

A close-up portrait of an elderly man with a mustache, looking slightly to the right. He has a warm, orange-toned skin and is wearing a dark jacket with a gold zipper. The background is dark and out of focus.

FALL 2022

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

A LASTING IMPACT

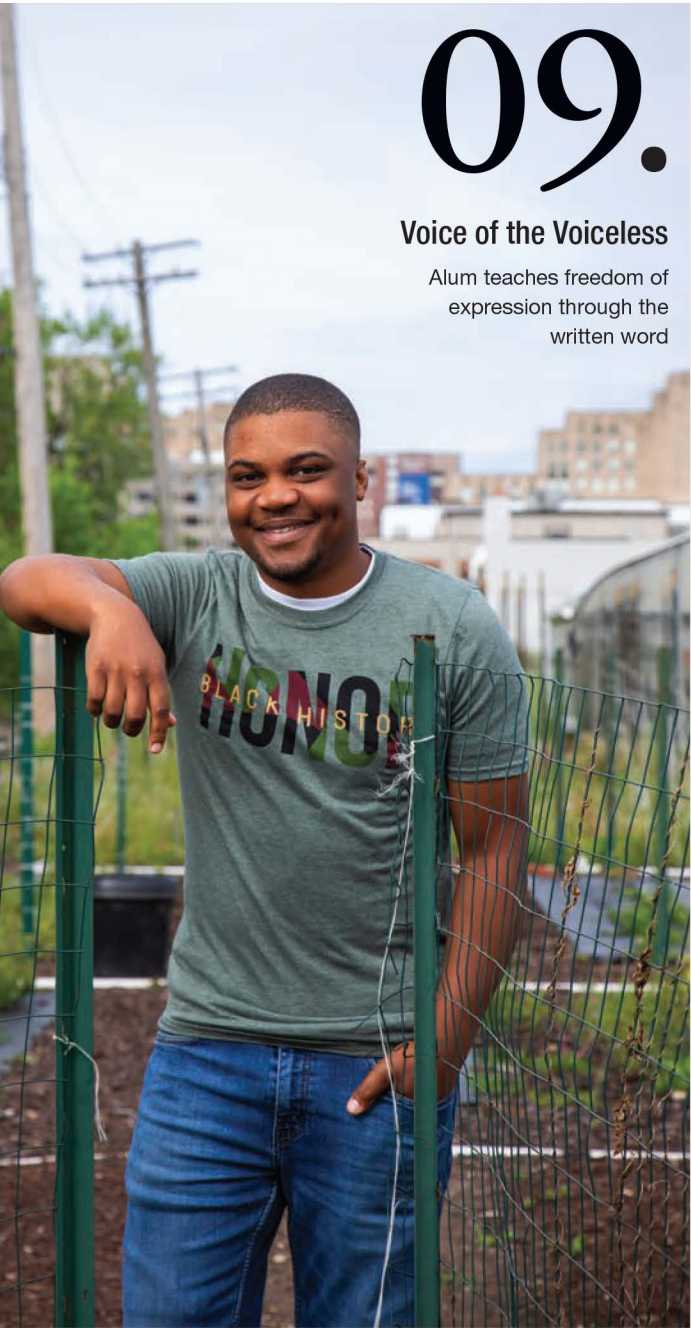
Contributions of selflessness and compassion for the betterment of society



Pollinator Garden

Oakland University campus and community members celebrated Earth Day 2022 by planting a pollinator wildflower garden with plants native to Michigan. The native wildflower bed is in the courtyard between the Oakland Center and Kresge Library. ➤

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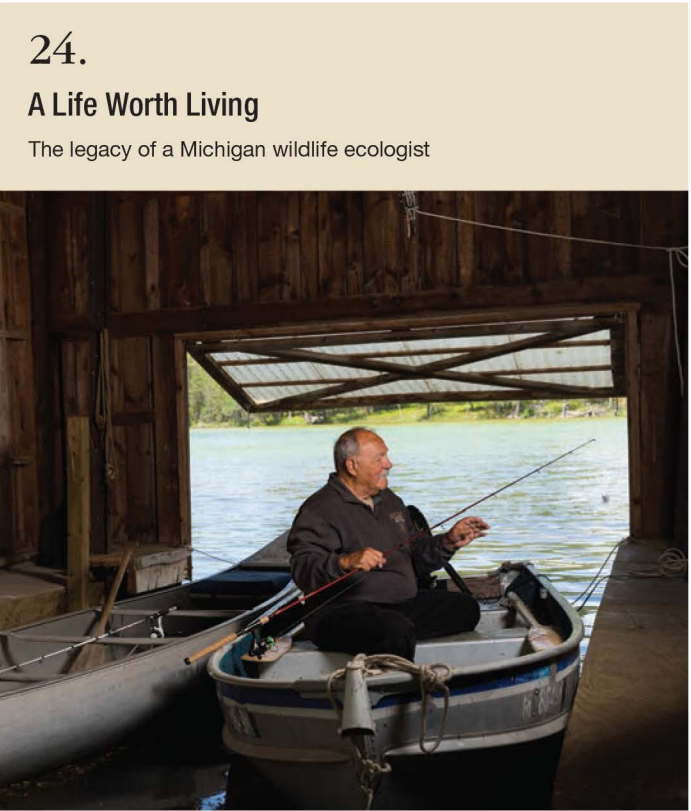
09.
Voice of the Voiceless
Alum teaches freedom of expression through the written word

ACRONYMS

CAS | College of Arts and Sciences
OUWB | Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine
SBA | School of Business Administration
SECS | School of Engineering and Computer Science
SEHS | School of Education and Human Services
SHS | School of Health Sciences
SON | School of Nursing
oakland.edu/acronyms



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Meet Rose Boone, retired educator and current author, in this recurring Q&A that reveals an alumnus' favorite campus memories



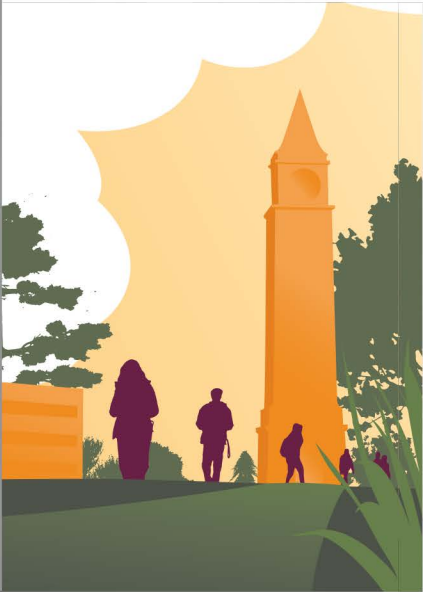
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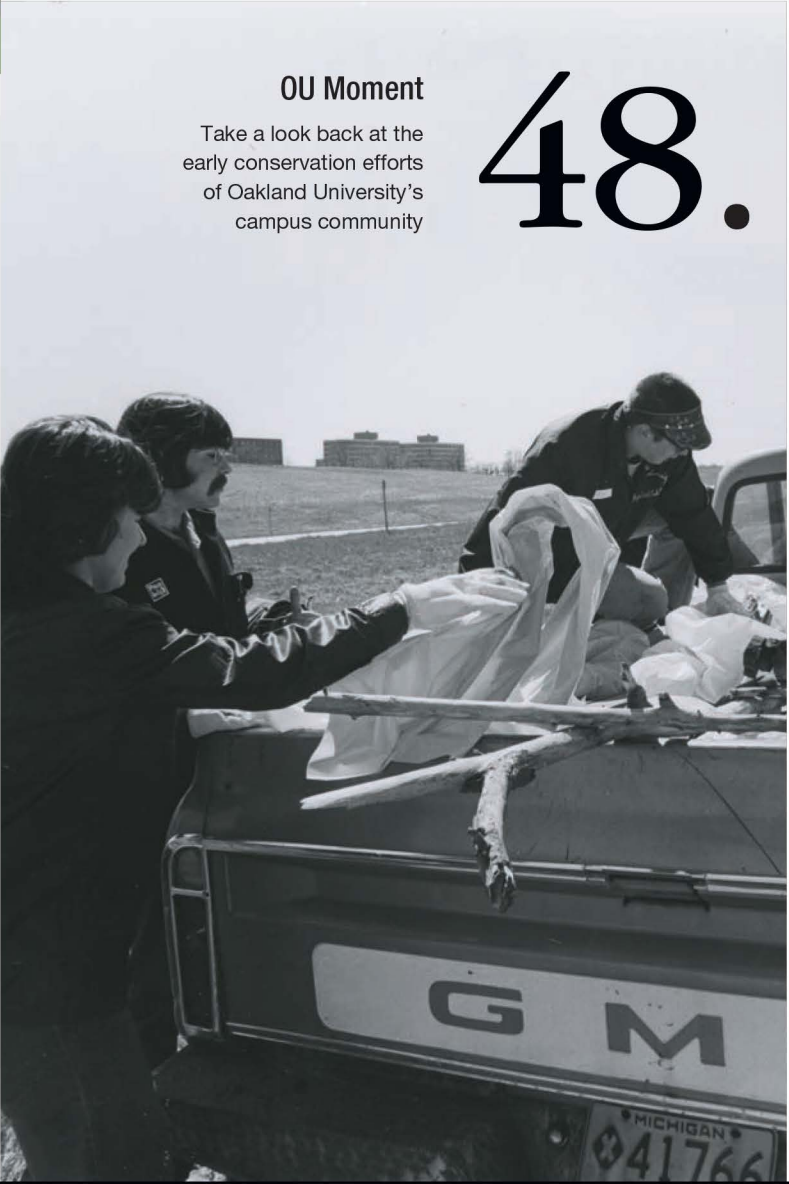
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Renique Kersch, CAS '99, is a leader and mentor to students



Donald Inman, CAS '66, devoted his career to conservation



Lohren Carter-Nzoma, CAS '02, teaches Traditional West African Dance and Drum

BETTERMENT of SOCIETY

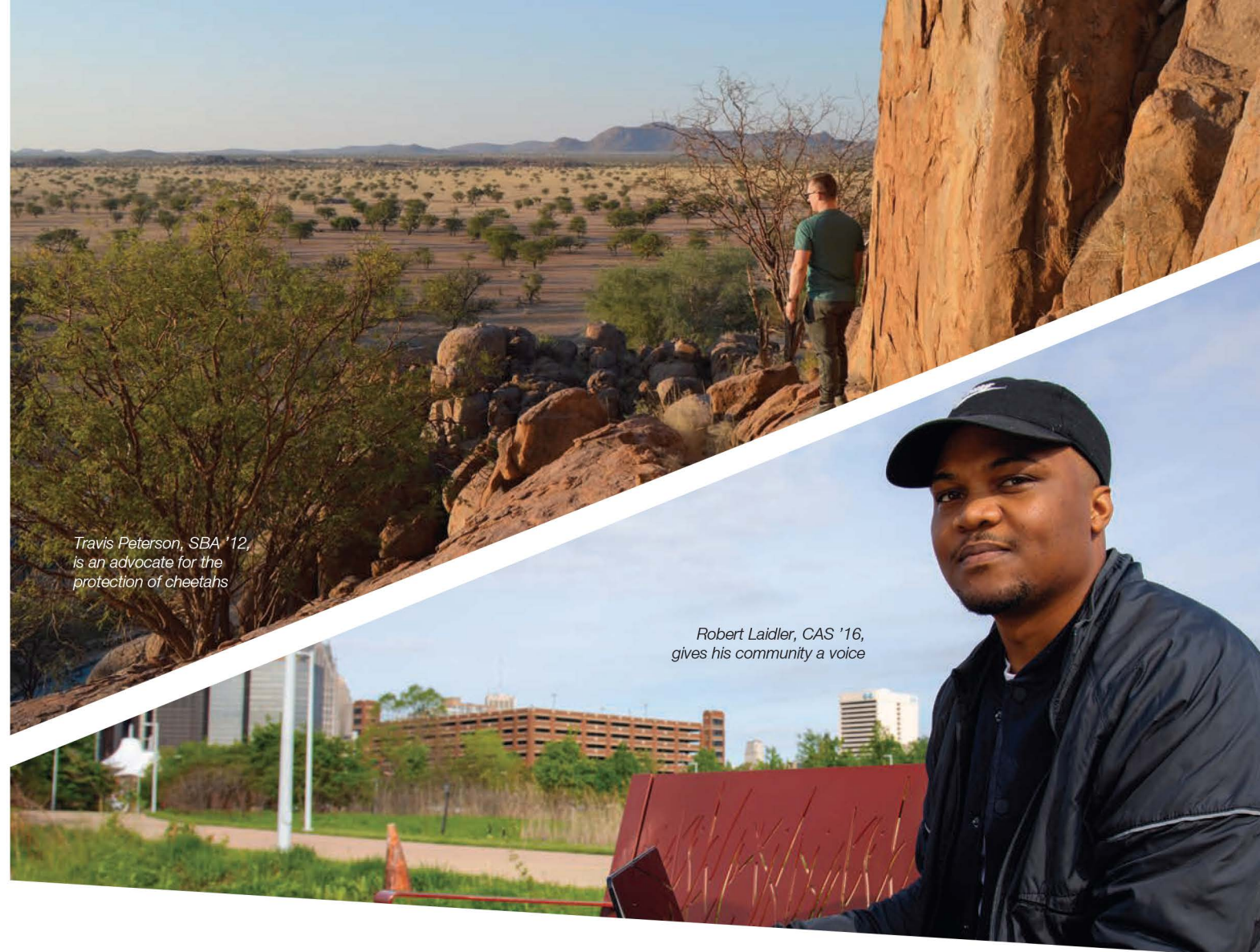
Alumni give back and create a difference in their communities

There is a special kind of joy that fills us when we help others. Whether we are buying lunch for someone, donating clothes or volunteering, every small act makes an impact in not only someone else's life, but ours as well. It nurtures our mental health and promotes compassion for all those who are witness to it.

