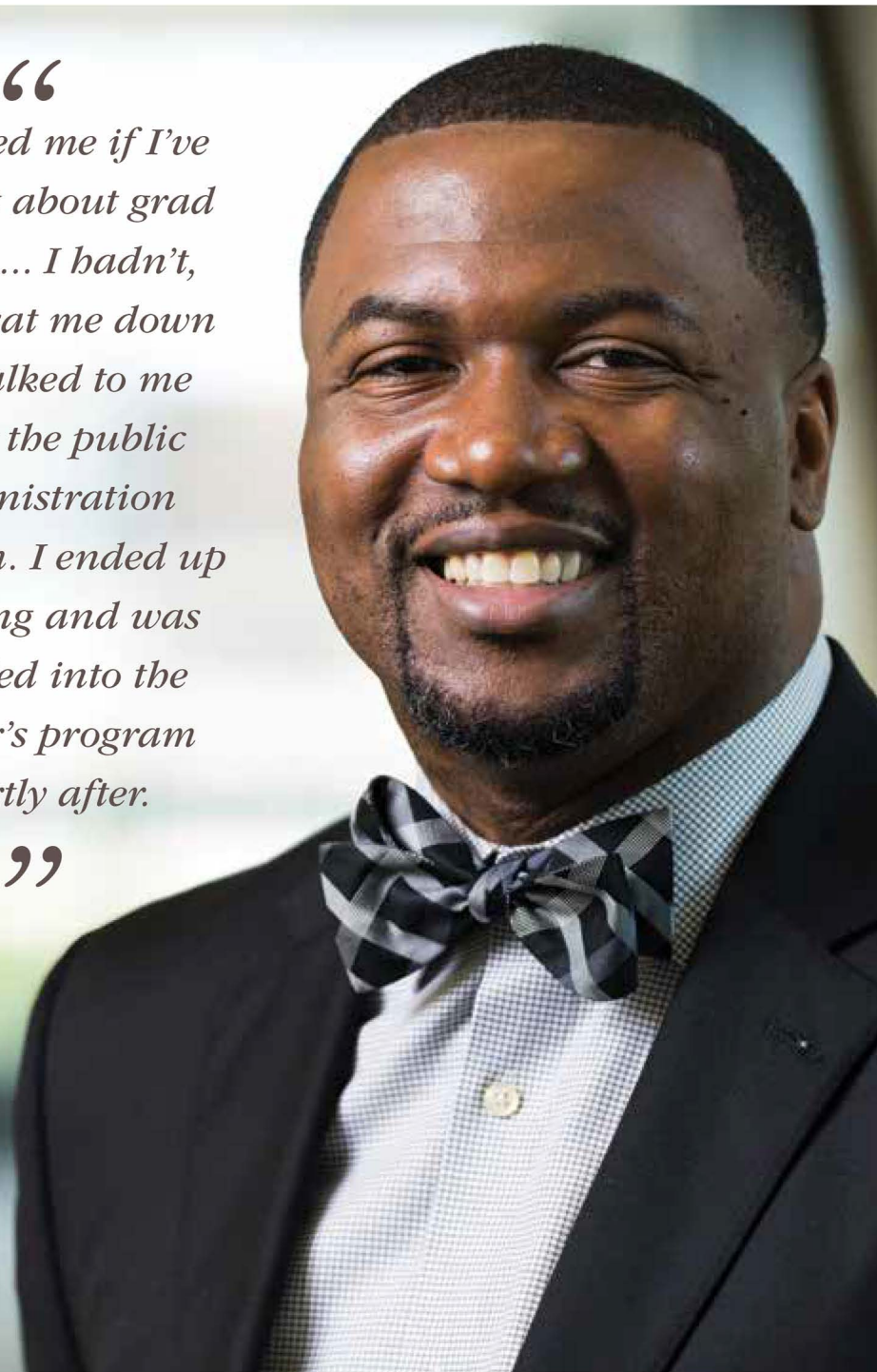


Jamar Lockhart



“
He asked me if I’ve
thought about grad
school ... I hadn’t,
but he sat me down
and talked to me
about the public
administration
program. I ended up
applying and was
enrolled into the
master’s program
shortly after.

”



MI GEAR UP at OU

The Michigan Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (MI GEAR UP), is a federal grant program focused on increasing the success of low-income students at the postsecondary level. The program is a competitive grant program that works closely with underrepresented middle school and high school students. It provides resources for tutoring, mentoring, academic preparation, financial education and scholarships to help provide education to low-income and disadvantaged first-generation students.

Jonathan’s journey

During his final years at Oakland University, Parks got involved in student congress and was named student body president in both his junior and senior years. He graduated with a liberal arts degree, but the post-graduation job hunt wasn’t as successful as he hoped. However, a run-in with an OU professor helped change his future.

Dale Nesbary, Ph.D., now the president of Muskegon Community College, was an associate professor and director of the Master of Public Administration program during Parks’ time at Oakland. Dr. Nesbary had recognized Parks from his work with student congress, and the two chatted in depth about his future plans.

“He asked me if I’ve thought about grad school,” recalls Parks. “I hadn’t, but he sat me down and talked to me about the public administration program. I ended up applying and was enrolled into the master’s program shortly after.”

Dr. Nesbary worked with Parks to help find him funding for the program through grants, scholarships and the King-Chavez-Parks Future Faculty Fellowship (FFF). Because of these efforts, Parks was able to earn his Master in Public Administration in 2009 with zero debt. Shortly after graduating, Parks received a job as a coordinator for MI GEAR UP at OU.

“Before that phone call, I was in and out of jobs,” says Parks, “but since then, it’s been nothing but an upward trajectory.”

Jamar’s journey

After being put on academic probation, Lockhart got involved as a peer-mentor for MI GEAR UP at OU. “I was working with middle school and high school students in the Pontiac and Auburn Hills area,” he says. “I was giving younger students tidbits and advice on how to be successful. It was an interesting position because it was almost like giving myself advice.”

After graduating with his degree in communication, Lockhart applied for a job within the admissions office at OU, but was not offered the position. “I was devastated, I loved OU. I just knew I wanted to continue my journey there, but it wasn’t in the cards.”

Lockhart landed on his feet and got a job at Delta Airlines. He was there for only a couple of months before getting an offer as the art instructor for Detroit Enterprise Academy, teaching students in K-8. He was able to share his love and passion for art with young students, some of who were taking their first art class.

“Dealing with students with raw artistic talent pushed me and inspired me to give them every opportunity to succeed,” he says. “I wanted to share the knowledge I had learned from OU and provide that to them.”

The faculty and staff around Lockhart quickly changed from just being co-workers to feeling more like family. But, while he loved his job, he received a phone call nearly a decade later from an old friend that provided an opportunity too good to pass up.



LOCK’S ART DESIGNS

Jamar Lockhart’s focus on art didn’t end at OU. He still paints, focusing on abstract and portrait pieces. You can find more information about Lockhart and see his work at locksartdesigns.com.

Jamar Lockhart, **Hidden Figures**
Acrylic Paint on Stretched Canvas, 60" x 72"

FULL CIRCLE



COERCION

Their freshman year at OU, Parks had won a raffle earning himself a single student dorm. Lockhart had a roommate at the time, but it wasn't working out, so he had to put on the charm to convince Parks, who wasn't even considering it at the time, to convert his single into a double. Lockhart's coercion worked, and the two became roommates.

Round trip

Parks moved on from his role as a coordinator at OU to become the director of Wayne State's MI GEAR UP program. One of his first moves was reaching out to an old friend.

"Jonathan called me and told me he had a position for me at Wayne State as part of their GEAR UP program," explains Lockhart. "It took some convincing from John. I definitely had some trepidation working with my best friend. It wasn't an easy sell. I was happy with my environment and helping students."

Two key factors played into Parks' pitch to Lockhart though: the first was a pay raise, the second — and more important — was ensuring Lockhart would still have face-to-face time with students. Lockhart was sold.

Lockhart was introduced as the program coordinator for Wayne State's MI GEAR UP program and recently was promoted to the interim director, working on hiring and training the staff as well as getting some time with students.

With his staff set, Parks took some time to reflect on how far he'd come. "It was full circle," says Parks, "I'm now the director of the GEAR UP program, overseeing a similar program to the one that helped me get into and through college. Wow!"

He and Lockhart continue to hold each other accountable, but the goal is different. Instead of

focusing on their own success, the most important thing now is the students. And they do everything in their power to propel them.

"When people tell me they want to go to grad school," says Parks, "I do what Dale Nesbary did for me. I help them find fellowships and funding to get them through similar things I applied to. I share what I can to help out."

The two longtime friends both realize that without people to help them along the way, their stories would be completely different. All it took was for someone to reach out and take a chance on them, and Parks keeps that tradition alive.

"Once every three years," says Parks, "I call someone and say, 'I've got a job for you and it's yours if you want it.'"

Share your story with us at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

IN THE GOLD SEAT with ANNIE MEINBERG

MAJOR: **Elementary Education**

GRADUATION YEAR: **2016**

FAVORITE STUDY SPOT: **Hammocks by Bear Lake**

FAVORITE CAMPUS EVENT: **Camping out for tickets to student trips like Chicago and New York City**

BEST MOMENT ON CAMPUS: **Climbing to the very top of the Elliott Tower and seeing the Detroit skyline.**

FAVORITE CLASS: **Student teaching was the best part of my academic program.**

BEST FRIEND ON CAMPUS: **Liz Iwanski. We met as Orientation Group Leaders after our freshmen year. She was Student Body Vice President and the smartest, kindest, best friend on campus.**

SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOU: **After teaching for a couple years, I used my experiences in elementary education to open up a kids' birthday party business: Dream Scene Parties. Then when COVID-19 hit, I used my degree again to open up a homeschool program with other certified teachers.**



In 2019, Annie created Dream Scene Parties in Troy, offering party planning services for children ages 3–13. Find out more at dreamsceneparties.com.



