

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

FACULTY RETIREMENT CELEBRATION

June 15, 2023

- Thank you, Britt...
 - I appreciate the emphasis on the importance of our retirees to remain connected to Oakland University.
- Fostering a connectedness and building a community based on the values of the pursuit of knowledge, integrity and an elevated public discourse are at the heart of what draws us to the mission of higher education.
- It is these values – our common values – that keep us connected on campus and in the “community of values” that we share beyond the boundaries of Oakland University.
- When each of you – De Wit, Susan, Niels and Kris -- began your academic careers, you had an ambition to teach, to perform, research and to serve.... To make a difference.
- Tonight, we look back at your careers in the fields of history, art history, English and library science, and we are tremendously grateful for your commitment and for how your success became an essential part of Oakland’s growth and success over the years.
- But know this: Your influence and success should not be measured in looking back....but rather in looking forward.
- Tonight, we honor the impact you have had on your students, colleagues and the community.

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- De Witt... your work and your presence will be forever intertwined with the history of Oakland.
- For 53 years, you have shared your knowledge and passion for African-American history, and you have inspired generations of students.
- Let’s take a moment to appreciate that when you began your career, the study of African-American history wasn’t widely taught or even accepted.
- You played a central role in elevating the contributions of African Americans, and for illuminating the influence of people like

Mary McLeod (pronounced muh-klowd) Bethune, Benjamin Mays, Thurgood Marshall... and offered insight into black women of the Harlem Renaissance and race relations in Detroit.

- You inspired 1983 OU graduate Nancy Zimmelman Lenoil (pronounced Lee-noil), who said she can “still quote verbatim” from your lectures.
- And you left your mark on your colleague of 33 years Sean Moran, who admires your patience, calm... and “will always think of you as the sensible center of things.”

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- Susan... We are so pleased and grateful that your journey from Bryn Mawr College and Columbia University led you to Oakland.
- You have been the guide to students on their journey into the world of western art, evoking the era and relevance of Roman art and archeology...
- Your research and teaching have brought the ancient world into a contemporary context, and based on the incredible responses from your students – many of whom graded you as “awesome” – your legacy is not only as an art historian, but a time traveler.
- Susan... It’s clear that you have inspired students year after year... And that you have made an impact.

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- Niels... Your work has not only furthered the understanding of early English literature, but you have made accessible the canon of one of western literature’s greatest writers, William Shakespeare.
- Like Susan and De Witt, your work distills complexity into a meaningful lesson, and you have shown an uncanny talent for presenting Shakespeare’s timeless appeal and wisdom.
- Your impact will continue to resonate, and your work provides a path for helping non-English majors and those outside of higher education to appreciate the works of Shakespeare.

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- Kris... There isn’t a scholar and researcher at Oakland University who isn’t indebted to you.
- At time of profound and dramatic technological changes, your work in University Libraries was absolutely essential to support students and faculty with electronic resources, from the impact of CD-ROM databases – remember CD-ROMs – to exploring how library websites could be more responsive during COVID-19.

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- De Witt, Susan, Neils and Kris.... There is much to look forward to as you make the transition to the next chapter of your lives, and my guess that in your next chapters, you will continue your life's calling to serve.
- As we grow older, there are many things that keep us young.
- In retirement, we hope you will have more time for your families, grandchildren, traveling... taking up a new hobby, or refining a current one.
- Your passion for learning and your idealism and belief that the world can be a better, more equitable place will keep your hearts open and your minds engaged.
- Oakland's legacy was built from your dedication....and the success of our university, and the success of Oakland University graduates reflect all that you gave during your time with us.
- On behalf of the Oakland University community, we are so very grateful to you.... and wish you all the best.
- May your retirement years bring you peace, joy and fulfillment.
- Thank you.