While fulfilling my undergraduate journalism internship at Oakland University, I covered a story about a pet therapy organization. I traveled with a team of people and their dogs to a special needs school in Farmington Hills and spent hours watching the layers of altruism unfold: the teachers and aides that work for the district; the pet owners who volunteer their time; and the dogs that light up a child's face. I realized that my favorite stories to tell are the ones that share goodness, strength and human decency for the betterment of society.

"We must do our part to make our community better for ourselves, our loved ones and the common good," says Shalonda Dennis, SBA '08.

I find myself reflecting on how much our community has come together for the betterment of society in the past few years. With the drastic



Travis Peterson, SBA '12, is an advocate for the protection of cheetahs



Robert Laidler, CAS '16, gives his community a voice

changes our world has endured lately, it is sometimes difficult to find a foothold in this storm of uncertainty. We need to remember, however, that there is good and love in the world. And in this issue of the Oakland University Alumni Magazine, we shine a light on those stories and the alumni who are making their communities better.

"Helping others provides a sense of contentment and shows that when individuals from different backgrounds work together they can achieve great things," explains Katie Aleck, SHS '17. "Through helping others you learn more about yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, and how we can all make great changes in the world."

As a student at OU, Aleck volunteered at a number of local community centers. These experiences instilled in Aleck a love for community involvement that continued to flourish. Today, she is involved with various OU alumni boards and local sustainable nonprofits.

"It keeps me connected and enlightens my passions for the communities I am a part of," says Aleck. "Through being engaged with communities that are important to me, I can share my experiences and skills to better those communities while learning and exploring through the perspectives of others."

Judy Hegelund, SBA '95, was also involved on campus, participating in a number of different service projects including cleaning I-75, raising

money for the Kidney Foundation and volunteering at Lighthouse — an organization striving to alleviate poverty in Southeast Michigan.

"The student organizations and their advisers do a terrific job of identifying awesome causes and deploying resources toward those causes," Hegelund says. "Community engagement builds connectivity among the citizens of a community — that connectivity improves the quality of life and overall wellbeing for its citizens."

In this issue, you'll read about Don Inman, whose passion for conservation runs inspiringly deep; Lohren Carter-Nzoma, who, with her family, is keeping an important culture alive; Robert Laidler, who is helping a community find its voice; and many other incredible alumni who devote their time for the betterment of others.

"The more I serve others through engagement, the more I'm making an impact by giving my most crucial asset, my time," says Stephanie Pratt, SBA '17. "A simple smile, a few sentences of encouragement or an hour of volunteering can be a gesture that makes a ripple that can turn into a wave." 🌊

Share your stories at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

LETTERS

SEND A LETTER
TO THE EDITOR

at oumag@oakland.edu or to:

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University Communications and Marketing
Anibal House, Room 124
630 Pioneer Drive, Rochester, MI 48309



I just read the Picture of Empowerment article in the magazine and wanted to tell you how awesome it was! Great story, shots and content. The way you wrapped it up with your personal experience was really inspiring. 🐾

Kate Genord



Wow. What a great change to the format and feel (and look) of the alumni magazine. Excellent design. 🐾

Martin J. Beagen, SBA '92



When I was a student, there were rumors that underground tunnels could be accessed under campus that took you to Meadow Brook Hall. Supposedly, the tunnels were built for the family to exit Meadow Brook in case of an emergency or threat. 🐾

Brenda Price, CAS '79



Our family has been excited to see the article about the gatekeeper of Meadow Brook Hall, because William Bates was our great uncle. Uncle Billy was our grandmother's brother-in-law, married to Millie, who also worked at Meadow Brook. We're so happy to see the picture of him, and to know that the Gate Lodge will be restored! My father — who is now 101 years old — went to live with his aunt and uncle during the depression. While he lived at the Gate Lodge, my father played sometimes with Danny Dodge. We've always been interested in his stories about life during that time. Thank you for your work. 🐾

Ellen Wigton de Piña, SEHS '72

TELL US WHAT YOU
WANT TO READ!

Have an interesting or unique campus story?
Want to follow up on a faculty or staff member?
Let us know at oumag@oakland.edu.

ALUMNI
Voices

“

“My whole life I’ve been underestimated and that’s fine with me, it gives me more opportunities to prove people wrong. People who are underrepresented have more to say than people who aren’t. Their stories are more important, more impactful.”

”

ROBERT LAIDLER, CAS '16
page 9

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.



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
DAY OF *giving*

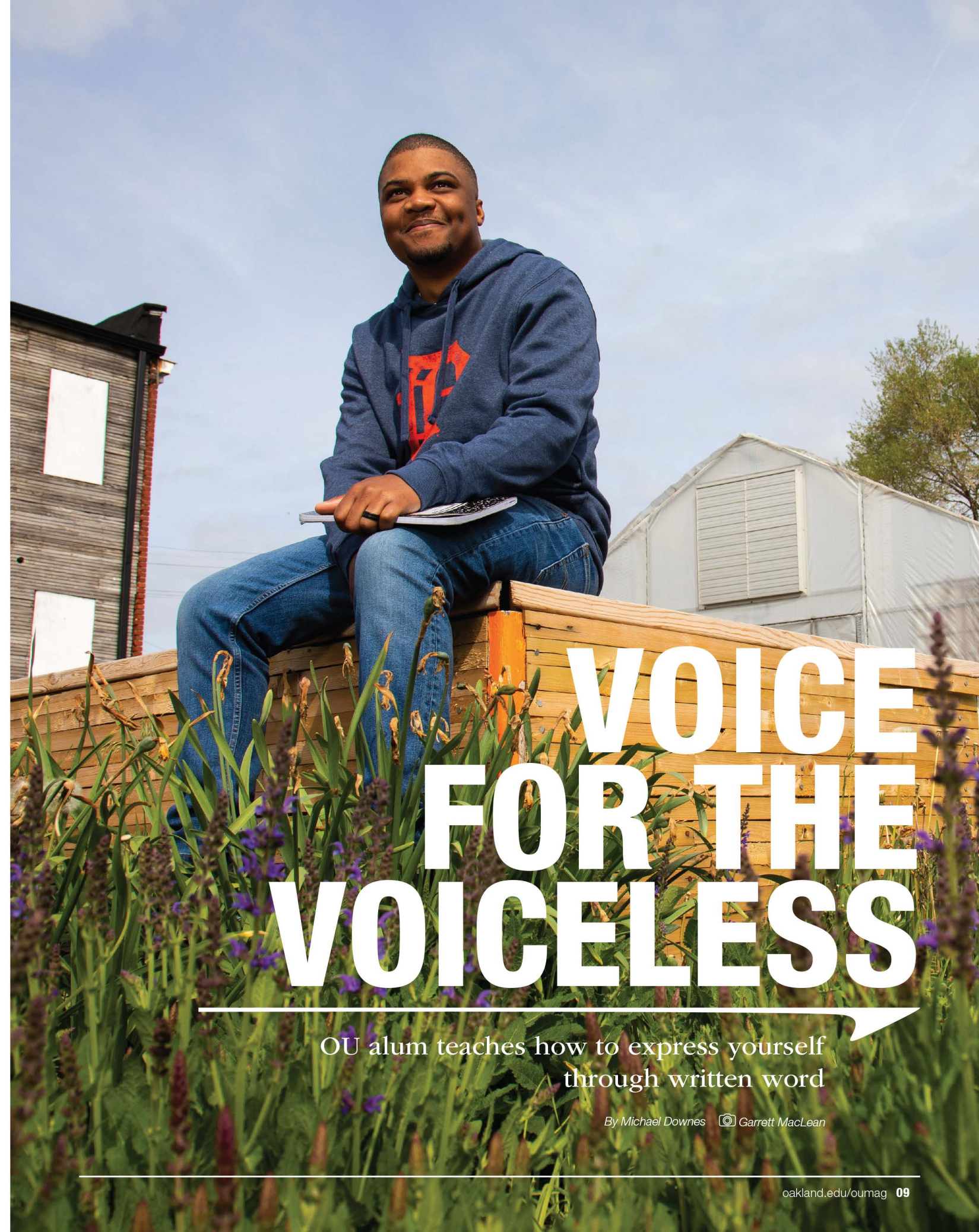
For some it's about giving back.
For others, paying it forward.
Maybe it's to extend a helping hand
or to invest in the next big discovery of tomorrow.

**Every reason matters.
Every gift makes a difference.**

FEBRUARY 2, 2023

Thank you to all of the alumni who contributed to last year's Day of Giving. Your support helped raise \$428,982 for scholarships, research, programs and more that directly benefit students at your alma mater. Mark your calendar for February 2, 2023 when we come together again for one day to make an impact that lasts for generations.

oakland.edu/dayofgiving



VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

OU alum teaches how to express yourself
through written word

By Michael Downes Garrett MacLean

VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Most kids remember staying up late at night, seeing their favorite television stations switch from the normal, happy-go-lucky, kid-oriented programming to something the older generation would enjoy. The shows that you are supposed to be asleep for, but you're going off the script and being rebellious. You remember the rush you get, your heart beats a little faster, you cannot wait to tell your friends what you saw in class the next morning.

It's not often that stumbling across those shows will have a long term, lasting impact on the course of your life.

"I was like 12 and somehow, I definitely shouldn't have seen it, but I actually watched Def Jam poetry one night. It was way too long to be watching, but I just fell in love with it."

From that day forward, Robert Laidler, CAS '16, started writing poetry.

"I wrote classic rhyming, or more melodramatic, emotional teenage poems about girls," laughs Laidler. "It wasn't until I was about 16 or 17 that I started to get more serious about my craft."

Family roots

The first person to ever read Laidler's work was his mother Lisa. Though not an avid writer or reader, she was always excited to see what Laidler would write next and shower him with compliments.

"When you first start out writing, you need someone to tell you that you have talent, you need someone to tell you how good you are," explains Laidler. "She'd finish reading a poem and say, 'Oh wow! This is great, you should keep going.' That was all the encouragement I needed to continue writing."

Since he was 13, Laidler has been the choir drummer at Trinity Christian Church in Taylor, Michigan, run by Pastor Rodney Wade. While Wade would eventually become Laidler's stepfather, Laidler refers to him as his 'step-up' dad because of the impact that Wade had on his life and his willingness to go above and beyond the duties of a father.

Wade started his own athletic association called ICE — integrity,

character and excellence. ICE launched in 2021 and, despite COVID-19, had more than 1,000 students enrolled.

"Robert is one of my main assistants on the weekends," Wade says. "He's volunteering and spending sometimes 13 to 14 hours a day with these kids, playing basketball with them on the weekends and coaching during the week."

Wade is a humble man, who works hard to have an impact on his community. He prefers action over words, rolling up his sleeves and getting involved in his service programs to ensure that what he invisions happening, whether through the church or ICE, gets done. That way of thinking has translated from Wade to Laidler.

Education

College was not something on Laidler's mind in high school, he wasn't familiar with Oakland University, but decided to visit.

"Once I was on campus, I fell in love," says Laidler. "It was small enough where I didn't get lost and far enough away from home to

get the real college experience. I found out more about the programs offered, specifically the ones for the not-so-great high school students. It just seemed like a good fit."

Laidler was accepted into OU's admittance program as a conditional admit student, required to earn at least a 2.0 grade point average his first semester, a feat he accomplished by the skin of his teeth. During his college journey, Laidler bounced around focusing on a couple different majors before landing on creative writing. While on campus, he spent his time at the Rec Center playing basketball, attending poetry slams and Maurice Brown readings on campus, helping hone his skills.

Laidler became the first member of his family to graduate college in winter 2016, with a Bachelor of Arts in creative writing. After graduating from OU, Laidler earned a master's degree from Wayne State as well as a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from the University of Michigan.

Writing style

Laidler's style has seen a stark change from the early, basic rhyme-scheme poems he wrote about girls in high school. The focus shifted from his internal thoughts and became more outward facing, focusing more on his audience.

"I'm much more focused on how what I write can affect somebody else," says Laidler. "Sometimes in good ways and other times in confronting ways."

His writing voice has a much different feel than his in-person personality, almost as if he has an alter-ego. "In person, I'm always silly, playing around any chance I can get," says Laidler. "I play video games, golf and basketball. When I write, though, I get very serious. My humor can come out in my writing, but it's almost like laughing-to-keep-from-crying humor."