SEIZE THE DAY

OU alumnus shares his experience bicycling cross-country at the age of 70.

By Kelli M. Warshefski ✍️ Kevin Fales

John Springfield, CAS '70, has always had a curiosity about the world. He came to Oakland University during its early years – when Rochester was predominantly farmland and campus contained only a handful of structures. But OU offered Springfield new experiences, along with the promise of freedom and exploration.

In 1976, Springfield took his first solo cross-country bicycle tour from Washington State to Massachusetts. The 3,200-mile expedition took a mere 31 days. Forty-three years later — at the age of 70 — Springfield biked another solo cross-country tour, providing a lesson for us all to “seize the day.”

What motivated you to start bicycling these long distances?

I started when I was a teenager and bought my own 10-speed bike. The American Youth Hostels had some rides that I went on and a couple of them were in northern Michigan. And that’s when I discovered you could take these long bike trips. It was a way for me to explore the world really cheaply. I said, “This is great. I can bike wherever I want!”

What was your favorite part about that first solo trip?

I didn’t know if I was going to make it, but there I was always getting closer to Boston, where I live. I remember, when I made it to the Upper Peninsula and saw the Michigan sign, I just felt like I was home. I grew up in the Detroit area, and I still had 800, 900 miles to go. But there was something about seeing the Michigan sign. It helped me to keep going.

It sounds like that first trip was an emotional journey for you.

I knew it was a challenge and I wanted to see if I could do it. So, I flew out to Seattle and headed east. In a way, both tours were emotional at times, but for the most part, you’re in a groove and there’s something about the pedaling cadence. It’s not like a runner’s high, but it’s a meditative kind of space.

So, why did you decide to do it again?

When I turned 70 I thought, “Maybe I could try to do this cross-country trip, but do it the shortest way possible,” which means going through the southern route. I didn’t know if I was going to finish it. I didn’t really care. It was just nice to get out of the cold, snowy weather.

What helps keep you going during a trip like this?

I would only look one or maybe two days ahead, because if you started in Georgia and said, “I’m 70 years old, are you really going to make it to San Diego?” You’d say, “There’s no way.” But if you start in Georgia and you say, “Well, 70 miles down the road you’ll be in the panhandle of Florida.” And then there’s a little bit of Alabama you go through, and then a little bit of Mississippi, and so on. That’s what kept me going was those little milestones.

Which milestone was the most difficult?

It was day 43 of the 44-day trip. I set off from Brawley, California, heading to Jacumba Hot Springs, a total of 65 miles. Everything was okay for the first 45 miles. Then, I joined Interstate 8 and I knew I had to climb 3,200 feet through the mountains. As the interstate highway climbed, the temperature did too and I started drinking more water than planned. I was trying to figure out if I could ration my water and hopefully find an exit to stop. At 3,000 feet, though, I knew I was in trouble. All my water was gone, the temperature hit 100 degrees and

there was nowhere to stop. Then, ahead on the right, I spotted a pull-over stop and noticed a cistern full of dirty water. The sign said, ‘For radiators only. DO NOT drink this water.’ I wasn’t about to drink it, but I took off my bike helmet, dipped my hands in and splashed it over my head and down my back. This seemed to do the trick. My body cooled down enough to reach the 3,200-foot summit and I coasted down the final eight miles.

Which portion of the route was your favorite?

Well, it was a love-hate thing in the West Texas desert. This was a long part of the route and there weren’t too many towns or places to stay. But, it had a wide open feel with mesas off in the distance.

What was your biggest takeaway from this journey?

When I got done with it and said, “What was it all about?” Yeah, there was the adventure, but the mere fact of doing it. I can still do day trips now, but that may have been my last long trip. I don’t know yet. But I also lost a bunch of people during COVID, and so you just never know what’s going to happen. I think of people who have big dreams and they never try them — whether it’s taking a big trip or writing a book. Life is short. Don’t keep putting off your dreams. Seize the day. 🌄

Read more at oakland.edu/oumagazine.



A-MAJOR INFLUENCE

OU legacy student turns family passion into career ambitions.

By Joan Carleton  Robert Hall

Parrish Roberts, SBA '86, has always had a keen ear for music. Throughout his time at Oakland University studying general management and economics, he frequented Meadow Brook Amphitheatre and kept up with the latest Hi-Fi technology. Once his career launched at Blue Cross Blue Shield and his children were born, he spent weeknight evenings listening to jazz, hip-hop and rap.

“My sons would gather around me, and I assumed it was just so they could be close. I didn’t even realize that they were soaking a lot of that music in,” says Parrish.

For most parents, it’s near impossible to fully comprehend the impact on their children. For Parrish, many of the influences are quite clear. His passion for music, fond memories of Oakland University and the drive to make a difference in his community are now mirrored in his oldest son, PJ.

Parrish was a constant presence when PJ began exploring music on his own. Starting with choir in kindergarten, Parrish attended every talent show, musical and open-mic night. In early high school, PJ decided to turn this passion into a future career. Now, he’s at OU studying public relations and strategic communication, with sights set on Nashville or Los Angeles to launch a career in songwriting. And he continuously looks to Parrish for guidance and feedback.

“Quite often, my son sends me his music,” says Parrish. “Music tells a story, so I’ll provide input if I think there’s something he can tweak to make the story clearer.”

“Great music is timeless — that’s why I appreciate my dad’s critiques,” PJ chimes in. “He’s not taking the approach of current marketplace salability, but instead is coming from the perspective of great storytelling. And I take that to heart.”

Father and son’s mutual choice of OU for their undergraduate experience is, in large part, for similar reasons. Parrish chose OU for its beautiful campus and contemporary feel. And though the physical campus has changed over the years, Parrish’s anecdotes about college life at OU encouraged PJ to attend.

“Much of [my decision] was based on my dad’s enjoyment of



OU,” says PJ. “He could speak to being close to home yet feeling far enough away to still get that college experience — especially living on campus.”

Parrish also recalls that during the 1980s, the SBA had an extremely small African-American community, which meant a very tight-knit group. “I would be the only minority in most of my business classes, so we really developed a close bond and friendship,” he shares. “Our accountability for each other led to study groups where we would push each other to succeed.”

“This vibrant community he describes led me to feel like OU has a very home-like quality, with the opportunity to make potential friends for life,” says PJ.

In order to make a larger impact on diversity and inclusion efforts across OU, Parrish had joined the student council. PJ is continuing this mission, fully immersing himself in the OU community and working toward the same positive

impact. He currently serves as vice president of Gold Vibrations A Capella and director of diversity events with the Student Program Board, and previously served as director of diversity and inclusion for the OU Student Congress. And Parrish enjoys reconnecting with his OU spirit alongside his son, through basketball games and OU Alumni Association Black Alumni Chapter events.

“PJ tends to be active in those same manners, by trying to make a difference and establish fair representation. That was a mission of mine back then, and one that he’s carried on,” says Parrish.

PJ is also following in his father’s management footsteps through his internship as manager of the Good Vibes Only (GVO) hip-hop collective, which aims to explore the roots of hip hop through poetry, instruments and the establishment of a strong community.

“30-plus years of my career were in business management. Now PJ manages the GVO collective. Management is in his DNA, whether he realizes it or not,” says Parrish.

Even after graduating from OU and heading to the music city, father and son won’t be far.

“As a retiree, I am looking to move to a warmer climate — Phoenix or Atlanta. Nashville wasn’t on the list until he mentioned it,” explains Parrish. “But if he establishes roots there, that would be one of the areas I would consider.” ➤

Send us your legacy story at oakland.edu/oumagazine.



A PATH FORWARD

By Kristina Lindberg Garrett MacLean

In the midst of wrapping up her bachelor’s degree at Oakland University and raising a family, Sharon Sigler’s life was turned upside down. Sigler, SEHS ’80 and ’84, was abandoned by her husband after she gave birth to their second child. Suddenly a single mom, Sigler knew it was time to support her family and put her academic endeavors to an end. “It was very hard,” Sigler says.” I was working two, three jobs and trying to raise two little boys.”



At OU, she was approached by reading and language arts Professor Richard F. Barron, Ph.D., who encouraged Sigler to pursue a master’s in education. “I told him ‘I don’t really have the money to go on for my master’s,’” she recalls.

Dr. Barron told her he would assist her in getting a graduate

assistant position on campus — a job that would help pay for her classes and keep her work and studies in close proximity to each other. After interviewing with a graduate professor, who told her about the high demand for learning disabilities teachers, Sigler was awarded the position, where she worked for 20 hours per week. “It made a big

difference,” she says. “I couldn’t have earned my master’s if I hadn’t received the help.”

Sigler graduated with a Master of Arts in teaching with a major in reading and language arts and was able to find a job quickly because of her specialization in learning disabilities. “I kind of fell into it,” she says of being a learning disabilities teacher. “But it was a good fit for me.”

Sigler taught full time for 27 years in Lapeer Community Schools and substituted for another 15 years in other school districts. During her career as a K-6 educator, Sigler put special emphasis on service learning for her students, an effort that earned her the Michigan Governor’s Service Award as a service learning educator in 1997. Her love for service learning expanded well beyond Michigan’s borders: it afforded her the chance to travel to Russia and the Czech Republic. As a delegate for People to People International — an organization established by the former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower to enhance international understanding and friendship through educational, cultural and humanitarian activities — Sigler visited local schools and learned from educators about their methods of teaching.

Once her children were older, Sigler pursued her life-long dream of working as an actress. Besides being a teacher, she has appeared in commercials, and feature and independent films and also has performed on stage at local theaters.

