

GOLDEN GRIZZLIES COMMUNITY LETTER

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

Dear Golden Grizzlies,

Thank you for your patience and understanding over the past few weeks as the university has addressed a critical infrastructure challenge disrupting heat in many campus buildings. I recognize the very real burdens this has placed on our community — on our students who have adjusted how they are learning just as the semester is ending; on our faculty and staff who have quickly pivoted to remote work or continued supporting on-campus operations in difficult conditions; and on all of you who have had to rearrange schedules and work around closed labs and residence halls. But you have met this moment by supporting one another and keeping our mission moving forward. For that, I am deeply grateful.

Our effort to restore heat has been an enormous undertaking, with so many employees selflessly working around the clock, including during last month's holiday break. While there are more people than I can name here, I would like to give special thanks to our extraordinary teams in facilities management and engineering, police, academic affairs, student affairs, communications, IT, finance and administration, among many others. I am also grateful for the generous support of our incredible community partners, including Oakland County, which has supplied heaters, and Oakland and Macomb community colleges, which have provided spaces for exams. Seeing our campus and our neighbors come together to support our students makes me proud to be part of the Oakland University community.

Although the semester has not ended as planned, our fall commencement ceremony will proceed as scheduled. This is such a special time of year when we come together to celebrate our graduates' hard work and commitment to excellence. We pay tribute to the family and friends who supported them along the way. And we recognize our remarkable faculty and staff who have helped prepare our students for lives of purpose, service and success. A big congratulations to our graduates, who are joining a long line of alums making a difference in our region and world — and who will always have a home here at Oakland. And a heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported them.



Achieving Excellence



Just as our graduates underscore OU's excellence, so too do many other Golden Grizzlies across campus. I am thinking about professors Shailesh Lal, Gerard Madlambayan and Fabia Battistuzzi, who received a major grant from the National Institutes of Health for research on corn and its potential to help us better understand cancer in humans. I am also thinking about Professor Gregory Patterson, who earned a lifetime achievement award from Eisenhower Dance Detroit for his incomparable contributions to the world of dance — and we wish him well on his retirement and next chapter. These are just a few examples of the many outstanding Golden Grizzlies

whose work reminds us how curiosity and creativity change lives here on campus and beyond.

I've also been thrilled to see our students gaining well-deserved accolades. Congratulations to the 12 OU voice students who were recognized at the Michigan Chapter auditions of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. And congratulations to the OU chapter of the International Business Honor Society, which received "Highest Honors" for the second year in a row. I am so inspired by the talent and dedication of these students and by all the faculty and staff who mentor them.



Making Strides

As I think of our community's many accomplishments, I am reminded that health and well-being are at the heart of learning, growth and our life together at Oakland. That is why our Strategic Vision places people first, including through our Healthy Campus initiative, which aims to foster an environment where everyone can thrive in all areas of wellness — physical, mental, social, environmental and financial. We want Oakland to be a place where you can do your best work and also feel your best.



Earlier this semester, we reaffirmed our commitment to embed health into every part of campus life by [adopting the Okanagan Charter](#) and joining a global movement of health-promoting universities. We are so proud to be among the first 50 universities in the country to sign this charter and even prouder to lead by example. A big thank you to the OU Healthy Campus Network for all their good work helping us reach this important milestone.

At the same time, our “OU & You” employee engagement survey reminded us that we can always do more to enhance our work environment and build a culture of learning and growth — a key Strategic Vision priority. We are grateful

to all the faculty and staff who took the time to share candid feedback, which is invaluable as we strive to create a rewarding workplace where everyone feels welcome, valued and supported.

In the spirit of collaboration and transparency, and as shared last week, we have [established a University Culture Committee](#) to further assess the survey findings and help address the issues and concerns they raised. We have also created a [comprehensive website](#) with the survey findings, a timeline of our work and FAQs. Finally, I will host several faculty and staff gatherings this spring to further learn from our community. Times, locations and registration details were shared earlier today.

Leading through Challenging Times

Beyond our campus, we continue to navigate a challenging national environment, with higher education facing federal pressures and growing public skepticism. As shared in our recent Strategic Response Team update, Oakland does not make decisions based on political expediency or partisan pressure. While we will follow the law, we are always guided by our mission and values. We take pride in being an independent institution of higher education where freedom of thought, academic freedom and a welcoming learning environment are maintained, and when necessary, defended. I am grateful to the SRT for providing steady, pragmatic leadership rooted in OU values, and I encourage you to [read more about their work](#).

In this environment, now is the time for universities to stand together, reaffirm their guiding principles and prove their value. And I intend to help do just that as the [new board chair](#) of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). Amid heightened scrutiny of higher education, regional public universities like Oakland can and do stand as beacons of hope, expanding access, advancing opportunity and catalyzing social and economic mobility. I look forward to working alongside my AASCU colleagues to amplify the impact of our universities and shine a light on how we deliver on America's promise.

In Closing

As we close the semester, I want to thank all of you again for everything you do to push Oakland forward. Our university stands strong today because of you. I'm grateful to work alongside you and can't wait to see what we accomplish together in the new year.

Warmest wishes for a joyful and restful holiday season.

Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President
Oakland University