Laidler finds inspiration by going out in the world, being around people and listening. He works to get a pulse on what the general public is going through.

Opportunity knocks

Through connections he made with OU’s English department and the English Channel, Laidler caught wind of a teaching job. “I was able to work in a correctional facility, with a group of inmates that wanted to learn about writing,” he says. “It was an amazing opportunity for me both professionally and personally.”

Once a week for three months, Laidler would travel up to the Thumb Correctional Facility in Lapeer. It quickly became evident that the room was full of students that were mentally hungry for an avenue to express themselves and tell their stories through different forms of writing: fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, etc.

“It ended up being the most productive classroom I’ve ever been in,” says Laidler. “We just talked. I’d bring in poems from my favorite author or ones that I wrote myself and we’d go through them. It became an open, creative, safe space for both the inmates and myself.”

For 12 weeks, Laidler built relationships and was able to see growth within his students. To see the gratefulness that his students showed him and recognize the impact and importance his work had on them, it sparked his interest in teaching.

While at Wayne State, Laidler got involved with InsideOut in Detroit, working with public school students downtown, focusing once again on writing and rhetoric. “It’s no secret that Detroit Public Schools aren’t the best in the nation,” says Laidler. “But they’re still kids and they still want to learn.”

Laidler worked to create that same safe, open space he had in his previous teachings, allowing the students to feel open to take risks and be creative. He built trust with his students, giving them the opportunity to be vulnerable and expressive.

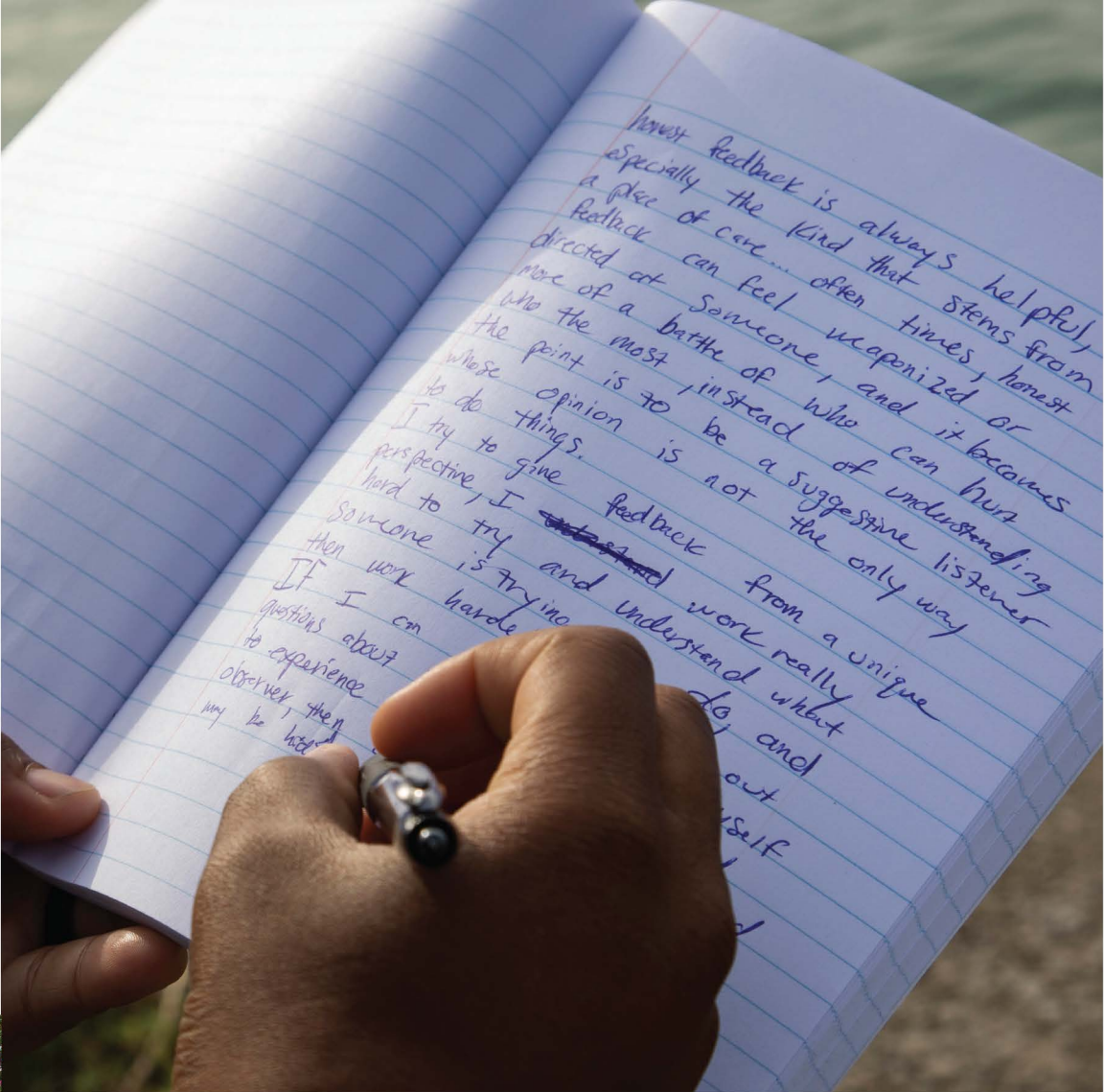
Professional endeavors

Through Wayne State, Laidler was exposed to City of Asylum, a group that brings writers in from different countries whose lives are at risk due to who they are and their work. Detroit just recently became an asylum city, currently housing a writer from Nigeria, Pwaangulongii Dauod. Dauod wrote an essay focusing on queer rights in Nigeria, that led to his life being threatened. City of Asylum works to house writers and expedite the process of applying for and receiving visas, so those at risk can work and live in safe locations.

With City of Asylum, Laidler is a program coordinator, volunteering on several jobs and working to create his own project right now. Building off of his experience with inmates, Laidler is establishing a program that would work exclusively with ex-inmates and parolees.

“City of Asylum would help them gain their own experience working on some urban farms in Detroit to gain their own experience working in nonprofits,” explains Laidler. “With that experience they’d be able to develop their own nonprofits.” The ex-inmates and parolees would learn how to write grants and proposals, as well as see what goes on behind the scenes and how nonprofits run.

Outside of City of Asylum, Laidler is a part-time faculty composition teacher at Wayne State University. He is also in year one of the Helen Zell Writers Program fellowship at the University of Michigan.



Underdog

Laidler is drawn to those within society that are underappreciated. He loves to highlight them in ways they haven’t been. “I am one of them,” says Laidler. “I always joke that if I was a fish, I’d be thrown back.”

“My whole life I’ve been underestimated and that’s fine with me, it gives me more opportunities to prove people wrong,” he continues. “People who are underrepresented have more to say than people who aren’t. Their stories are more important, more impactful.”

In April of 2022, Laidler performed his most impactful poem alongside the Imani Winds chamber music group at Seligman

Performing Arts Center in Beverly Hills, Michigan.

“I was able to interview four juvenile lifers, who were eventually eligible for parole due to a law change in 2012,” Laidler explains. “Performing and writing their stories wasn’t the most rewarding part, it was afterward, when all four were in attendance and thanked me for honoring them.”

Lasting impact

Laidler is so often spent focusing on other people, that his personal goals happen to go to the backburner, but not forgotten. “I want two poetry books and tenure. That’s all I want.”

His professional success isn’t his focus long term. Instead, he

wants to leave behind a program that will continue to impact those without a voice. “That way, I can serve the community long after I’m gone,” he says. “It’ll be self-sustaining, operating like clockwork. Constantly getting new people involved and pouring back into Detroit.”

Laidler has put his faith into people, he believes they are the most important part of making change. “When you give people time to develop, you’d be surprised at what they can do. That’s the ultimate goal.” ➡

Find more stories about community advocacy at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

AD

He came swinging his hands like a madman perched on a steeple. Water from the river darkened up the bottom of his white jeans, he said he didn’t want to get baptized. He grabbed a shovel, an axe, a piece of cornbread from the table. He walked deep into the pines, red dirt dust trails swirled behind him. Pit bulls chained to trailers turned tails toward him, pulled away from the anchor. We all knew what he was going to do. A man’s walk is different when he is sure of himself. I call it the walk of the bad path because the good path was the other way, toward the street where his children threw mudstones at birds hoping to see them dive like J said they would, and J said you would know you hit one because you’d feel your back curve. He kept going until he disappeared. A bird the children thought they downed, swooped low to scoop a cornbread crumb from the bad path. His mother followed him, too late though. Her shouting told us that.

Poem by Robert Laidler

VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS



IN THE
GOLD SEAT
with
ROSALINE
BOONE

MAJOR: B.S. in history and language arts '75, M.A. in teaching '92

OCCUPATION: Retired educator and reading consultant; currently writing a science fiction novel

FAVORITE STUDY SPOT ON CAMPUS? Vandenberg Lounge and the student center. I also enjoyed playing Billiards there.

FAVORITE CLASS? Afro-American People, Intro to Africa, Slavery Race Relation New World, American and Russian History

FAVORITE PROFESSOR? Professor DeWitt S. Dykes. He instilled in me the desire to visit the African continent, which I did in the '90s.

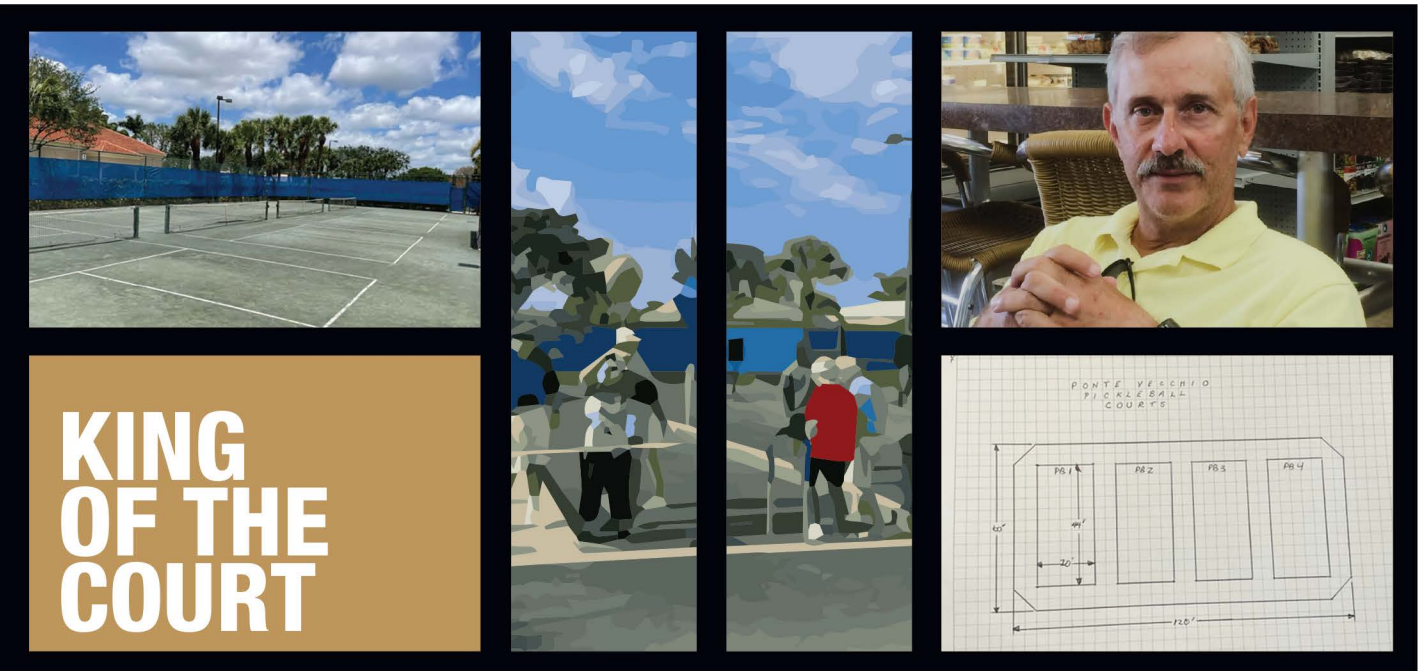
NICKNAME: Road Runner, since I'm always on the move.

FAVORITE HOBBY? Writing, reading and dancing.

BOOK YOU'RE CURRENTLY READING? "Paper Bag" by my favorite author and screenwriter, Brian W. Smith.

SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOURSELF? I have a lot of younger followers. My nieces and nephews and their friends love to have me around and take me places like the Jazz Festival at the Aretha Franklin Amphitheatre.

BEST ADVICE RECEIVED AS A STUDENT? Travel when you can, if at all possible. It's a big world out there, you should see as much as possible. ➡



By Michael Downes

John Giganti, SECS '74, grew up in Detroit with his mother, father and two siblings. His father was a union worker at Ford's vinyl plant in Mount Clemens and frequently dealt with big machinery.

"He was extremely capable with his hands," Giganti explains about his father, "He taught me about carpentry, engineering, all kinds of things. He learned through reading manuals top to bottom, to familiarize himself with his equipment."