Looking back, Sigler says she realizes that Dr. Barron’s help was a defining moment in her life. “I always gave my thanks to that professor because my life would have been a lot different without him,” she says. ➤

Share your defining OU Moment at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

By Kelli M. Warshelski

© Robert Hall

Last issue, we introduced our readers to Jonathan Weyhrauch, founder of Reroot Pontiac, a nonprofit organization that converts blighted properties to sustainable, environmental spaces. And while we learned a bit about Weyhrauch's life, there is more to discover about the Reroot Environmental Network. This is an extension of "Overcoming the Odds" in the OU Magazine Spring 2021 Issue, that can be found at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

"Our goal is to build up the Reroot Environmental Network and take its initiative to other areas impacted by economic and environmental justice issues," says Jon Ivar Weyhrauch, CAS '15. "Our integrated style of education takes systems-based understanding and teaches communities about sustainability and public health."

Reroot is ever-evolving. The nonprofit Pontiac-based organization has grown dramatically since its inception in 2016, currently occupying 64 lots that total 14 acres in the city's neighborhoods. This much space requires constant maintenance. Reroot Pontiac normally relies on corporate partners, local businesses and community volunteers to help maintain the lots' gardens, orchards and project construction. In 2020, however, Reroot took a big hit from the pandemic, losing nearly

100 percent of their funding and volunteer force.

"Pre-pandemic, GM would send out about 30 people regularly to help maintain lots and further projects," he continues. "All that stopped during COVID, and now

we're just starting to pick back up. In fact, DTE is volunteering to come out and help finish some of the projects that have been on hold since the pandemic."

Aside from corporate partnerships, Reroot Pontiac

also finds help from Oakland University students and alumni. Most notably, the organization offers internships for students in a variety of majors, from marketing to biology. And students from OU's nonprofit management program have volunteered to

assist with grant-writing for funding proposals.

"It's really important for us to have funding to complete these projects so we can get back to doing what we need to do," says Weyhrauch.

Weyhrauch hopes to continue to expand Reroot beyond Pontiac, initially branching out into Detroit and Flint. He has seen firsthand the impact Reroot has on the Pontiac neighborhoods and strives to bring similar changes to other urban communities.

"Our main building sits on what was the heroin highway of Pontiac; 300 cars an hour went through to pick up heroin and there were 17 active heroin houses in this six-block neighborhood," Weyhrauch

says. "We've watched this activity completely diminish. It's been great to see societal development mirroring ecological development." 🍂

Get involved at
rerootpontiac.org.

BRANCHING OUT

CLASS NOTES

Nancy (Knisley) Zentis

Human Resource Development, SEHS '79

Nancy had a successful career in the field of human resources, learning and development and organization development. In 1990, she created the Institute of Organizational Development (IOD), to provide online certification programs for those interested in a career in the field of Organizational Development (OD). The institute provides certifications in over 30 countries, including Sunyani, Ghana, where they've built a college to teach OD bachelor's and master's degrees, and Kingston, Jamaica, where they teach OD to business professionals. ➤



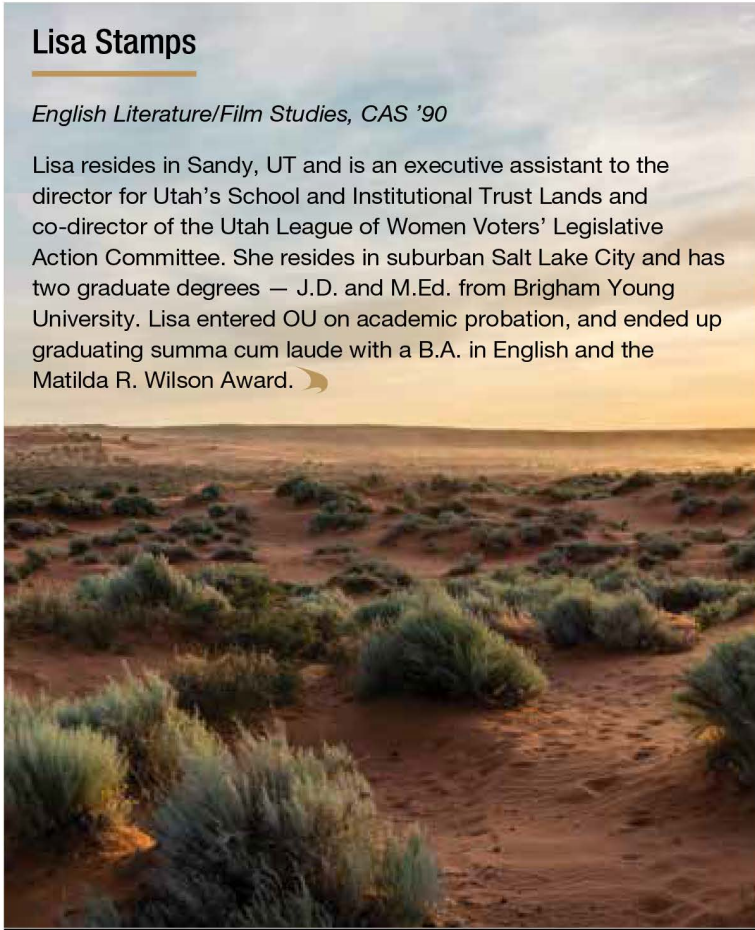
VOLUNTEER WITH YOUR ALMA MATER

at oakland.edu/alumni/volunteer

Lisa Stamps

English Literature/Film Studies, CAS '90

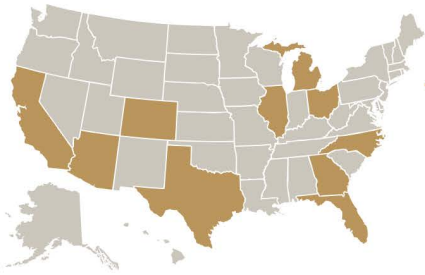
Lisa resides in Sandy, UT and is an executive assistant to the director for Utah's School and Institutional Trust Lands and co-director of the Utah League of Women Voters' Legislative Action Committee. She resides in suburban Salt Lake City and has two graduate degrees — J.D. and M.Ed. from Brigham Young University. Lisa entered OU on academic probation, and ended up graduating summa cum laude with a B.A. in English and the Matilda R. Wilson Award. ➤



Tony Sakich

Marketing, SBA '09

In 2017, Tony was awarded the Oakland University Young Alumni Association's 10 Within 10 Award for his early experiences working in Bitcoin. Since then, he was a co-founding member of a project called Augur — a decentralized prediction market platform with a current market cap of \$278 million. Augur was the very first app built on the Ethereum ecosystem (Ethereum being the second most valuable cryptocurrency). With this success, Tony was able to retire at the age of 32 and is enjoying his retirement in Atlanta, Georgia. ➤



TOP 10 ALUMNI LOCATIONS

as of July 2021

MICHIGAN 95,761	TEXAS 1,501	NORTH CAROLINA 962
FLORIDA 2,669	ILLINOIS 1,240	GEORGIA 747
CALIFORNIA 2,208	OHIO 1,123	COLORADO 704
	ARIZONA 1,018	



Chris Van Dan Elzen

Robotic Systems, Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, and Artificial Intelligence/Control, SECS '94, '95, '96, '97

Chris Van Dan Elzen is highly involved on campus, serving as the chair of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Board of Advisors and a member of the Alumni Board of Directors. Van Dan Elzen's time at OU focused primarily on vehicle autonomy and artificial intelligence learning. He remains in that field as the executive vice president of Radar Product Area at Veoneer, a company that outfits vehicles with autonomous functions that saves lives. Van Dan Elzen met his wife at OU and says his time there prepared him for his future and was formative to his life. ➤

WE WANT YOUR NEWS!

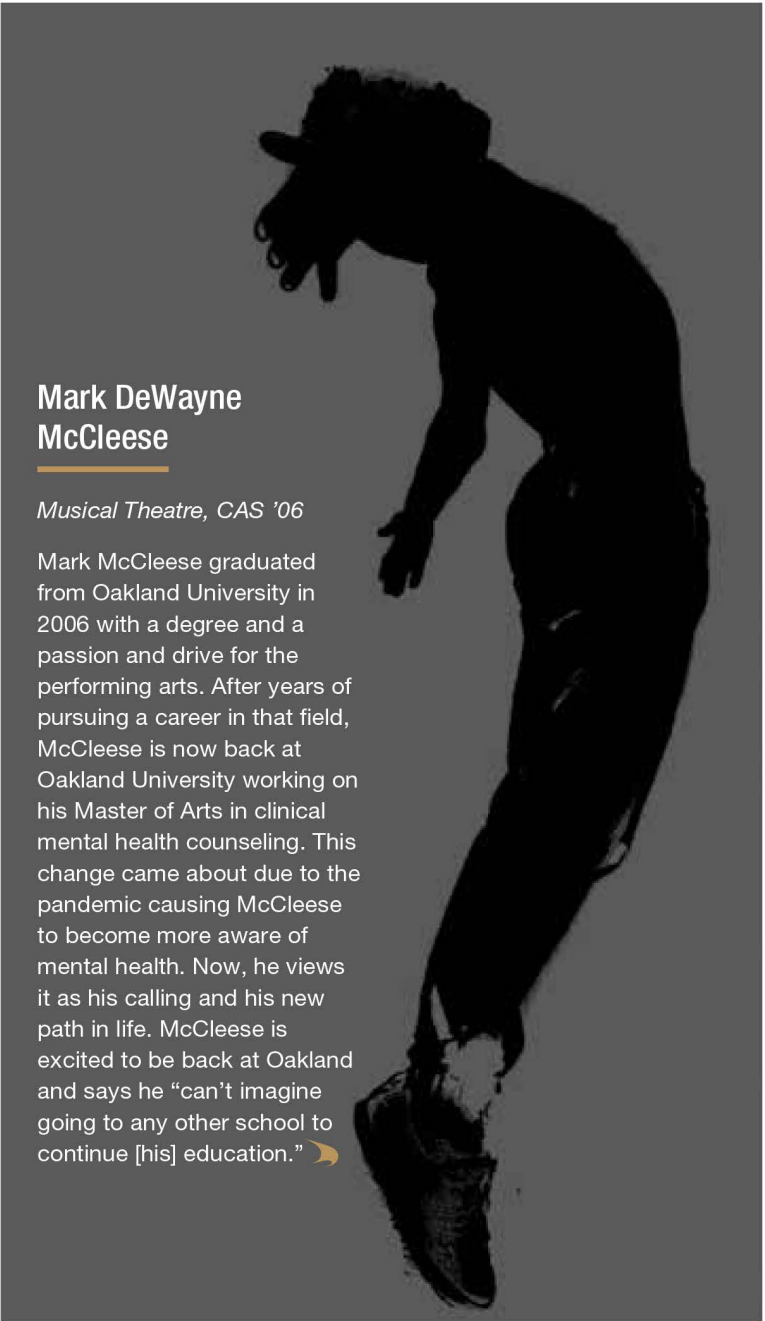
Email us updates on your life after
OU at oumag@oakland.edu

Read more class notes at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

Mark DeWayne McCleese

Musical Theatre, CAS '06

Mark McCleese graduated from Oakland University in 2006 with a degree and a passion and drive for the performing arts. After years of pursuing a career in that field, McCleese is now back at Oakland University working on his Master of Arts in clinical mental health counseling. This change came about due to the pandemic causing McCleese to become more aware of mental health. Now, he views it as his calling and his new path in life. McCleese is excited to be back at Oakland and says he "can't imagine going to any other school to continue [his] education." ➤



MORE THAN
10%
OF ALUMNI HAVE TWO
OR MORE DEGREES



FINDING COMMON GROUND

How OU taught one alumnus to prioritize trust and understanding in politics.

By Patrick Dunn © Robert Hall

Stacie Behler, CAS '92, was disappointed when she “literally ran out of money and came home” to Sterling Heights from Michigan State University (MSU) in 1989, and began her political science studies at Oakland University. But in retrospect, she says, “it was the exact thing that was supposed to happen.”

Today Behler is the group vice president for public affairs and communications at Meijer, as well as the executive director of the Meijer Foundation. She also has extensive legal experience, having worked as Meijer’s senior legal counsel and as an attorney at Grand Rapids-based Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge. But she faced considerable challenges when she first set out to pursue her dream of a career in law and policy.

Behler’s parents both worked extremely hard and, while they supported her as a first-generation college student, she says the idea of going to college was a bit “foreign to them” and they were nervous about the long and short term costs connected to getting a college degree.



Stacie Behler and Professor Shelly Appleton 1992



"I watched my parents work incredibly hard but not have and do everything they wanted," she says. "I wanted more and knew that college would allow me more financial stability."

After a year at MSU exhausted her financial resources, Behler knew she'd have to continue her education somewhere near her parents' house and work while taking classes. The obvious answer was OU, but Behler says she struggled with "a lot of misconceptions" about OU before she started taking classes there. She'd thought of OU as a commuter school that didn't have much campus life, with lots of students older than her going back to finish their degrees. Now she says some of her assumptions were plain wrong — while others were true, "but just in a wonderful way."

"Oakland was the perfect place for me," she says. "I can't imagine getting through college anywhere else."

Building a community

One of the key ways in which OU defied Behler's expectations was in her experience with her fellow students. Although she did meet many non-traditional students, including working parents, she bonded closely with and drew inspiration from them. Behler worked days at a small family office and took night classes for most of her time at OU. Many of her older fellow students related to her challenges.

"They took it seriously," she says. "They worked hard and they were real role models for me as I tried to balance some of the same things they were balancing around working full-time and trying to complete degrees quickly."

Behler says she also appreciated the way her older classmates would "bring a willingness to talk about their life experience into the classroom." She appreciated

the diversity of experience they brought to class and the way they made discussion "so much richer." She recalls doing group work for certain classes with fellow students whose family and work commitments required them to host the group in their homes, rather than on campus or another public place.

"I was a 19- or 20-year-old student and had my own challenges, but these folks were sitting in their living room with their 8-year-old eating dinner in the kitchen while we're working on our homework," Behler says. "Just watching the resilience of those students was life-changing. I think it reminded me never to take things for granted, that going to college was a gift, that having these opportunities to learn was not something that most people got."

Having formed a robust friend group, Behler was also surprised to find that she developed a strong sense of campus life. She

says she found OU's campus to be a "safe and quiet place to study," even though "there were only a handful of places to hang out" at the time. Behler recalls the Oakland Center being just the basement of a building, with cafeteria tables and a couple of restaurants. But, she says, "it was everything."

"I really got that college experience and that was not what I expected," she says. "It really was a great campus life and a beautiful campus, even back then."

A life-changing mentor

Behler also found crucial support in OU staff — most notably from now-retired political science professor Shelly Appleton, who she says "changed my life."

"He was just transformational. I don't think I would have been able to navigate through college without someone like him constantly supporting me."

“

I think he understood my circumstances and what I was working to accomplish. He had children of his own. But I think he could really connect with where I was emotionally. It was a lot to get through with not a lot of free time. He was just always a good listener and encourager.

”

Behler had her first class with Appleton in her sophomore year and says she's "so disappointed for everyone who didn't have a chance to get to meet him."

"He was a pistol," she says.

"He was very passionate about politics — not partisan politics, but the philosophies and the historical nature of where we were as a country and why we were there."

Behler tried to take every class of Appleton's that she could, and the two became friends. When he learned she was trying to make some extra money to get through school, he offered her a job as his teaching assistant. He later got her a job doing administrative work in the provost's office, where he was associate provost for undergraduate studies.

"I think he understood my circumstances and what I was working to accomplish. He had children of his own,"

she says. "But I think he could really connect with where I was emotionally. It was a lot to get through with not a lot of free time. He was just always a good listener and encourager."

Appleton also helped shape Behler's path post-graduation. He wrote recommendations for her when she was applying to law schools. Behler ended up attending the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. And while accepted and was offered scholarships to attend school in Southeast Michigan, she says Appleton encouraged her to leave Michigan and strike out on her own.

"It was time," she says. "I needed an independent experience like that, and it helped me grow and develop confidence that I didn't have before then. In the big picture, it's just what I needed to grow up."



Convening conversations

After Behler graduated from OU in 1992, she remained involved on campus. Notably, in 2018, OU political science professor David Dulio recruited her to join the founding advisory board for the OU Center for Civic Engagement (CCE). CCE aims to act as a "convener of conversations," engaging a variety of stakeholders in productive, non-partisan dialogue on local, state and federal political issues. But before CCE got off the ground, Director Dulio pulled together a group of thought leaders from across the state to help shape its mission. He says Behler was a natural choice for the board.

"She has a long and distinguished career in and around Michigan politics, Michigan policy and philanthropy," Dulio says. "She's a Golden Grizzly that we want to tout and proudly claim as one of ours."

Erin Sudrovech, OU's director of alumni engagement, was on CCE's internal advisory board. She says getting a whole new organization off the ground was no easy feat, but Behler rose to the challenge.

"As a founding member, it's really important for you to have the time to dig in a little bit more and be comfortable trying to

create strategy, not just execute it," Sudrovech says. "Stacie was really well suited for that."

In addition to her work on CCE, Behler also received OU's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2014 and spoke at OU's 2016 commencement ceremony. Behler now lives in Grand Rapids and makes no bones about the fact that she hopes to get an OU alumni chapter on the west side of the state off the ground. In the meantime, Sudrovech says she values Behler's willingness to assist with planning events for alumni in her region.

"She's been a big part of championing those efforts," Sudrovech says. "She was the one who was hooking us up with space and recommending where we should go to host something. That was just really helpful for us to have boots on the ground over there."

Behler's efforts at OU as an alumnus seem to reflect the broader way she approaches her passion for politics — as a "convener of conversations," to use CCE's parlance. Like her mentor, Appleton, she's not interested in partisanship. She notes that she and her husband bought a home larger than they needed in Grand Rapids so they could throw regular fundraisers — although he is a Democrat and she is a Republican. But

she sees those events as places where "people can come and build relationships based on trust and understanding, not on partisanship." And she traces that approach back to her time at OU.

"My OU education informs me in the understanding that, while we may not have common background or shared experience, there's much to be learned from each other," Behler says. "Oftentimes we don't see each other because we don't want to. We just want to see what's different or the same. What Oakland taught me was to listen and to be open to people who aren't like me." ➤

Explore more alumni stories at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

“

My OU education informs me in the understanding that, while we may not have common background or shared experience, there's much to be learned from each other.

”



STAY CONNECTED

Alumni of Oakland University are important and valuable members of the Golden Grizzlies family. Every year, thousands of alumni stay connected to OU by:

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- Volunteering at an Event
- Providing Strategic Insight
- Visiting Campus
- Becoming a Digital Ambassador

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CAMPUS *Highlights*

“
I am humbled by the endorsement from the board of trustees, and I am excited about the promise of a university with limitless potential.

”
**PRESIDENT ORA HIRSCH
PESCOVITZ**
page 35

The Oakland University campus community is ever-evolving. Through keeping in touch with your alma mater, you can witness these changes firsthand. Your memories keep OU rooted in its rich history, and your love for campus continues to help it grow.

Oakland University professor speaks at Holocaust Memorial Center exhibit

In 1945, a Soviet doctor found a school notebook in the liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp. It was a diary written by Rywka Lipszyc, a teenager in the Łódź Ghetto, between October 1943 and April 1944. The contents were the testament of a Jewish girl who lost her siblings and parents, but never lost hope despite moments of doubt.

More than 60 years after its discovery, the diary traveled to the United States, where it was translated from Polish, supplemented with commentaries and published in book form. OU’s Derek Hastings, an associate professor of history, walked attendees through this time in history when Rywka penned her diary.