Giganti's father was a master carpenter, building garages, hanging aluminum siding, fixing roofs and laying concrete. When Giganti got older, he would work on jobs alongside him, sparking his lifelong interest in engineering.

"Working with my dad, mechanics and physics became part of my life," says Giganti, "He encouraged me to continue down this path. He wanted me to have a better life."

Giganti's father talked to his employer, who recommended Oakland University for engineering and that's all it took. Giganti enrolled in classes in 1970.

Post graduation, Giganti weighed his options. It was the middle of the oil crisis and jobs were scarce. He opted to join the Army as a Department of Defense civilian employee, which was offering an engineering trainee position. From trainee to chief engineer and deputy program manager in 10 years, Giganti's last big job was a \$530 million military truck contract with General Motors.

After a decade with the Army, Giganti spent 40 years in positions of increasing responsibility, working for major defense contractors in the U.S. — Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics and L3 Technologies — and traveling the world.

"Then I decided to retire at 56," says Giganti. "It seemed like it was time. I was wrong. I got a phone call about an opportunity to go and work in Kuwait."

Giganti became General Dynamic's customer-facing executive for the Middle East and North Africa. For nearly three years, Giganti sold the Abrams Main Battle Tank to surrounding countries, before retiring for the second time.

In 2014, Giganti and his wife moved from Kuwait to a gated community in Florida. He had come out of retirement one more time, running his own consulting firm, but he retired for a third and potentially final time right before the COVID-19 pandemic, but his services were still needed.

"I got approached by the community's engineering committee to help with some smaller projects, basic day-to-day things," explains Giganti. "But then a big project came up."

The community was looking to transform three of their six tennis courts into pickleball and bocce ball courts. After some extensive research, including the amount of decibels a pickleball hits a paddle with a couple mock-up drawings, Giganti had a plan in place to convert the three tennis courts into six pickleball courts, two bocce courts.

After three days of construction, the first four pickleball courts were ready and being used. Since then, the remaining two more pickleball and two bocce courts have been added. With the new, permanent courts, the community's pickleball club has grown from six members to more than 175 members. Giganti has become a certified pickleball coach and is working on coaching the community to enjoy the new courts to the fullest. ➡

Share your story at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

DEFINING MOMENTS



Rhythms discovered in college set the tone of alum's life *By Kathy Angel*

As an undergraduate at Oakland University, Lohren Carter-Nzoma, CAS '02, had a very robust experience on campus, immersing herself in studies and extracurricular activities. "My time at OU has completely shaped my life," she says.

Carter-Nzoma came to OU in the wake of a family legacy. Her grandmother's first cousin was Manuel Pierson, Ph.D., known for his pioneering diversity initiatives during his 28-year career at OU.

"He was a really big influence in our lives," Carter-Nzoma says. "It was all about education and being that next leg of legacy, setting a tone for our family and other people in our community."

Carter-Nzoma majored in communications and made a pivotal discovery in a course in interpersonal communication. Her textbook "How Can I Help" by Ram Dass still sits on a shelf in Carter-Nzoma's home, in part because it contains a concept that she tries to apply to all areas of her life.

"The book talks about servant leadership and how it's everybody's role. The price you pay for rent on Earth is service," she says. "I really try to live that way in everything I do."

After graduating from OU, Carter-Nzoma worked in communications and public relations but always felt a pull toward education. She went on to receive a master's of elementary education from the University of Phoenix and post-graduate certificate in educational leadership from Grand Valley State University. Currently, she is assistant

superintendent of exceptional student education for Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) where she oversees a wide range of specialized and individualized programs for students of all ability levels.

Carter-Nzoma is thrilled to be working for DPSCD at a time of great reformation. "We're evolving, shifting and growing into updated best practices. We're doing what's best for kids."

Because she lives in the community in which she works, Carter-Nzoma feels an even stronger desire to help.

"You approach your work differently when your children go to school here and this is your community and you know they are counting on you for support," Carter-Nzoma says. "I'm really happy and grateful for the opportunity to serve in that capacity."

Carter-Nzoma's life outside of education is also the continuation of a passion sparked at OU. In 1997, she and a handful of students revitalized the African Dance and Drum group, Akanké, an interest





inspired by Ma Safia and Kahemba Kitwana (Anita Martin) who were, at the time, instructors in African Dance at OU.

“They gave me the start and interest to look into studying and revitalizing African Dance on campus, exposing me to traditional dance and drum,” recalls Carter-Nzoma. “We also had a faculty adviser, Ms. Horn, who oversaw the group.”

“Akanké was one way for them to learn about their history and how it’s still influencing dance today,” Ivy Horn explains, now retired from her position as assistant director of the OU Academic Skills Center. “It was a way to pass on the culture and keep it alive.”

Horn is thrilled that Akanké set Carter-Nzoma on a path that she continues to the present day. Designating herself a “Keeper of the Culture,” Carter-Nzoma teaches and performs Traditional West African Dance and Drum, accompanied by her four children. She learns from master teachers and works with reverence to recreate the art with authenticity. Carter-Nzoma wants people to know that the rhythms and movements are not random or wild but that they have their origin in life events. Some dances represent ordinary activities, like washing clothes, while others contain warrior movements. There are wedding dances and dances that celebrate overcoming hardship. Each dance comes from specific people and has a particular type of costume and drumming associated with it.

“These dances and the rhythms are thousands of years old, and they tell stories,” says Carter-Nzoma. “It’s the history of the people.”

By keeping the art of Traditional West African Dance and Drum alive, Carter-Nzoma hopes not only to preserve the culture but also to give to others some of the things that she has gained from it, including a connection to “something that feels right for who she is” and a cultural history that for many African Americans is largely unknown.

“It gives us a common sense of belonging. Is this our history? We don’t know, so we treat it with the utmost respect and gratitude to the individuals who share a bit of their culture with us.”

Like her work in education, Carter-Nzoma’s work of culture-keeping is a gift she shares with the public as well as those closest to her. Each time she sees her one-year-old grandson, she greets him by singing a traditional African rhythm, which he plays back to her on the drum that was his first gift.

“He knows that when he sees me, that’s how we’re going to greet one another. So, we’re passing it on. Keepers of the culture. That’s what we’re doing.”

[Read more at oakland.edu/oumagazine.](https://oakland.edu/oumagazine)

By John McTaggart Robert Hall

Travis Peterson, SBA '12, is a vision of success. He was an honors student while earning his undergraduate degree at Oakland University. He pursued and excelled in advancing his education after OU. He is giving back by becoming a mentor to students, and he is pursuing a longtime passion to help save cheetahs.

“I have been obsessed with cheetahs my entire life,” Peterson confesses. “Actually, not too long ago, my mom found a letter that I wrote to the founder of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) asking if they could arrange for me to bring a cheetah to my class for the day. I think I was about four-or-five-years old when I sent that letter. It’s been a passion that long for me.”

Peterson’s affinity for cheetahs has not waned. Over the past five years, he has spent time in Africa to see cheetahs up close, and has been a part of a slew of programs aimed at cheetah conservation and education. As an active member of CCF, Peterson launched the organization’s Michigan chapter in 2020.

“I’m so happy to be involved with CCF,” Peterson says. “I’ve been able to help out with programs

like teaching farmers how to turn goat milk into powdered milk and deploying new sensors for cheetahs to help monitor the cat’s vital signs. It’s been so cool to see results come together.”

Outside of his conservation efforts with CCF, Peterson also has a rewarding job at Lear Corporation as director of sales and program management. “I’m very lucky to have found Lear,” he says. “Professionally, it has been a very exciting time. I get a chance to drive innovation and that’s a part of my career that I really enjoy.”

Peterson is also an active member of Leadership OU and the School of Business Administration ACHIEVE programs. “I’ve had some great mentors,” Peterson says. “I feel like now I’m in a position to start passing along some of what I’ve learned to others.”

Peterson explains that the balance between professional life and passions outside the office is important and one aspect that is too often overlooked. “I encourage younger people to not be afraid to volunteer in the community or help out organizations like CCF. We all have a skillset that can help in some way — don’t be afraid to use it.”

[See more photos of Peterson’s work with CCF at oakland.edu/oumagazine.](https://oakland.edu/oumagazine)

DIFFERENCE MAKER

CLASS NOTES



Lisa Marie (Kaleita) Gabriele

Theatre Arts, 1984

As a student, in the early 80's, Lisa worked at the Barn Theatre as the Box Office and Concessions manager. She was also the President of The Village Project, a student organization that raised money and facilitated the upkeep and renovation of the Barn Theatre and surrounding buildings. Lisa now works as a Group Sales Manager with Meadow Brook Theatre. ➤



Soléil McCants

Psychology, 2001

In January 2022, Soléil was awarded the Community Hero Award from Compete Sports Diversity for her work in the community. She serves as a Director on three Nonprofit Boards advocating for and improving the lives of LGBTQ+ people. She just celebrated five years at Caesars Entertainment working in consumer marketing as senior paid search specialist. On 02/22/2022, Soléil's partner proposed to her and they will be having a Las Vegas wedding on the High Roller Ferris Wheel on Halloween 2022. ➤

READ MORE CLASS NOTES

at oakland.edu/oumagazine/classnotes



Jo Scibilia

French/English-Secondary Education, 1974

Jo's daughter Marisa, SON '01, and son Mario, SEHS '05, are all OU graduates. Jo had a teaching career with Utica Community Schools and Clintondale Community Schools until retiring in 2010. Jo and Marisa have each set up endowment scholarships for nursing and foreign language education students, and Mario is employed as an assistant registrar at OU. This family has come full circle at OU and are very proud to be Grizzlies! ➤



Karen (Stahl) Danoff

History, 1999

Karen lived in Michigan for one year after graduating from OU before moving to College Park, Maryland to attend the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland. She graduated with her master's in library science in 2002 and landed her first professional job as a reference librarian contractor at the Environmental Protection Agency in downtown Washington, D.C. Karen later obtained a full-time government position as a reference librarian with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). For 17 years, she's worked in a number of roles with the NRC, serving the American people. ➤

Stay Golden

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING 2022

From college and beyond, Oakland University alumni know what it means to stay golden. We have a fighting spirit. We are go-getters. We are continually refining who we are. We shine bright and stay connected to those who helped us along our journey toward greatness.

Reminisce and relive your golden OU memories with alumni, students and friends at homecoming this fall. ➤

OCTOBER 13-15, 2022

- Celebrate with old friends and classmates
- Enjoy food trucks and live entertainment
- Connect with faculty and staff
- Cheer on the Golden Grizzlies sports teams
- Play games and win prizes with your family

Find events and details at oakland.edu/homecoming.

Benjamin Schutz

Chris Powers

Engineering Chemistry, 2011

Chris an OU alumnus who co-founded a grassroots disaster response project which has scaled to more than 80,000 food deliveries, serving 15,000 people in Oakland County. Out of the pandemic, Chris and his co-founders (all OU graduates) started a company called ReciproCity Apps, a Pontiac-based company created by Oakland University alumni Cam Underdown, Chris Powers and Josh Linneburg. The company uses technology to build public goods and help better connect communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. ➤

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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

A MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIP

By Rebecca Steketee



© provided by Tara Maudrie

Tara Maudrie, SHS '19, is an enrolled citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. During her studies at the Oakland University Honors College, she was given an assignment that resulted in the writing of a Land Acknowledgement: a formal statement that recognizes and respects Native Peoples as traditional stewards of the land and the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories. Maudrie had been tuned onto the idea of Land Acknowledgements through her work with a local indigenous group and when she realized that OU did not have their own, she decided to make it the focus of her assignment, titled "Land Acknowledgments: The Importance of Acknowledging the Original People of Michigan (and Oakland University Land)." In 2021, Maudrie's idea transformed into reality when the university approved and officially adopted the statement.

Did you ever believe that this assignment would be taken beyond the classroom?

I had recently started to work with the Detroit Indigenous Peoples Alliance and had some really great conversations with some colleagues there, including David Pitawanakwat who worked on Wayne State University's Land Acknowledgement. To be honest, I really didn't know if it would go anywhere, but I am really thrilled for the allies and other Native students who picked up this cause and did so much work to make it a reality.

Why is the Land Acknowledgement important, and what is your desired outcome with its ratification?

I was really pleased to see that OU gave land back to the community as a result of this. I think my desired long-term outcome is that OU continues to find ways to form meaningful partnerships with Native Peoples. Having a Land Acknowledgement is only one step toward building relationships with Native communities. I really hope that Native issues are centered in classroom conversations and that more students and faculty understand the history of this land and how it continues to impact their own relationships with Native lands.

Has the Land Acknowledgement affected Native peoples?

I think the school continuing to build relationships with the Native community by offering space for powwows, cultural ceremonies and providing meaningful outreach to Native students is really what will create change in the long term.

Since graduating from OU, what have you been doing and what are your future plans?

I moved to Baltimore, Maryland, shortly after finishing my undergraduate degree to pursue a Master of Science in public health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. I have since finished that degree and am now working on my Ph.D. in social and behavioral interventions, also at Johns Hopkins. All of my work focuses on various aspects of American Indian health and well-being. I will likely graduate in Spring 2025 and hope to apply for tenure track faculty positions to continue to partner with Native communities on health and wellness research.

How do you continue to be involved in your Native community?

I have been an enrolled citizen of my tribal nation since birth. I serve my tribe through my appointed role as a technical adviser to the National Institute of Health Tribal Advisory Council. Prior to moving to Baltimore, I worked at Detroit American Indian Health and Family Services and continue to stay connected to community members in Detroit. ➤

While Maudrie conceived the creation of OU's Land Acknowledgement, it is important to note that there were many people along the way who helped bring her idea to fruition and ensure the statement was properly ratified. Read more oakland.edu/oumagazine.



Land Acknowledgement Ceremony held at Oakland University on May 5, 2022

© John McTaggart

Official Land Acknowledgement Statement

Oakland University resides on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabe, known as the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. The land was ceded in the 1807 Treaty of Detroit and makes up southeast Michigan.

In recognizing the history and respecting the sovereignty of Michigan's Indian Nations, Oakland University honors the heritage of Indigenous communities and their significant role in shaping the course of this region. Further, we recognize the wrongs done to those forcibly removed from their Homelands and commit to fostering an environment of inclusion that is responsive to the needs of First Peoples through our words, policies, and actions.

The preservation and perpetuation of customs and traditions of Indigenous nations are essential to our shared cultural heritage. A deep understanding of Native peoples' past and present informs the teaching, research, and community engagement of the university in its ongoing effort to elevate the dignity of all people and serve as shared stewards of the land. ➤



A LIFE WORTH LIVING

The legacy of a wildlife ecologist

By Kelli M. Warshefski 📷 Robert Hall

There is a connectedness humans have with nature. It nourishes both body and soul. Offers opportunities for adventure. Instills a sense of peace. The natural world educates and inspires anyone who opens themselves up to the magnificence of it.

No one embodies this spirit of nature more than Donald (Don) Inman, Ph.D., CAS '66.

“Ecology has given me a real true appreciation for the world we live in,” Inman says. “Look at how many fascinating, wonderful things there are in this world. It still enchants me today.”

Inman has a long history of environmental advocacy: He studied biology and wildlife ecology in college. He devoted his career to protecting Michigan public lands. He created and chaired conservation organizations. And, most notably,

sparked an idea that would preserve and restore countless acres of land throughout the state.

Mapping the trail

Inman grew up learning to love and appreciate all living things. At the age of 10, he would ride around on his bicycle, bird book in hand, discovering different

species in his hometown of Muskegon. His parents had an affinity for the outdoors, both hunters who honored the land and resources Earth provided them. Inman was enthralled with the creatures that he shared the planet with; a fascination that blossomed into a love for biology. He came to Oakland University on a General Motors scholarship in the hopes of fostering this passion, but the young university had yet to establish a biology program. Inman opted for the next best thing — a chemistry major with a minor in biology.

Don overlooking Kelsey Lake at his home in Northern Michigan.

“I think a lot about how far the [Michigan Natural Resources Trust] fund has come. I’m very proud ... It’s a legacy for Michigan.” – Don Inman



“I grew up hunting, and so I actually kept my shotgun in my dorm room,” Inman recalls. “On Saturday mornings, I walked across campus with that gun in a case and went hunting squirrels and rabbits on the Dodge property.”

“It was a really good university in just a nice small town atmosphere,” he continues. “They had some really unique people and professors.”

One of Inman’s favorite professors was Fred Obear, who joined OU in 1960 as an assistant professor and eventually served as dean of freshmen, vice provost and provost at Oakland University. “He was always laughing and just loved his students,” says Inman.

After OU, Inman transferred to Michigan State University,

seeking to combine his degree in chemistry with his passion for biology. But, the lab coats and microscopes found in biochemistry made him feel too disconnected to the tangibility of nature, so he switched to a major in wildlife ecology in the Fish and Wildlife Department at MSU. Graduating with his Ph.D. in ’71, Inman continued to expand his education by becoming a postdoctoral researcher (postdoc) at the Institute of Ecology at the University of Georgia, studying under famous ecologist Eugene Odum, Ph.D.

Odum spent most of his professional career at the University of Georgia and was a leader in studying nature in terms of ecosystems. According to a New York Times article from 2002, “Odum is widely considered the father of modern ecology,

who founded and for many years directed one of the world’s largest outdoor scientific preserves.”

“I really learned a lot about ecology from Odum,” Inman says. “He really got me interested in not just wildlife management, but wildlife ecology and the connectedness of animals to their environment and plants.”

Shortly after completing his postdoc, Inman began working as a biologist for the Office of Environmental Review with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), writing and reviewing environmental impact statements. He eventually found his way into the Environmental Enforcement Division, where he examined pollution impacts through a legal lens. Throughout every aspect of Inman’s 26-year career with the DNR, he continued to search and

rectify the connection between humans and the environment.

Igniting the spark

In 1974, the Pigeon River Country State Forest in Vanderbilt, Michigan, was leased for oil and gas drilling. As such, Inman’s team was commissioned to establish an economic and environmental impact statement. The community was torn between the effect this would have on the environment and the income the proposed drilling would bring to Michigan. A young Inman came up with a solution: in order to mitigate the damages caused by the drilling, the state could use a percentage of the revenue to preserve recreational lands.

“It was Don who first came up with the idea to assure that revenues from the use of publicly owned non-renewable resources

— oil and gas — would be invested back into non-renewable resources — land — for the perpetual use of the Michigan public,” says Bill Rustem, member of former Michigan Governor William Milliken’s staff (1970-82) and longtime friend of Inman.

“I might have started the spark, but there were a lot of people involved with moving it forward,” Inman humbly remarks. “Bill was one of them.”

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) was signed into legislation in 1976. During that time, Rustem was an executive assistant to the governor and part of his portfolio was conservation and environmental policy. “I worked with the DNR and the legislature in getting what was the Kammer Recreation Trust Fund bill (the first iteration of the MNRTF)

passed by the legislature. State Senator Kerry Kammer of Pontiac was the sponsor of the bill.”

During that time, Rustem and Inman found a common love of nature and became fast friends. “Don and I have always shared abiding interests in hunting and fishing, which meant that we cared deeply about the woods and waters of Michigan and the flora and fauna that help define the state,” Rustem says. “We also were both passionate about ensuring public access to those resources for both the present and future generations.”

To date, the fund has awarded more than \$1.2 billion back into Michigan lands. The MNRTF has contributed funds to every county in Michigan to acquire land, improve public outdoor recreation and strengthen the economy of local communities.

In Oakland County alone, 175 projects have been funded by the MNRTF.

According to the 2021 MNRTF annual report, throughout Michigan “about \$279 million has been invested in trails. In excess of 1,000 public parks have been acquired, developed or both. Other projects funded include ball fields, boat launches, trailheads, restrooms and other amenities, for a total of 2,715 Trust Fund-assisted projects since 1976.”

“I think a lot about how far the fund has come. I’m very proud,” Inman says, with tears in his eyes. “The state has stood up to many attacks on that particular piece of legislation to try to earmark some of those funds for other purposes. So, I am happy that it passed and continues to hold firm today. It’s a legacy for Michigan.”

The reach of the MNRTF is extensive, and while it would be nearly impossible to list in this publication the massive number of areas it has impacted, here is just a glimpse of a few notable projects:

- Bald Mountain Recreation Area, acquisition, 1980
- Pigeon River Country acquisition, 1981
- Big Sable Dunes acquisition, 1984
- Whitefish Point acquisition, 1996
- Ludington State Park development, 2000
- Tip of the Keweenaw acquisition, 2001
- Belle Isle development, 2003
- Macomb Orchard Trail acquisition, 2003
- Indian Springs Metropark acquisition, 2008
- Ocqueoc Fall development, 2008
- Globe Building acquisition, 2010
- Flint Riverfront Restoration acquisition, 2017
- Blue Water River Walk Park development, 2018
- Milliken State Park acquisition, 2019

[Learn more at michigan.org/dnr/about/boards/mnrtf](https://michigan.org/dnr/about/boards/mnrtf)



Preserving the legacy

After retiring from the DNR as deputy director of the lower peninsula in 1997, Inman and his wife, Virginia Pierce, a fellow DNR employee, settled down on a 500-acre plot of wild, undeveloped land in Northern Michigan. But, retirement did not stop them from continuing their conservation work. Inman and Pierce started the Michigan Resource Stewards, a conservation organization composed of naturalists and scientists that work to influence decision makers in conservation and environmental policy, and became Michigan environmental consultants. Inman briefly became a chairperson for the Headwaters Land Conservancy, an organization that seeks to protect the waters and land of Northeastern Michigan, and where Pierce still holds a position on the board today. The two have also spent the past 25 years traveling the world, exploring several countries in Africa, along with Central and South America; Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador; Hong Kong, China; Havana, Cuba; and many more countries and cultures throughout the world.

“Don believes deeply in conservation,” says Pierce. “I am extremely proud of his significant contribution in the creation of Michigan’s land trust fund. The passage and implementation of the trust fund has had a real life effect on Michigan’s outdoor recreation offerings.”

With their home that overlooks Kelsey Lake, surrounded by lush forests, Inman and Pierce now spend most of their time watching the plethora of wildlife in their backyard, hunting, fishing off their dock, and enjoying friends and family.

“What I love about our home is its setting,” explains Pierce. “It sits on a 40-acre lake with nearly 500 acres of woods and marshes and all the living wildlife that inhabits those places. I love being able to sit on the porch and watch the lake and the birds, with a cup of coffee in the morning or a glass of wine in the evening.”

“In my downtime, I think about what a really good life I’ve had, how much I’ve done and how much I appreciate the world,” says Inman. “I feel like I had a life worth living.”

While Inman has a slower stride these days, his legacy continues to build momentum. From the recreational lands that are still being funded through the MNRTF to his impact on local communities and the many lives he has affected throughout his career, Inman’s life is rooted in the parks, trails, wildlife, waters and forests of Michigan’s majestic beauty. ➤

Read more about Don and other incredible alumni at oakland.edu/oumagazine.



Don, Virginia and their dog, Mr. Wood.



📷 *Oakland University Archives*

INMAN'S PROFILE FEATURED IN THE 1989 OAKLAND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT'S REPORT

ONLY PART-TIME CARETAKERS

DONALD INMAN

We aren't going to continue to have renewable resources and a healthy environment until humankind rises to a higher ethical standard. I really want to get people thinking about proper resource management and environmental protection — how much gasoline we use, what happens to our trash. I care about the environmental legacy we're going to leave our children and grandchildren, and I wish more people did.

I spent two years at the University of Georgia and worked with Eugene Odum, the “father of ecology.” His tutelage further shaped my feelings. We need to return to land-use ethics: We're only part-time caretakers of the property we pass on; we really don't own it. ➤

OVERCOMING CROSSROADS

By Emily Morris © Provided by Renique Kersh



After years of studying, Renique Kersh, Ph.D., CAS '99, wavered from health to higher education, mirroring the compassionate careers of her Oakland University mentors.

A prospective students of color event initially drew her attention to OU, but the buzzing community confirmed her university choice. Dr. Kersh blossomed with the guidance of university leaders, including Glenn McIntosh, senior vice president for student affairs and chief diversity officer, and David Herman, former dean of students.

“Growing up, I was always interested in leadership and how leaders paved the way for others,” Kersh says. She seamlessly weaved into student leadership roles: Office of Equity mentor, Upward Bound Program paraprofessional, orientation leader, resident assistant and Delta Sigma Theta member.

But when her undergraduate time dwindled to an end, Kersh could not bear to part with the community she had fostered. “I didn’t know what path to take, but I did know I loved being on a college campus,” Kersh says. “I loved being around students and building a community.”

With three years under her belt and medical school on her doorstep, Kersh sought out Herman, looking for guidance again and permission to stray from her meticulously planned course. At that moment, she was enveloped with “kindness and direction,” and her choice became clear. “I said, ‘how do I get your [Herman’s] job?’ He told me I could get a master’s degree, and so I decided to change my major,” she says.

Kersh is a member of the Oakland University Alumni Association board of directors, appointed in May of 2022.



Far left photo: Kersh with her mother after accepting the Keeper of the Dream award at Oakland University in 1997-98

Top photo: Kersh in her current role at Simmons University

Bottom photo: Kersh performing for the non-Greek step show in 1996

In her senior year, she changed her major to communication and took 48 credits in the year, 24 credits more than the minimum for a full-time student. Kersh still graduated in four years, swiftly moved onto a Master of Education and then a Doctorate of Philosophy in community health.

“This wasn’t the path I’d thought I’d be on, but it was the right path — that’s for sure.”

Now a seasoned higher education leader herself, Kersh guides students as vice president for student affairs at Simmons University in Boston. “I always tell my students now that I exemplify the classic major changer,” she says. “You’re still learning how you fit into the world in college. I changed my major multiple times, but I ended up on the right path.”

Kersh strives to be a leader that always listens and leaves room for students’ voices to be heard, following in her mentors’ footsteps. As the tables reverse and Kersh leads students now, she still admires McIntosh’s work from afar and stays in touch with Herman for additional guidance and gratitude.