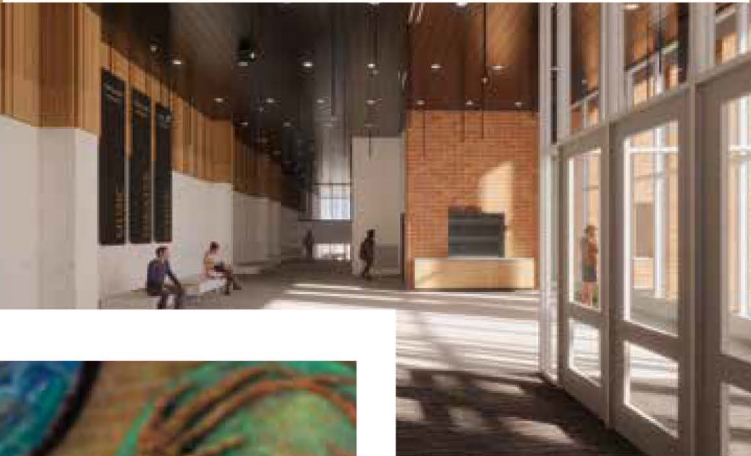
This lecture was sponsored by the Cis Maisel Center for Judaic Studies and Community Engagement.



OU’s Varner Hall to undergo ‘much-needed’ renovations as part of \$45 million project

Oakland University’s Varner Hall will be undergoing some long-awaited and much-needed renovations over the next few years as part of a \$45 million improvement project authorized by the Board of Trustees.

“The primary goal of this project is to upgrade the aging infrastructure; renovate/replace air handling units, elevators, electrical systems and lighting, add sprinklers throughout the building, replace windows and ensure the roof withstands the next 20 years,” says Susan Riley, senior project manager, OU Capital Planning and Design. “We will also bring the building up to current ADA standards and improve the public and student spaces.”



OU offering new Orthotist and Prosthetist Assistant Studies specialization

A new Orthotist and Prosthetist Assistant Studies (OPA) specialization is being offered within the Bachelor of Science in exercise science degree program in the Department of Human Movement Science at Oakland University.

Combining a unique blend of disciplines (human movement, materials science, and engineering), the 26-credit hour OPA specialization prepares students with the skills needed to serve patients in many ways similar to other health care providers. In addition, a new 18-credit OPA minor is available to students in any major across the university.



OU names new executive director for Meadow Brook Hall

William “Bill” Matt was named the new executive director of Meadow Brook Hall. With a 20-year career in higher education, Matt has provided visionary leadership in a variety of professional and community roles focused on arts and culture.

“We are thrilled to welcome Bill Matt to the Oakland University family,” says Michael Westfall, vice president for University Advancement. “The Meadow Brook Estate holds a special place of great tradition and pride within the university. Matt’s depth of museum experience, coupled with a strong background within higher education, will ensure that the estate will continue to be preserved as a vibrant centerpiece for the entire community.”



OU Trustees approve three-year contract extension for President Pescovitz

The Oakland University Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve a three-year contract extension for President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D., who began her tenure in July 2017. The contract runs through June 2025.

“We are very fortunate to have President Pescovitz leading Oakland University,” says Oakland University Board Trustee Emeritus Tonya Allen. “Her relentless drive, engaging personality, commitment to excellence and diversity, generosity and uncompromising vision make her an inspirational and extremely effective leader.”



Oakland University to offer Master of Social Work degree program

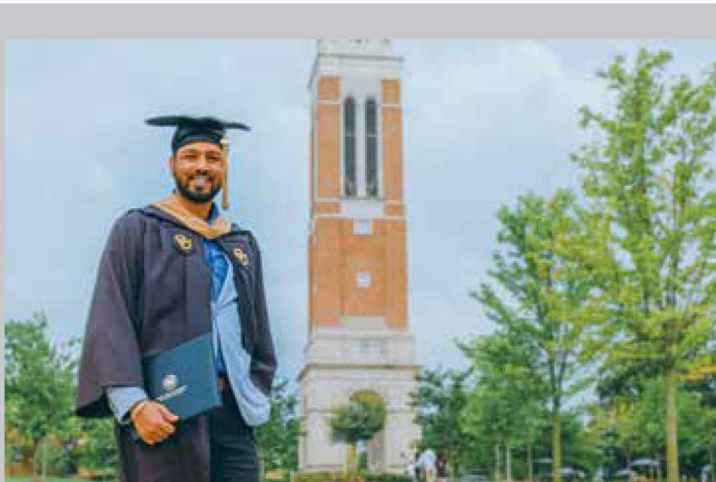
Beginning in July 2022, Oakland University will offer a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree program that provides students with the requisite theoretical knowledge, evidence-based interventions and ethical framework for advanced social work practice with diverse client systems.

“Oakland University’s MSW students will be uniquely trained through an advanced generalist integrated curriculum that merges both the ‘clinical’ and ‘macro’ areas of practice in a more contemporary and transformative approach to social work practice,” says Dr. Maria Beam, director of social work at OU.

Oakland MBA grad wins nationwide case competition

Recent Oakland University graduate Shreyas Gavit was part of an innovative team that won the Salesforce Career Journey with Deloitte, a case study competition in which college students were tasked with helping a fictional online retailer meet recruiting and hiring challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

“Our solution used the Salesforce platform to build out a new recruiting app that optimizes the candidate and hiring manager experience,” he explains. “We used the latest features from the winter ’21 release, which allowed us to make a solution using features that have not been implemented in the market.” 🐾



LEARN AND ENGAGE

with OU webinars at alumlc.org/oakland

Kate Nye wins silver medal at Tokyo Olympics

Oakland University student Kate Nye powered her way to the podium on Sunday, winning a silver medal in the women’s 76-kilogram/156-pound weightlifting event at the Tokyo Olympics.

The 22-year-old lifted a total of 549 pounds, between a 245-pound snatch and a 304-pound clean-and-jerk, to achieve the best U.S. Olympic weightlifting finish since 2000. The total and clean-and-jerk were personal bests for Nye, who has cemented her status as a world-class weightlifter despite entering the sport just five years ago. 🐾



© Sophie Hume



Be proud to Be Golden

What does it mean to Be Golden? It’s a standard of excellence we strive for and set. It means believing in yourself, being confident, and surrounding yourself with others who nurture your confidence and challenge you to be your best. To be empowered — and be a true leader.

Whether you are an alum, a community member, corporate partner or donor, OU will always inspire and encourage you to Be Golden. Please follow the official OU social media channels to explore OU’s golden moments and learn more about the Be Golden campaign. 🐾



OU’s CAIR Program fosters mutually beneficial partnerships between hosts, international students

The CAIR Program (Creating American-International Relationships) at Oakland University offers a unique opportunity for international students to be matched with OU faculty, staff and community families for friendship, conversation and cultural exchange.

“Often, people are afraid that they won’t have time to spare for another commitment to fit in their lives, but I can’t tell you how many times over the years the hosts came up to me, thanking me and telling me that it was the best experience and they were the one benefiting from it,” says Petra Knoche, international adviser with the International Students and Scholars Office and the Office of Global Engagement. 🐾

OU paralegal program ranked best in state by Michigan Lawyers Weekly readers

Oakland University’s paralegal certificate program was recently ranked as the “Best Paralegal Program” in the state of Michigan in the category of Education by Michigan Lawyers Weekly based on the results of its 2021 Reader Rankings Survey.

“As the program director of the paralegal program at Oakland University, I am proud of our instructors and advisory board for all the time and effort they continually invest into the program to achieve the ranking of the best paralegal program in the state by the readers of Michigan Lawyers Weekly,” says Barbara Lister-Tait, director of OU’s paralegal program. 🐾



Watch a performance.
Visit the art gallery.
Attend a basketball game.

Check out the variety of events on OU’s campus
at calendar.oakland.edu.



Oakland University recognized for eight top degree programs in the U.S.

Oakland University has been awarded top ranking status for multiple degree programs by Intelligent.com. The university was listed among thousands of public institutions in the nation, and the comprehensive research guide is based on an assessment of 2,277 accredited colleges and universities. Each program is evaluated based on curriculum quality, graduation rate, reputation and post-graduate employment.

These are the ranked categories:

- Project Management Degree Programs
- Electrical Engineering Degree Programs
- Information Technology Degree Programs
- RN to BSN Programs
- Master’s in Engineering Management Degree Programs
- Master’s in Public Safety Administration Degree Programs
- Colleges in Michigan
- Master’s in Industrial Engineering Degree Programs 🐾

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WELCOME BACK



HOMECOMING 2021

Welcome back to campus

Thousands of OU alumni, students, parents, faculty, staff, friends and family members flocked back to campus for the annual Homecoming and Reunion Weekend October 8–9, 2021. After a virtual homecoming celebration in 2020, many alumni expressed enthusiasm to be back on campus for traditional events like athletics contests and reunion gatherings.

“Getting back on campus with fellow alumni was such an incredible experience,”

says Mark Guthrie, SECS '86 and SBA '91, chair of the OU Alumni Association Board of Directors. “I can’t even begin to describe the

feeling of walking through the Oakland Center, seeing familiar faces and catching up. Sitting in the stands at the soccer game, cheering on the team and seeing everyone enjoying just being together again made it a perfect weekend.”

The success of virtual programming during the 2020 homecoming week did impact some events this year, including a once-in-a-lifetime “OU History Makers” online panel discussion of former OU leadership, including Shelly Appleton, Bill Connellan and former provost Fred Obear.

“This year we were able to build on our successes from both the traditional on-campus events as well as the virtual opportunities that were so well-received last year,” says Erin Sudrovec, director of alumni engagement. “No matter how you decide to participate, homecoming will always be a great time to reconnect.” ➤

Discover more alumni events at calendar.oakland.edu/alumni.

FAMILY TRADITION

By Rebecca Steketee 📷 Robert Hall

Senior Micah Dymond will soon join ranks with her parents, brother and fiancé when she graduates next year with her double degrees in communication and Spanish language and literature. As part of a household of Oakland University alumni, Dymond chose to attend OU because it is an affordable option and close to her hometown.