“It’s been a great journey,” she says. “And I wouldn’t be here without their initial guidance.” ➤

Explore all of OU’s student services at oakland.edu/students.

CAMPUS Highlights

“

“During times of hardships, the need for social workers is even greater. As in earlier pandemics and economic downturns, professionally trained social workers are crucial in assisting individuals in navigating the impact of these challenges.”

”

MARIA BEAM, Ph.D., SEHS '19
page 37

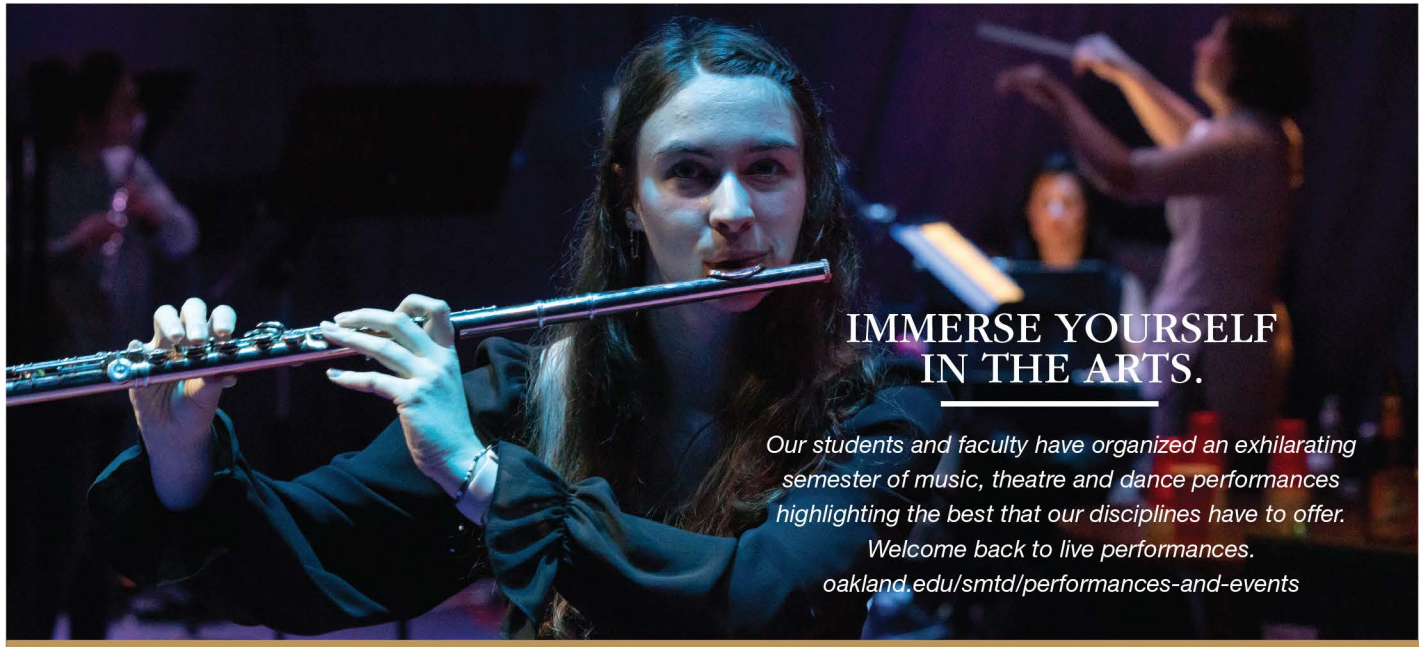
The Oakland University campus community is ever-evolving. Through keeping in touch with your alma mater, you can witness these changes firsthand. Your memories keep OU rooted in its rich history, and your love for campus continues to help it grow.



OUWB medical student Linzi Hobbs was mentored on her Embark capstone project by Randal Westrick, Ph.D., associate professor, Oakland University.

Research projects by OUWB Class of 2022 featured in Embark Capstone Colloquium

Linzi Hobbs believes that research is the foundation of medicine, and the soon-to-be physician says that is why she is so grateful for the capstone project required of her as an Oakland University William Beamont School of Medicine (OUWB) medical student. Hobbs was awarded the Kenneth J. Matzick Embark Program Manuscript of the Year for her project done via OUWB’s Embark program. Her poster is one of many now available on a special section of the OUWB website – the Class of 2022 Embark Capstone Colloquium.



IMMERSE YOURSELF
IN THE ARTS.

Our students and faculty have organized an exhilarating semester of music, theatre and dance performances highlighting the best that our disciplines have to offer. Welcome back to live performances.

oakland.edu/smtd/performances-and-events

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[at oakland.edu/news](http://oakland.edu/news).

Oakland University lending Ashley Bryan artwork to Maine museum

Oakland University’s School of Education and Human Services is lending a portion of its extensive children’s literature art collection to the Farnsworth Art Museum in Maine as part of a new exhibition featuring works of award-winning children’s book author and illustrator Ashley Bryan, who passed away earlier this year at the age of 98.



OU students named to task force promoting civic engagement on Michigan college campuses

Oakland University students Jeremy Johnson and Anna Van Hese are among 25 students selected to serve on the Michigan Department of State’s Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force. For the next year, they will serve as civic engagement liaisons between the Michigan Secretary of State’s office and Oakland University to inform their peers of their voting rights, promote awareness of the newly redistricted electoral maps and combat election misinformation on campus.

OU Community Music summer camps encourage students to ‘explore their musical world’

This summer, Oakland University Community Music offered two unique summer camp programs for high school students to keep them engaged and entertained. “Having the opportunity to bring high school instrumental musicians to campus is a highlight of the Community Music program,” says OU Community Music Director Elizabeth Medvinsky. “The Summer Jazz Intensive, over the last few summers, and the Oakland Youth Brass Band, originating this past spring, have repeatedly created diverse groups of creative, motivated and energized high school musicians that we are proud to have as a part of School of Music, Theatre and Dance. We are preparing for this summer to be no different and we open our doors to any students who are looking to further explore their musical world.”

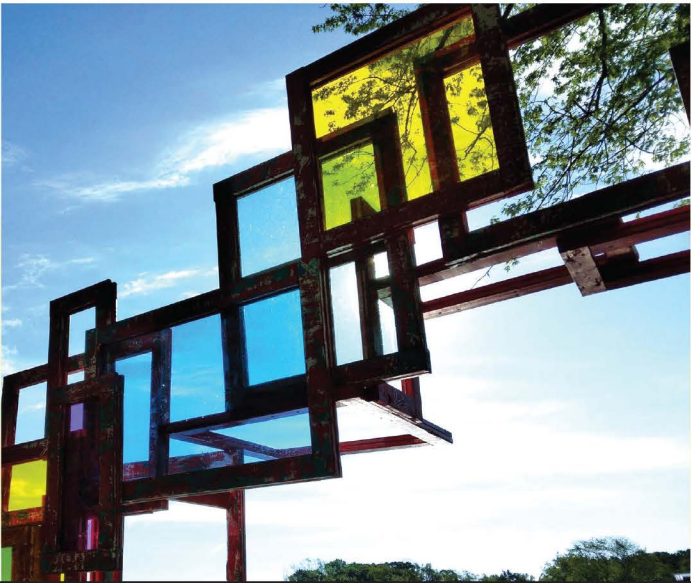


OU professor, alum create art installations for West Michigan exhibition

In celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, Oakland University Associate Professor of Theatre Jeremy Barnett and theatre alumnus Jason Maracani are creating seven new art installations in the West Michigan communities of Saugatuck, Douglas, Holland and Fennville as part of a special summer exhibition.

OU administrative associate named one of Michigan’s ‘Esteemed Women’

Stephanie J. Lee, Ph.D., administrative associate at Oakland University, has been selected by the Gary Burnstein Community Health Clinic in Pontiac, Michigan as a recipient of the 2022 Esteemed Women of Michigan Award. The award honors the achievements of women who work to make their communities a better place. These are women of diverse backgrounds and professions that inspire other women to tackle challenges and make a positive difference. “I am honored and humbled to be nominated and selected to receive this award,” Lee says.



As Oakland University alumni, we are a community of doers.
We worked hard as students, and continued to evolve,
adapt and hone our crafts well beyond graduation.
This is what ties us together. It's how we, as alumni, stay golden.
And it's what brings us together, time and time again.

Join us on campus October 13-15, for Homecoming 2022.
Share your triumphs. Explore the expanding campus. Meet with old friends.
Find events and details at oakland.edu/homecoming.

Stay Golden

Returning to campus, especially for Homecoming, always begins with a comforting sense of nostalgia followed by exciting new discoveries. For me, it starts with something we all probably know like the back of our hand: entering off University Drive, taking the loop past Kresge Library, a pause at Meadow Brook Road to let a student cross and then that left turn into P1. Then I slowly follow someone headed to their car to leave, who suddenly changes direction, leaving me to creep down another row or two to find a parking spot. I get out and there they are ... North and South Foundation Hall. I'm home.

Walking the route I've taken countless times before, Elliott Tower now proudly pierces the skyline I was familiar with almost 20 years ago. It is a Golden Grizzly beacon that can be seen miles from campus and depending on the time of day, its carillon bells can be heard nearly as far.

Walking toward the Oakland Center (OC), I see an impressive new façade only to be outdone by a breathtaking remodeling of the inside. Before entering though, I notice a modest bronze statue off to the right. Posing with a shovel just as she did when she and Alfred originally broke ground in 1958, stands a lifelike homage to our original benefactor Matilda, pearls and all. She's as welcoming now as she was in life.

Nothing puts the *home* in Homecoming, though, like the sounds of the OC. The bustle of it gets me every time. It was the soul of my life as an OU student and where nearly all of my golden stories begin. During Homecoming weekend, the OC and the entire campus come ALIVE!



Rob Ray and family with Coach Kampe

Students from every graduation class, Golden Grizzly and Pioneer alike, reunite in a sea of black and gold. An expansive list of events are thoughtfully curated for alumni, family, staff and students. These include activities for each school and college, athletics and social gatherings. Every memorable chapter of your OU experience has been reimagined as an engaging opportunity on campus during Homecoming. There is something for everyone and odds are, you'll leave with more than you expected. I was able to finally thank my Math 012 professor for that extra help, reconnect with classmates that have gone on to lead fascinating careers and celebrate with friends and the families they've created since graduation.

What's my favorite part of Homecoming? Sharing Oakland University with our two children. My wife, Summer, and I found each other on campus and 22 years later, share it with our kids. We stroll along the same sidewalks, sharing stories and reliving memories from all corners of campus. Each is a vivid reminder of the experiences that have guided me to where I am today.

This is where I earned more than an education. This is where I cheer "GO BLACK" and "GO GOLD". This is where I belong. This is Homecoming.

I hope to see you there!

Rob Ray, SBA '05





By Patrick Dunn 📷 Jon-Paul Bakaric

When first arriving at Oakland University in 2019, Markeal Williams says he wanted to do something to “break the spell” of people’s tendency to separate themselves into groups based on their similarities. Since then, he has undertaken numerous projects to foster understanding across the traditional barriers of race, ethnicity and political views.

A hurdler and jumper on the track and field team, Williams is OU’s campus representative for the Horizon League’s #OneHL working group, which seeks to promote meaningful change and social action. He also serves on OU’s Student-Athlete Advisory Committee; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Athletic Committee; and Track and Field Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Club. This year, his hard work was recognized with an OU Keeper of the Dream Award, which offers scholarships to students who demonstrate academic achievement and leadership on diversity issues. Even his choice of major, psychology, is rooted in community service.

Williams’ community engagement work goes back to his high school days, when he volunteered with two different mentorship programs. Growing up in Southern Florida, he was accustomed to great diversity and conversations that crossed social boundaries. Williams wants to promote that same spirit at OU.

“I want to be a part of something that makes it comfortable for people to want to be uncomfortable,” he says.

For example, as part of his work with the Horizon League, Williams recently spearheaded an event that examined the topic of privilege. Williams invited members of both the cross-country and track and field teams, among whom he’s worked to foster a greater sense of unity, to discuss the privileges that each of them hold.

“These are people you see every day, but you may not fully know some of the things that they are affected by, which ultimately affects how they interact with you, how they interact with the world and the things they can achieve,” he says.

Williams has spearheaded a variety of similar activities on campus, including a banner signing event that engaged students in pledging to support unity and acceptance, a voter registration event and a Black History Month event that educated students on Black leaders’ accomplishments. Williams feels he has been successful so far in his goal of promoting dialogue between people who otherwise might never speak to one another.

“Even if they learn they have strong differences, or they have opinions that are polar opposites, they can have a conversation and educate themselves,” he says. ➤

Learn more about OU’s diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at oakland.edu/diversity.



The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare what has been known to stakeholders for a while: the increasing need for social workers. To address this shortage in Southeast Michigan, Oakland University began offering a Master of Social Work (MSW) program.

By Kristina Lindberg
📷 Robert Hall

Maria Beam, Ph.D., SEHS ’19, director of the MSW program, works closely with local community partners in health care systems, community institutions and school districts who have expressed concern about the shortage of industry professionals.