Upon her arrival, Dymond enthusiastically embraced campus life. Her initial participation began with a summer position in the Office of Student Involvement (OSI), where she helped behind the scenes of Grizzfest, connecting students with local businesses. That position eventually led to becoming a leadership consultant with the OSI, allowing her to gain experience presenting workshops and organizing community service events for OU students.

"I know that whatever job field I go into, I will be dedicated to helping individuals, especially those who may be less privileged," explains Dymond.

Working at the OU Tutoring Center, Dymond has many opportunities to improve her communication skills and, simultaneously, help other students be academically successful. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she worked on developing interactive training videos for tutors which

focused on improving their communication skills and deepening their perspectives. Dymond is also focused on how the COVID-19 pandemic affected education, especially in the Spanish-speaking community in Pontiac. She wants to learn more about the gaps in education and provide recommendations to local policy makers so that the best interests of all children are advanced for the future.

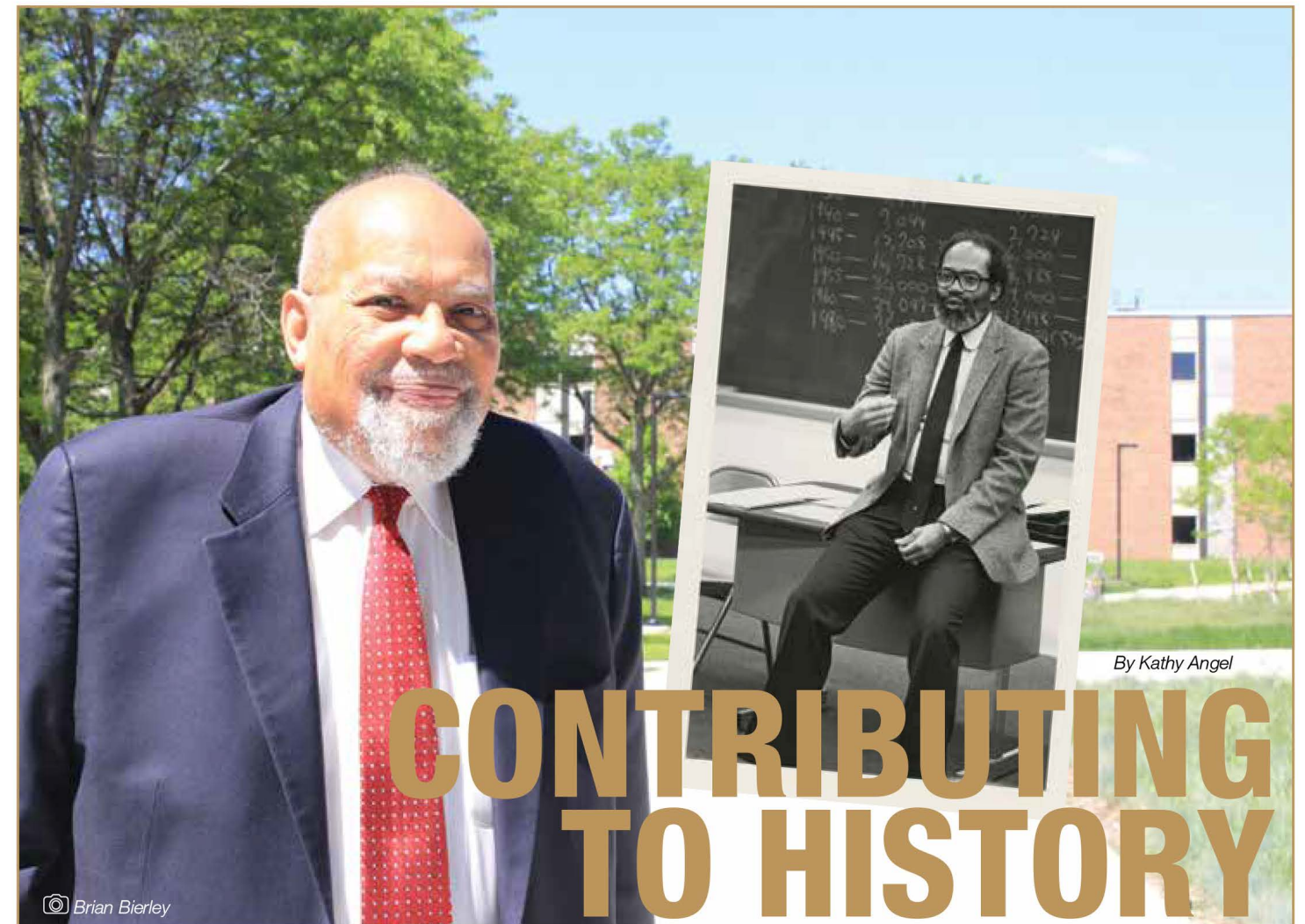
Dymond dreams of becoming a lawyer and eventually a judge. She plans to use her Spanish to become an advocate for individuals who suffer from a language barrier while practicing immigration, family or civil rights law. Her current internship at Clean Fuels Michigan gives her an edge on that since it exposes her to new settings at the governmental level as well as with the community.

"This opportunity with Clean Fuels Michigan has exposed me to new settings, like observing House Energy Committee hearings at the State Capitol," says Dymond. "It has also taught me about advocacy, policy, grant writing and so much more."

Armed with her OU education, and the experiences wrought from her campus involvement and internships, Dymond's success will no doubt make her family of Oakland alumni proud. ➤

Learn more about the opportunities OU offers students on campus at oakland.edu/osi.

Micah (center) with her family of OU graduates.



When you love something, keep doing it.

For Oakland University Professor De Witt S. Dykes, a love of history has kept him busy, both in and out of the classroom, for more than 52 years.

Dykes came to OU in 1969, thrilled by the opportunity to develop and teach a broad range of courses, including American history, history of American cities, history of American families, black history, history of African American women and more.

"I've been fortunate to be at OU where I could have a long career," says Dykes. "The university has been very supportive, a very good place to work. I've enjoyed both the faculty and staff."

Dykes also enjoys the ongoing relationships with students, some of whom still keep in touch after graduation. A few years ago, he had lunch with a former student who became the head archivist for the state of California.

Outside of the classroom, Dykes crafted two presentations for OU's History Comes Alive speaker series: "The Underground Railroad: Legend vs. History" — a talk he also shared with the Detroit Historical Society upon invitation from a former student — and "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Fight against Racism, Poverty and War."

Beyond the university, Dykes has 44 historical articles and nine book chapters to his name. He co-founded the Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society, an organization dedicated to the research and preservation of African-American family history. With similar intent, he co-founded the Michigan Black History Network, whose aim was to promote historical knowledge of African Americans in Michigan. Dykes was also part of exhibit planning committees at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and the Detroit Historical Museum.

In recent months, Dykes has offered virtual lectures to nine different genealogical and historical organizations. His lectures include "The History of Blacks in Michigan," "How Africans Became African Americans" and a three-hour talk for the Historical Society of Michigan on African-American genealogy.

"One of the reasons why I like both Oakland University and Detroit is that there is so much intellectual activity at different levels," says Dykes.

In 2019, Dykes received the Michigan Chronicle's "Man of Excellence" award, which celebrates local African-American men for their leadership and achievements. ➤

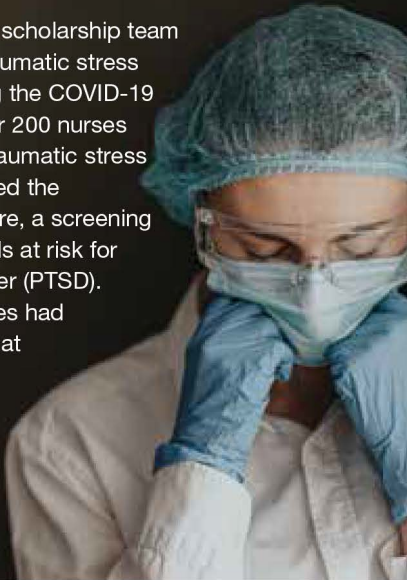
Discover more about the history department's extraordinary faculty at oakland.edu/history.

RESEARCH

Nursing Workforce Issues

Kristen Munyan, DNP | Assistant Professor, Nursing

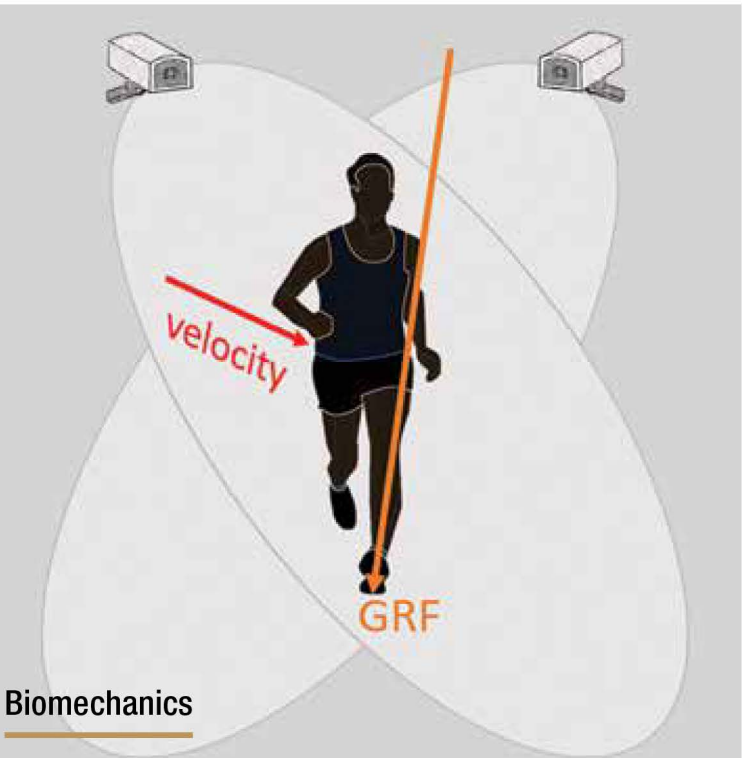
In Spring 2020, Dr. Munyan’s scholarship team examined the incidence of traumatic stress among frontline nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic. They sampled over 200 nurses who reported high levels of traumatic stress related to their work. They used the Traumatic Stress Questionnaire, a screening tool used to identify individuals at risk for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). More than 65 percent of nurses had scores above the threshold that indicated risk for developing PTSD. ➡



Geochemical Processes

Ziming Yang, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Geochemistry and Environmental Science

Dr. Yang’s team’s research includes studying organic geochemical processes in the hydrothermal systems on Earth and beyond. They design and carry out experiments to simulate natural hydrothermal environments, to understand the reaction pathways and mechanisms with respect to prebiotic synthesis and the origin of life. They also explore the potential application of Earth-abundant materials in green and sustainable chemistry. They are also interested in biogeochemical (microbial) processes in soil and aquatic ecosystems, including the Arctic tundra, wetlands and the Great Lakes. One of their current projects focuses on transformation and cycling of soil organic carbon, phosphorus and pollutants (e.g., mercury) in the Lake Michigan sand dune ecosystem. ➡



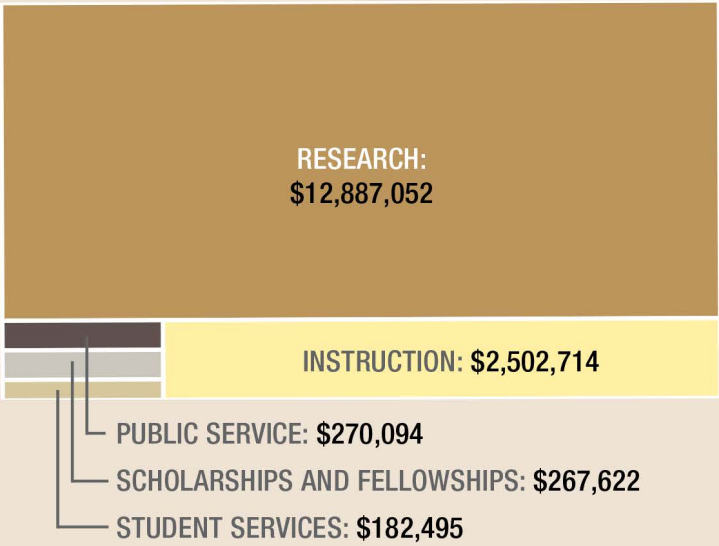
Biomechanics

Joshua Haworth, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Human Movement Science

Dr. Haworth studies sensorimotor mechanisms underlying human movement. As co-director of the OU BEAR Lab (Biomechanics, Ergonomics and Abilities Research), Dr. Haworth, with physical therapy and medicine students, focuses on developing knowledge and methods to support patient-centered physical medicine including advanced health monitoring and care delivery. The state-of-the-art space is designed and equipped to measure and modify various aspects of mobility and state of mind, using markerless 3D motion capture, force plates, EMG, eye tracking and computer-vision based affect assessment. Current studies examine barriers to mobility in persons with osteoarthritis, cancer survivorship, autism and other special populations. ➡

RESEARCH FUNDING AWARDS

Purpose of Funding FY 2021



20 Hz

40 Hz

100 Hz

200 Hz

0 dB

-50 dB

Computational Physics

Peter Elphick | Graduate Student, Physics

Elphick’s current research is centered on spectrum analysis using a nanoscale device called a Spin Torque Nano Oscillator (STNO). The STNO is ultra fast and can scan over a wide microwave frequency range in a small amount of time relative to the time scale of microwaves. Due to its construction, it eliminates the need for some supporting circuitry and is appealing to manufacturing due to the fact that it is complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor (CMOS) compatible. The research is focused on studying the effects of the STNO’s imperfections on its performance in spectrum analysis. ➡

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Macro and Regional Economics

Nivedita Mukherji, Ph.D.
Associate Provost, Faculty Affairs and Professor, Economics

Using knowledge flows and regional economic characteristics, Dr. Mukherji’s team has developed innovation absorptive capacities for U.S. metropolitan statistical areas. These absorptive capacities are found to be important for regional economic performance. During the early stages of the pandemic, as cases and mortality data were published on a daily basis, it became evident that there were large disparities in the incidence and mortality rates across regions. Dr. Mukherji developed an index that captured the vulnerabilities of 770 counties across the U.S. to the virus. This index demonstrates the vulnerability of the counties depending on socioeconomic and demographic conditions. These indexes can be developed for infectious diseases to prepare for future health crises. ➡

Criminal Justice and Immigration

Watoji Rabii, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Criminology and Sociology

Dr. Rabii is a qualitative researcher whose primary training is in criminology and urban sociology. His research focuses on the sociology of race and ethnicity, masculinity and immigration. The research can be categorized into two tracks. First, exploring how positive discourses about race, immigration and masculinity mask and perpetuate inequalities. The second focuses on the experiences of immigrants and people of color within the criminal justice and immigration justice system. Important to the research are the concepts of colorblindness, hybrid masculinities and crimmigration. ➡

Biochemistry

Sarah A. Denha | Graduate Student, Chemistry

Denha works in Adam Avery, Ph.D., lab, researching how mutations in a protein called β III-spectrin causes the neurodegenerative disease spinocerebellar ataxia type 5 (SCA5). SCA5 affects the cerebellum, which is responsible for balance and movement coordination. Understanding the underlying mechanism by which mutant β III-spectrin affects the normal function of the neurons helps in developing future therapeutics for the currently untreatable SCA5. To understand the disease mechanism, Denha employs a unique combination of assays ranging from biochemistry and biophysics, to fruit fly genetics. ➤



Were you involved in research?

What do you want to read more about?

Is community research important to you?

Let us know at oumagazine@oakland.edu



Human Computer Interaction

Douglas Zytke, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Computer Science and Engineering

Computers are dangerous. OK, not computers themselves, but the way they're used to communicate with strangers online and face-to-face. Dr. Zytke's research explores and designs solutions for risk of harm associated with computer-mediated communication, particularly against women and LGBTQ people, such as sexual violence and harassment. He's currently exploring AI and virtual reality as design "materials" for these solutions. He's using participatory design to enable women to craft new AI interventions for safety while using social matching systems such as dating apps. He's also exploring the role of virtual reality storytelling to impact attitudes and behavior around public health issues. ➤

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT TOP 5 RANKINGS FOR RESEARCH FUNDING

FY 2021

— 1 —

CHEMISTRY
\$4,089,796

— 2 —

FOUNDATIONAL MEDICAL STUDIES
\$2,497,150

— 3 —

EYE RESEARCH INSTITUTE
\$1,967,042

— 4 —

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING
\$1,434,391

— 5 —

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
\$882,603

ACADEMIC *Spotlight*

“

Many people played an influential role in shaping my career. I embraced getting involved in this mentor program to pay it forward.

”

MEGHAN MACDONALD,
SBA '12
page 49

Oakland University's academic programs do exceptional work every day – not only in educating students, but through community advocacy, securing grants and creating new programs. These schools are empowering the next generation of OU alumni.

Telehealth Counseling Services Implemented on Campus

Experts have reported a spike in telehealth, or virtual, counseling services, with 83 percent of individuals expected to utilize telehealth counseling even after the pandemic resolves. Counselors at Oakland University have seen the effects of offering a virtual counseling option firsthand and claim it could be groundbreaking in their approach to their practice. ➤

Building Confidence Through STEM

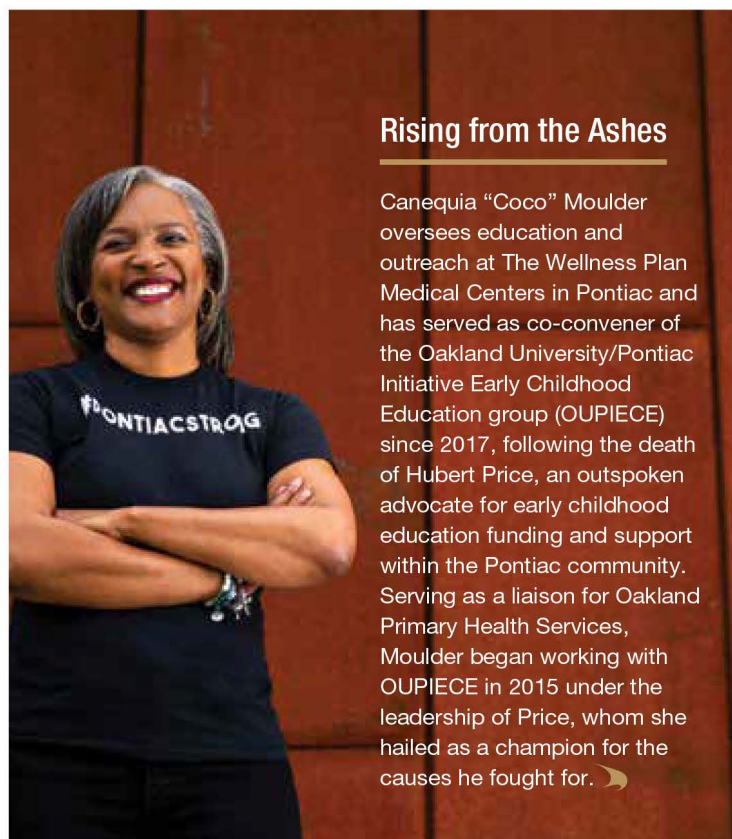
As a full-time teacher at Marian High School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, Stephanie McRoberts has always had a love for math and science and has made it her goal to share that love with her students.