“During times of hardships, the need for social workers is even greater,” says Dr. Beam. “As in earlier pandemics and economic downturns, professionally trained social workers are crucial in assisting individuals in navigating the impact of these challenges.”

OU’s MSW program offers a unique advanced generalist integrated curriculum that combines clinical and macro social work practice roles in a more contemporary and transformative approach. For more intensive training in a specialized area, students will have the option to complete one of three specializations: integrated health, community and organizational leadership, or school social work.

“The social and economic wellbeing of individuals who are disadvantaged, marginalized or oppressed is at the core of our

program,” Beam says. “I really do think that we already have a wonderful reputation with our Bachelor of Social Work program and that we will continue to be a quality program.”

So far, the program is already exceeding its enrollment goal with more than 80% of applicants coming from OU. “Our own students know us. They have seen us train them already. They want to stay here and I think that is telling of the type of program we will have,” Beam says.

Establishing and developing a Master of Social Work degree at

OU — especially one that has been requested by students and community stakeholders alike — means a lot to Beam. “To be part of something new and knowing that this will be here well beyond my lifetime is very exciting.” ➤

Find out more about the MSW program at oakland.edu/socan/social-work/msw.

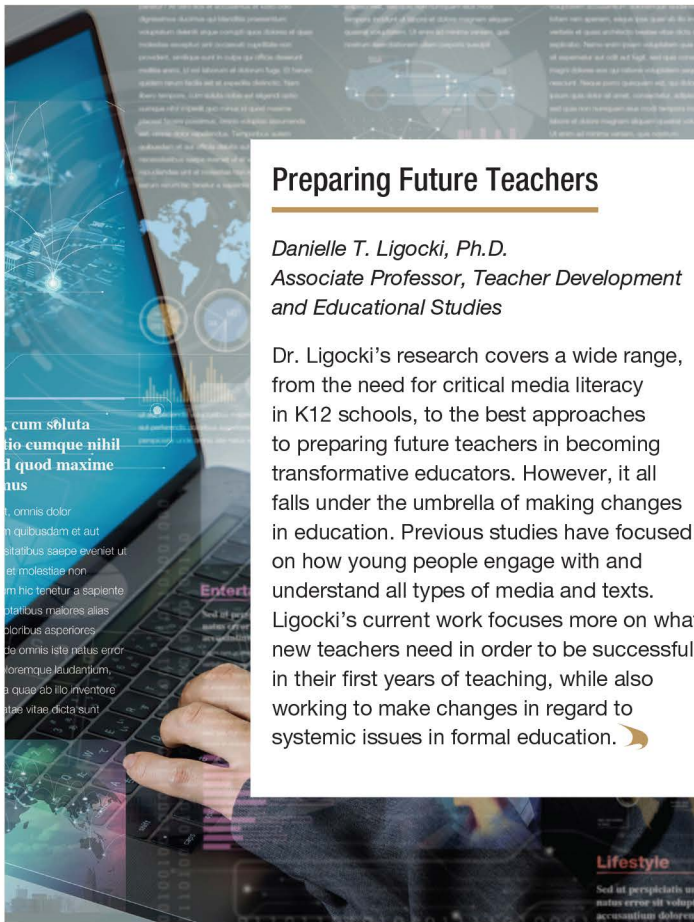
RESEARCH



Bioethics and Philosophy

Mark C. Navin, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair of Philosophy, Lecturer in Foundational Medical Studies at OUWB, Clinical Ethicist at Beaumont Health

Dr. Navin’s work addresses ethics issues in public health and clinical medicine, and it often incorporates original social science research. Along with a colleague from University of Western Australia (Kaite Attwell), Navin is currently finishing a book for Oxford University Press about the ethics and politics of childhood vaccine mandates. He is also working on multiple papers about clinical decision making for people with cognitive disabilities or mental illness. ➤



Preparing Future Teachers

Danielle T. Ligocki, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Teacher Development and Educational Studies

Dr. Ligocki’s research covers a wide range, from the need for critical media literacy in K12 schools, to the best approaches to preparing future teachers in becoming transformative educators. However, it all falls under the umbrella of making changes in education. Previous studies have focused on how young people engage with and understand all types of media and texts. Ligocki’s current work focuses more on what new teachers need in order to be successful in their first years of teaching, while also working to make changes in regard to systemic issues in formal education. ➤

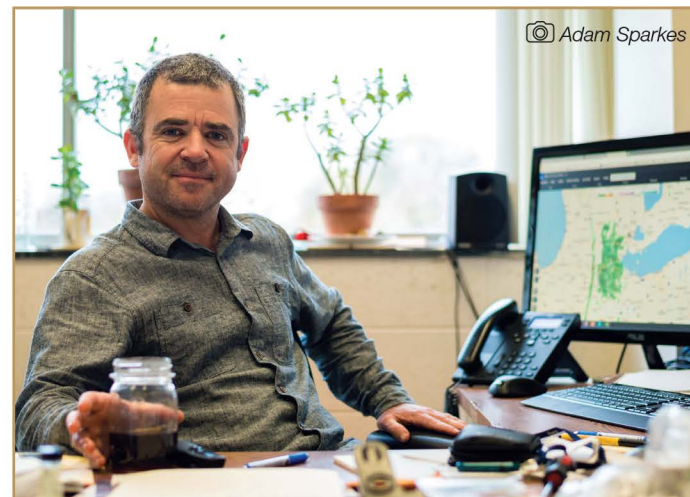
WERE YOU INVOLVED IN RESEARCH?

*What do you want to read more about?
Is community research important to you?
Let us know at oumag@oakland.edu.*

NUMBER OF AWARDS BY PURPOSE AMOUNT AND PERCENTAGE

FY 2021

61	RESEARCH \$12,887,052	80%
3	INSTRUCTION \$2,502,714	15%
8	PUBLIC SERVICE \$270,094	2%
3	SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS \$267,622	1%
2	STUDENT SERVICES \$182,495	2%
77	TOTAL \$16,109,977	



Adam Sparkes

Freshwater Ecology

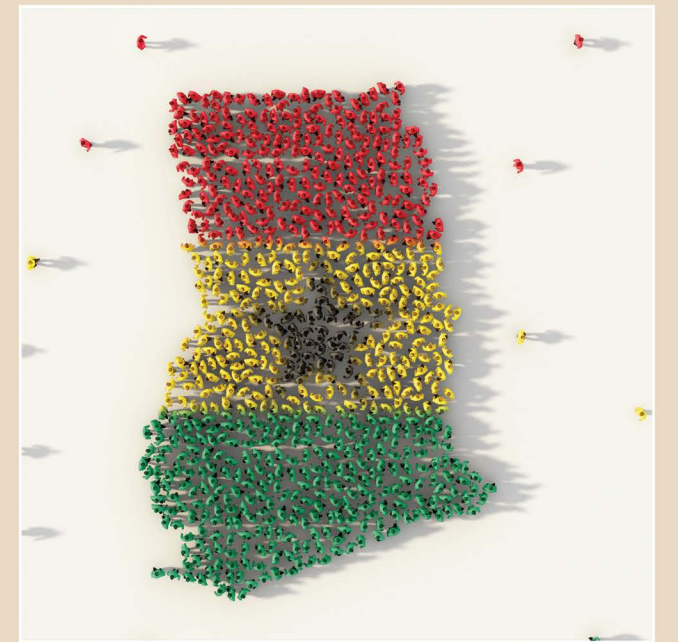
Scott D. Tiegs, Ph.D.
Professor, Biological Sciences

Freshwaters such as wetlands, streams and rivers are hotspots for biodiversity that provide societies across the globe with indispensable goods and services. Increasingly, however, these ecosystems are impacted by human activities, reducing biodiversity and compromising the ability of freshwaters to provide vital ‘ecoservices’ such as clean drinking water, protein provisioning and recreation. Dr. Tiegs and his team in the Aquatic Ecology Lab employ field-based experiments and observations to better understand how human activities impact freshwater ecosystems, and how undesired effects can be ameliorated through ecological restoration. Recent projects investigated the effects of warming on small streams in Iceland and Ecuador, the impacts of invasive snails on trout streams in the Great Lakes region and how light pollution alters freshwater and terrestrial insect communities in southeast Michigan. ➤

Ghana Public Health

Kwame Sakyi, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Public and Environmental Wellness

Dr. Sakyi’s current research seeks to develop a peer health intervention to support families of children with disabilities. The goal is to improve quality of life, increase access to services and reduce depression among families of children with disabilities in Ghana. Caregivers of children with a disability would be provided with training and resources to deliver counseling, deliver basic rehabilitation services, promote stigma reduction strategies and link families to resources. ➤



The Michigan ELNEC Initiative

Toni L. Glover, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, School of Nursing

Dr. Glover is the principal investigator for The End of Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC) undergraduate program, a Michigan initiative funded by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund. The program will help 2,000 nursing students achieve the primary palliative care skills they need to enter professional practice. While almost every nurse will care for a dying patient at some point during their career, the need for primary palliative nursing care is vital. ELNEC undergraduate program was developed by experts to facilitate nursing student’s acquisition of primary palliative care competencies. Upon completion, nurses will have the requisite skills to care and advocate for patients with serious illness and their families. ➤



ACADEMIC *Spotlight*

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.

“

“[Dr. Moon J. Pak] was my favorite professor at OU. His encouragement and support were instrumental in getting me and many other students into medical school.”

”

SUSAN KLEMMER
page 43

Striking a Chord

Mike Medvinsky, SEHS '07 and '15, an alumnus of Oakland University's bachelor's and master's programs in music education, often deviates from traditional learning methods in the classroom to create a sense of agency and pride over their thoughts and ideas. In his current role as the dean of pedagogy and innovation at University Liggett School in Grosse Pointe Woods, he plays a pivotal role in improving learner engagement and classroom culture. Through a combination of constructivist theory and innovative technology, Medvinsky encourages his students to be forward thinkers in all they do, both inside and outside the classroom. ➤



Empowering Communities

Amarachi Wachuku, SHS '18, '21, is passionate about serving others: spirit, soul, mind and body. She grew up near Sterling Heights in an eclectic community comprised of individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds. For the past two years, she has worked as a graduate assistant for Dr. Laurel Stevenson, assistant professor of interdisciplinary health sciences. Wachuku's efforts have been focused on Prescription for a Healthy Oakland, a community-based grant program supported by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, which is overseen by Stevenson. ➤



'Caring' Without a Cost

Diane Johnston, CAS '93, SEHS '11 and '18, has taken her passion for helping people to the next level. After shifting careers to focus on psychotherapy, she partnered with fellow OU counseling graduate Patricia Thaar-Tocco to found Thaar Care Foundation, a local nonprofit that aims to provide quality, affordable therapy to those in need. Since its inception, the nonprofit — whose staff consists solely of OU alumni — has also bolstered Johnston's efforts to destigmatize mental health and provide resources to youth struggling with depression in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. ➤

'Evolving' Beyond the Classroom

Two-time SEHS graduate Maria Kopicki, SEHS '89 and '93, certainly raised eyebrows when she retired from a teaching career that spanned three decades to focus on realty. After 30 years of impacting lives inside the classroom, Kopicki quickly achieved success in real estate, rising to the top of her company in sales within her first 18 months. She decided to combine her passions for education and realty, founding EVOLVEK12+ to address the lack of funding within education and provide more equitable opportunities to disadvantaged individuals. Since 2019, she has donated nearly \$50,000 to fund the nonprofit's efforts to support K-12 schools across the country. ➤



A Legacy of Gratitude

In 1973, Susan H. Klemmer, M.D., decided to pursue her dream of becoming a doctor. Dr. Moon J. Pak, M.D., Ph.D., an associate professor of biological sciences, taught Dr. Klemmer's physiology class. "He was my favorite professor at OU," she recalls. "His encouragement and support were instrumental in getting me and many other students into medical school." To honor the important role Dr. Pak played in her life, Klemmer made a generous gift to name a large classroom in the Human Health Building in Dr. Pak's honor. Her support also created Oakland University's Clinical and Diagnostic Sciences Endowed Fund, which will fund student scholarship and research. ➤



Pathway to Medical School

Samantha Pfiffner, SHS '20, is the epitome of relentless determination. She was a recipient of the OU Presidential Scholar Award, a merit-based scholarship that covered the entire cost of her undergraduate tuition. The Davison, Michigan native initially came to Oakland as a direct admit nursing student in the fall of 2017. Earning her Bachelor of Science in clinical and diagnostic sciences (CDS) with a specialization in pre-clinical professions in just three years, Pfiffner graduated summa cum laude last April. ➤

OUWB charter class member parlays love for collaboration, detail into career as doctor

An appreciation for collaboration and detail once had Alex DeMare, M.D., OUWB '15, longing to become a filmmaker, but — fortunately for his many patients — fate intervened and he pursued a career in medicine. Today, Dr. DeMare is wrapping up a hepato-pancreato-biliary (HPB) surgery fellowship at The Cleveland Clinic Foundation. Post-fellowship, DeMare is set to return to Beaumont as a surgical oncologist. A member of OUWB's charter class, DeMare previously was in surgery residency at Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, for six years, including one as chief resident. Though it's been seven years since he was hooded at OUWB's first commencement, he remains grateful for his medical school experience. "I learned a lot of skills from being part of OUWB's dynamic environment," he says. "Ultimately, it was really beneficial for me."



OUWB Class of 2015 alum delivers commencement message



OUWB alumnus Chris Jaeger fully expected to be an engineer until one conversation changed the trajectory of his career and led him to become a doctor. The person was Ken Peters, M.D., Peter and Florine Ministrelli Distinguished Chair in Urology, OUWB. The conversation? "He was a family friend...and very invested in mentorship," says Jaeger, OUWB '15. "He convinced me to

strongly consider medicine, and I did." As a result, Jaeger went on to graduate from OUWB's inaugural class, became OUWB's first urology match, spent five years as an intern and resident at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and currently is a pediatric urology fellow at Boston Children's Hospital. Amidst a busy schedule, Jaeger took time off in May to return to OUWB as the alumni speaker at the Class of 2022 commencement.



Class of 2018 OUWB graduate serves community while teaching, mentoring OUWB students

Things could have gone terribly wrong for Yujin Oh, M.D., when his car broke down while driving to his interview at Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, but instead, the opposite occurred. Dr. Oh, OUWB '18, says everyone was very accommodating and understanding — and it contributed to the overall "good vibes" he got from everyone at the school, which ultimately helped him decide to attend OUWB. "The people were great," he says. "Everyone was very welcoming. I just got really good vibes." Today, Oh is all about paying forward what he gained from his OUWB education and experiences.



School of Business commemorates golden anniversary

Over 50 years, OU's School of Business Administration evolved from a liberal arts business program in the College of Arts and Sciences to a Department of Economics and Business Administration to an AACSB-accredited business school. This spring, faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends gathered to commemorate the anniversary and look ahead to a strong future. "Imbued with the pioneering spirit of our founders, OU's SBA is recognized for creating transformational experiences," says Michael A. Mazzeo, Ph.D., dean, SBA who retired in June 2022. "We have remained focused on what matters: ensuring business students and businesses have the knowledge and skills to succeed and lead."

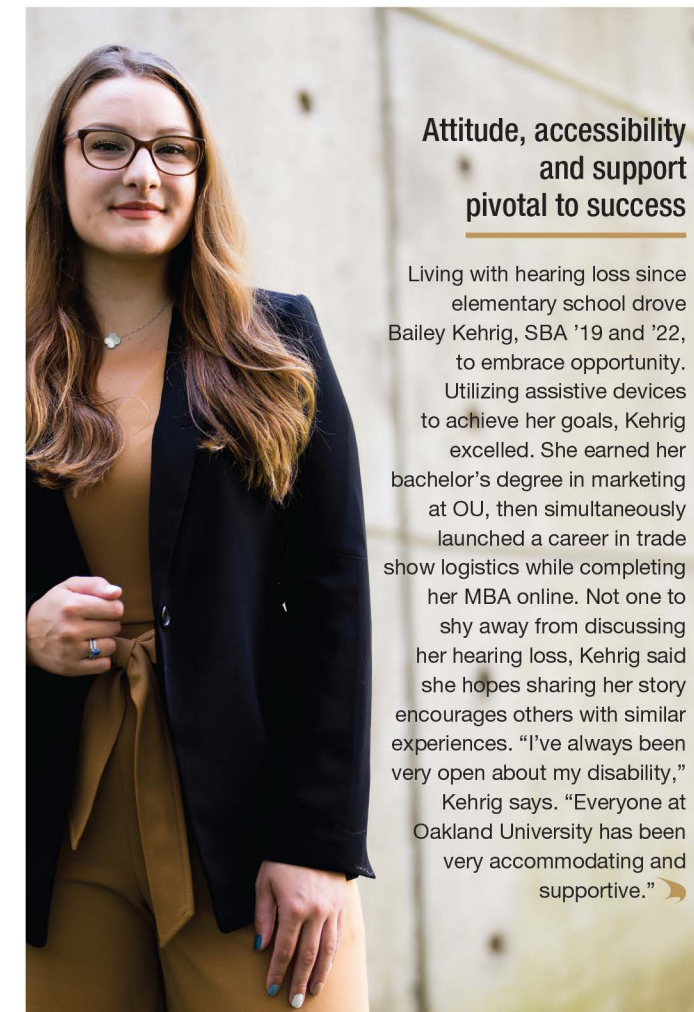
New graduate certificate strengthens business leadership skills

Professionals across all organizational levels can unlock their leadership potential and strengthen their management capabilities with OU's new Leadership in Business graduate certificate program. Through action-based and experiential learning, students develop core leadership competencies, including strategic planning, change management, problem-solving, collaboration, communication and team building. Designed for early and mid-career professionals, the program can be completed 100% online, face-to-face or hybrid. Credits earned can be applied toward an Oakland University MBA. Learn more at oakland.edu/business/graduate-certificates/leadership-in-business.



Attitude, accessibility and support pivotal to success

Living with hearing loss since elementary school drove Bailey Kehrig, SBA '19 and '22, to embrace opportunity. Utilizing assistive devices to achieve her goals, Kehrig excelled. She earned her bachelor's degree in marketing at OU, then simultaneously launched a career in trade show logistics while completing her MBA online. Not one to shy away from discussing her hearing loss, Kehrig said she hopes sharing her story encourages others with similar experiences. "I've always been very open about my disability," Kehrig says. "Everyone at Oakland University has been very accommodating and supportive."

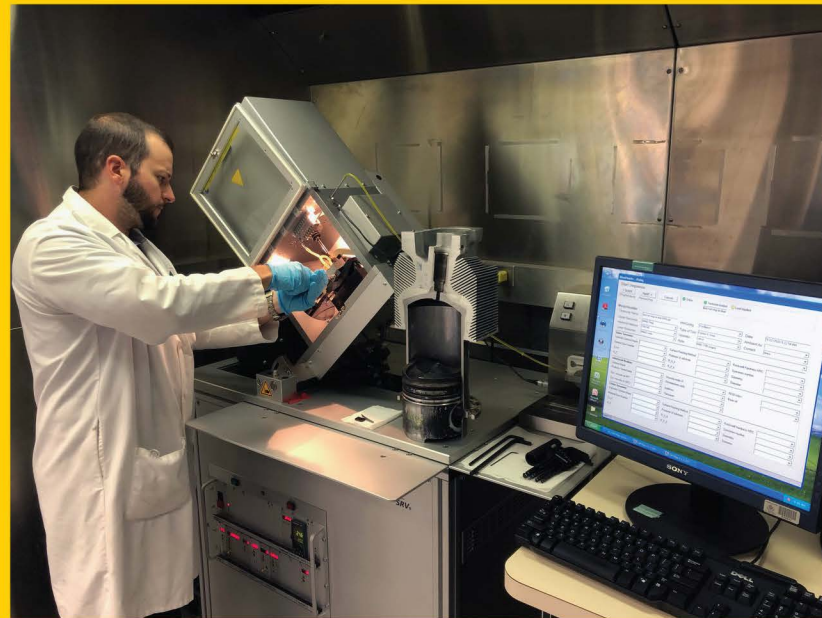


OAKLAND ENGINEER

oakland.edu/oaklandengineer

Grizzly Pride, Army Strong

The work and collaborations, which SECS students begin at Oakland University, don't stop at the commencement; rather, they blossom into potent partnerships that move industry forward. Steven Thrush, SECS '10, '12 and '20, can attest to it firsthand. The recent doctorate graduate in mechanical engineering has been named a recipient of the 2021 Society of Tribologists and Lubrication Engineers (STLE) Edmond E. Bisson Award for his paper "Stability, Thermal Conductivity, Viscosity, and Tribological Characterization of Zirconia Nanofluids as a Function of Nanoparticle Concentration" – the first publication from Dr. Thrush's doctoral research, conducted as a result of collaboration between OU and the U.S. Army. 🐾

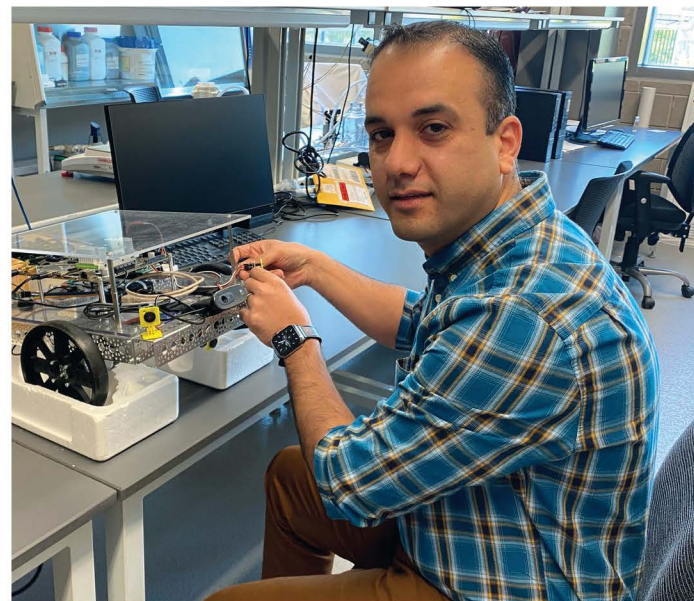


Pursuit of Learning

Dick Sams, the founder and retired CEO of NuStep, is easily one of the most well-regarded developers in Michigan medical technology. Recently, his vision for helping individuals transform their lives by experiencing a more fulfilling lifestyle has found another application. Sams and his wife, Norma, have established Dick and Norma Sams Bioengineering Scholarship for Excellence to enable OU's students to transform their own lives and those of others through quality education. The scholarship is to be awarded to an in-state undergraduate student within the School of Engineering and Computer Science who majors in bioengineering, maintains a minimum 3.0 GPA and demonstrates financial need. 🐾

Coming Into View

There is nothing more precious than a human life, and when it is at stake, science often responds with the most advanced solutions. Shadi Alawneh, Ph.D., assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering, leads research to enhance the technology that would minimize pedestrian fatalities by providing the driver or the auto-driver with correct information related to pedestrian behavior. To meet this challenge, Dr. Alawneh and his students utilized GPU Computing Research Laboratory to describe a vision-based approach that combines deep-learning techniques and depth sensing to build a 3D understanding of the pedestrian orientation in reference to the camera view. 🐾



PULSE

oakland.edu/pulse



Kyra Callicutt is ready to face nursing's biggest challenges

The School of Nursing is proud of its role helping nurses become leaders in the field through its graduate programs. One of those future leaders is Kyra Callicutt, SON '09, and is now enrolled as a graduate student in the SON's Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) program. Once Callicutt learned about the CNL program, her decision to take the plunge and enroll was driven by her exposure to some of the biggest challenges in nursing today and her desire to help solve those problems. Callicutt's experience in the CNL program has helped crystallize her sense of a 'mission' in her career. 🐾

Distinguished Alumni Award winner is a national leader in hospice and palliative care

At the 2022 Nightingale Awards, Annmarie Switchulis, MSN, BSN, SON '92, was the recipient of this year's Distinguished Alumni Award. She moved from an early career as an oncology nurse clinician to become a nationally-recognized leader in palliative and hospice care. She currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer for Hospice for AccentCare, one of the largest post-acute providers in the U.S. Upon acceptance of the award, Switchulis said, "At the end of the day, at the end of a career, we realize that people are what make the difference, one relationship at a time." 🐾



Nursing Fellow Embodies Excellence

Lisa Chism, DNP, APRN, NCMP, FAANP, is a fellow twice over. She was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners in 2011 and received her second in October 2021 from the American Academy of Nursing. Dr. Chism has been heavily involved in developing nursing standards at the federal level. Chism is also a published author. Her most recent publication is the fifth edition of "The Doctor of Nursing Practice: A Guidebook for Role Development and Professional Issues," a textbook for students pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. 🐾

OU MOMENT



Campus cleanup

On April 24, 1974, Oakland University students, faculty and staff cooperated in a national “College Pitch-In” campaign. The Student Congress, campus sponsoring organization, set the campus theme as “Pick A Prof. For Pitch In.” Students asked their favorite professors or members of the administration to team with them during the cleanup work period. Persons working at least two hours of the four-hour campaign were entitled to free food and refreshments donated by area merchants. A post-cleanup celebration was held in the Oakland Center. 🍷



Explore the magic of Meadow Brook Hall this holiday season

November 25 – December 30, 2022

Located on the Oakland University campus, historic Meadow Brook Hall will be the most dazzling destination this holiday season. Explore the historic mansion decked in shimmering splendor for 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: December 1 and 15
Holiday Walk OU Day: December 18

Join us for the most wonder-filled time of year at Meadow Brook Hall.

Tickets available online at meadowbrookholidays.com

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A Life Worth Living, page 24

There is a
connectedness
humans have with
nature. It nourishes
both body and soul.
Offers opportunities
for adventure. Instills
a sense of peace. The
natural world educates
and inspires anyone
who opens themselves
up to the magnificence
of it. 🌿