“I love helping young women realize that it’s not perfection that makes someone great, it’s the drive to keep going,” McRoberts said. To continue fostering her passion and to better serve her students, she earned a Master of Education in teacher leadership degree from OU in 2015. ➤



Rising from the Ashes

Canequia “Coco” Moulder oversees education and outreach at The Wellness Plan Medical Centers in Pontiac and has served as co-convener of the Oakland University/Pontiac Initiative Early Childhood Education group (OUIECE) since 2017, following the death of Hubert Price, an outspoken advocate for early childhood education funding and support within the Pontiac community. Serving as a liaison for Oakland Primary Health Services, Moulder began working with OUIECE in 2015 under the leadership of Price, whom she hailed as a champion for the causes he fought for. ➤



Mentoring the Next Generation of EHS Professionals

Karly St. Aubin will receive her Bachelor of Science in environmental health and safety (EHS) in April 2021. She has excelled in the classroom and beyond during her time as an OU student. St. Aubin currently serves as president of the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) OU student section, and as an undergraduate student representative on the School of Health Sciences EHS Industry Advisory Board.

Comprehensive coursework, research endeavors and experiential learning opportunities have equipped St. Aubin with both the technical and people skills she needs to become a successful EHS professional. ➤



Improving Social Wellness

Oakland University’s Department of Interdisciplinary Health Sciences (IDH) has become not only a key department in preparing students for an array of health careers, it has also become a critical partner in empowering southeast Michigan individuals and families with the tools and resources to live healthier, more fulfilling lives. Chaired by Jennifer Lucarelli, Ph.D., IDH’s goal is to provide future health-related professionals with experience in the complexities of healthy living.

“Doctors can tell people to eat more fruits and vegetables,” Lucarelli says. “But until we recognize the barriers, we won’t achieve health improvements for everyone. It’s really about understanding the various outside influences on someone’s health.” ➤



Combining Wellness and Health Promotion with Public Health

The School of Health Sciences has rolled out an accelerated pathway, enabling students to earn a Bachelor of Science in wellness and health promotion and a Master of Public Health (MPH) in just five years.

In this “4+1” dual degree program, students complete coursework for a bachelor’s in wellness and health promotion by taking specific graduate level public health courses as undergraduates, and they also gain direct entry into the MPH program. Experiential learning through an internship and practicum is essential. The focus is on preparing students for careers that improve the health and wellness of individuals, organizations and communities. ➤



OUWB's student-run clinic marks five years

When signup sheets become available for Student Run Free Clinic (SRFC) at Pontiac's Gary Burnstein Community Health Clinic, OUWB students fill all the volunteer slots in minutes.

The reason is simple: for most medical students, it's the very first opportunity they have to interact with patients in a clinical setting — and in a way that's consistent with OUWB's commitment to community. In 2021, the Student Run SRFC celebrates five years of serving the community in partnership with the Gary Burnstein Community Health Clinic. ➤



A research first for OUWB

Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine's first wet lab has opened — a big step in furthering the school's commitment to increasing its research endeavors.

Located in Oakland University's Dodge Hall, the lab — valued at more than \$450,000 — is led by Luca Cucullo, Ph.D., an OUWB professor primarily serving on a research track. Dr. Cucullo joined OUWB in September, 2020. Along with 20-plus years of research experience, Dr. Cucullo brought a number of significant projects for which he serves as principal investigator. It all serves as a big step in the evolution of OUWB. ➤

'A duty to be back'

Michael Bonnette, M.D., first heard in the mid-2000s that Oakland University had plans for a medical school, and it piqued an interest that would chart the course of his life.

First, the interest ultimately led him to attend OUWB and graduate as part of the charter class (2015). Currently based in southeast Michigan, he serves in private practice. Dr. Bonnette also is now part of the inaugural Dean's Advisory Board. Established in late 2020, the OUWB Dean's Advisory Board consists of 13 members who have expertise in leadership and a commitment to assisting the school in matters of strategic importance, including community outreach, partnership and resource development. ➤



Perfect Balance

Whether working full-time, traveling around the world or home with her family, Oakland University's online MBA courses mean Iryna Nykolayko has not missed a beat in pursuit of her MBA. With access to the same accredited curriculum and quality faculty, Nykolayko discovered a way to balance the complex demands of school, work and life.

Taking full advantage of the flexibility, Nykolayko participated in online classes when she traveled for work and pleasure. "I could study online at my own pace when I went home to Ukraine and when I visited Hawaii and Mexico," she says. ➤

Women in Business: Mentorship Matters

As more women are climbing the leadership ladder, they are discovering how the power of mentorship magnifies career success and satisfaction for the mentor and mentee. It also creates a continuum where professionals who benefited as mentees pay it forward as mentors.

That satisfaction is exactly what mentor Meghan (Chamberlain) MacDonald, MKT '12, experienced as a member of the pilot program. "Many people played an influential role in shaping my career. I embraced getting involved in this mentor program to pay it forward," says MacDonald, chief of staff, Bosch. "To my surprise, it was much more. Nothing compares to the mentor-mentee relationship." ➤



Empowering Others to Build Their Best Life

At seven years old, Serena Scott took it upon herself to organize a water bottle campaign during Flint's water crisis. She made posters, collected bottles from her Farmington Hills classmates and personally delivered 30 cases of donated water to her peers at a Flint elementary school.

Doing the right thing is an example Serena learned from her parents, Samino Scott II, MKT '97, MBA '01, and Trina Goven-Scott, FIN '96. The Scotts are also dedicated to empowering others to build their best life by equipping Detroit-area youth with tools to find their niches and by being proactive problem-solvers to address economic disparity. ➤

Stepping Up

At the end of the second decade of the 21st century, there is a surge in the development of new biology-based industries. Oakland University's engineering and science educators stepped up to meet the demands of our times by creating the new bioengineering department. The department is a product of collaboration between the School of Engineering and Computer Science and the College of Arts and Sciences.

While some traditional engineering majors can obtain a background in the biological sciences, there is an emerging need for professionals with the thinking capacity that integrates biology and engineering. Bioengineers solve problems in unique ways. ➤



The Door to Success

OU's Engineering Day attracts hundreds of high school juniors and seniors and prospective transfer students. As 600 attendees fill the halls of the Engineering Center and Oakland Student Center, they are eager to find out how OU would enable them to pursue their dreams and launch their professional careers.

In the last two years, national employment rates for engineering college graduates have been showing a trend toward underemployment. Forbes states that three in 10 engineering majors are underemployed, taking a first job that does not require a college degree. Thus, when looking for the right college, many high schoolers put the degree's long-term outcomes at the top of their list. ➤



Quest for a Cure

Gerard Madlambayan, Ph.D., associate professor of biological sciences, conducts research that has the potential to improve acute myeloid leukemia (AML) patient outcomes.

When treating AML, chemotherapy refractory disease presents the biggest challenge. Dr. Madlambayan's recent efforts have been focused on the interaction of AML cells with endothelial cells (ECs), which can lead to chemotherapy resistance and disease relapse. Even though chemotherapy helps most AML patients achieve initial remission, 60–80 percent of them eventually relapse, Dr. Madlambayan believes that it is because of these supportive cellular interactions. This means that the majority of AML patients may die of relapsed or refractory leukemia. ➤



SON Grad Accepts

Megan Piotrowski, MS, BSN, BS, RN, 2019 graduate of the School of Nursing's Accelerated Second Degree Program, was elected as the Newly Licensed Director for American Nurses Association – Michigan (ANA-MI). Piotrowski previously served as president of the Michigan Nursing Students Association which has over 3,000 members across the state. Piotrowski worked closely with ANA-MI and Michigan Nurses Association to provide nursing information and leadership development opportunities for nursing students in Michigan. As her term came to a close, the previous President of ANA-MI asked Piotrowski if she would consider running for the newly licensed director position. Piotrowski was elected in February 2020. ➤



Like Mothers, Like Daughters

Somebody had to go first. In this case, it was Tammy Dukatz, MSN '93, who was in School of Nursing's very first cohort of the master's program to become a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA).

Two years ago, OU transitioned its CRNA program from a master's degree concentration to a Doctor of Nursing Practice-Nurse Anesthesia (DNP-NA) program. Gwen Dukatz, BSN '12, Dukatz's daughter, enrolled in that first cohort, making them a rare pair of mother-daughter inaugural students. ➤

Making Program Entry Seamless for Nurses

Nurses with an associate's degree in nursing might question if completing their bachelor's degree is a possibility. With family obligations, hectic work schedules, and money being tight, many nurses put their own wants or desires aside. Thanks to Oakland University's new affordable, seamless pathway model for Bachelor of Science in Nursing completion, this opportunity has become a reality for many. Most recently, Oakland University School of Nursing and McLaren Oakland Hospital partnered to devise an innovative option for the ADN-prepared employed nurses to have the option of returning to school to complete their BSN degree in a timely, flexible, and cost-effective way. ➤



OU MOMENT



T-shirt stuffing contest, circa 1977, courtesy of the Oakland University Archives

In 1977, Oakland University students, faculty and alumni participated in their first-ever T-shirt stuffing contest, determined to discover how many people it would take to stuff a T-shirt that is 14 yards wide. On Saturday, January 22, 1977, the OU community found out as they piled into the Sports and Recreation Building to watch 352 bodies squeeze into the 14-yard shirt. This contest was just one of the many activities during the university's annual "Newcoming" event (now known as homecoming) celebrating the spirit of Oakland with games, gatherings and sporting events. 🍂

HOLI-DAYS AND NIGHTS AT THE GREAT ESTATE

November 26 – December 30, 2021



Located on the Oakland University campus, historic Meadow Brook Hall promises to be the most dazzling destination this holiday season. Explore the historic mansion decked in shimmering splendor for a Holiday Walk during the day or let your nights be bright with an evening light show at Winter Wonder Lights. Evening visitors also have the opportunity to tour the main level of Meadow Brook Hall.

OU alumni and their guests receive a discount on the following days:

Winter Wonder Lights OU Nights | December 2 and 16

Holiday Walk OU Day | December 19

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Enriching Lives

Grand Rapids, Michigan, is home to the Meijer corporate headquarters, where alumnus Stacie Behler works as group vice president for public affairs and communications. ➤