

Presidential Remarks

OU Forward

September 13, 2022

Let's Connect

- Thank you...
 - Glenn McIntosh, Oakland's Senior Vice President of Student Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer
- Thank you...
 - Andrew Romano and Murryum Farooqi for your hard work in representing OU students as President and Vice President of Student Congress. We look forward to working with you...
- And thank you to our deans, chairs, faculty and staff who are here today.
- I have to tell you, it's so wonderful to see so many people on campus. For the last two years, it's been pretty easy to get a good parking place... Today, not so....
 - But I'm so glad to see the lots are full again.
- I've been walking on campus and attending events like New Student Convocation and OU Welcome Week..... The energy on campus has been amazing... and I hope you feel as inspired and excited as I do.
- Let's keep this positive energy going....and let's make sure each of us is doing all we can to make this a great semester.
- We've named today's gathering, "OU Forward."
- Why "OU Forward?"
 - Because as an institution of higher learning, we must always be moving forward to be responsive to the "needs" of students, and everyone within our campus community.

- For the last few years, as a community, we have shown the strength of our commitment when we were held together by virtual bonds.... Well, today marks the occasion of reconnecting in a way that shows the strength of our human connection.
- We gather today for one purpose: To reconnect with each other.
 - When we connect “our” shared values are solidified.
 - When we connect, “we” work as a team for a common purpose...
 - When we connect, “we” find ourselves united in the mission to prove the power of education to transform lives.
 - And when we connect, “we” achieve amazing results.
- Just a brief message to the students: I know the past few years have been challenging, but you have demonstrated the perseverance that is not only crucial for academic success, but necessary to achieving career and life success.
 - It’s worth repeating: Character isn’t necessarily formed by how you conduct yourself when things go your way, but how you cope and respond when unexpected things happen...
- It’s the unexpected that allows us the opportunity to demonstrate the best parts of our character.
 - Think of your days at Oakland as your time...It’s your moment to create a future that matches the aspirations in your dreams.
 - And know this: We are here for you....every step of the way.
- And a message to the faculty, staff, and administrators:
 - I know the past few years of uncertainty, virtual meetings on platforms such as Zoom and TEAMS, and hybrid gatherings have shed light on our steadfast commitment to providing high quality educational experiences for our students.

- And, in ways never done before the pandemic, you extended yourself by reaching out to students and providing necessary wraparound services and every imaginable and even previously unimaginable forms of assistance for their well-being.
 - Thank you for being so flexible, resourceful, compassionate and mindful.
- When considering the many issues, challenges and injustices in our country and in the world, can there be any doubt that education, decency and working for the common good must be at the heart of our efforts?
 - We must always come together for our common purpose and common good.
 - And we must move forward.

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- Together, we are doing all that we can to make sure that Oakland University is a place where students come to make their dreams a reality.....a place where faculty and staff find fulfilling work and the satisfaction of playing an integral part of a mission to educate the next generation that will shape the future.

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- Like other universities around the country, Oakland University is in a transition after what we hope are the post-pandemic days....
- In the upcoming days and weeks, we will present updates on a range of issues, projects and initiatives in our ongoing effort to elevate Oakland as the university of choice for students, faculty, and staff.
- For now...today...we focus on a simple, straight-forward objective.
- Today, our focus is on reconnecting.
- What does it mean to “reconnect?”

- When you're walking on campus, put your cell phone away, look around, and take in all that you see – especially the people around you...
 - Have a smile on your face.
 - Say, “Hello” to someone you pass in the hallway, or on sidewalks.
 - Have lunch at a table in the food court with students or colleagues who you don't know.
 - Ask someone how they're feeling.
 - Make a point to be courteous...
 - Attend a university event, special lecture, concert, play, athletic event, recital, exhibit....
- Last Friday, we held the first annual “Leadership Day.”
 - We invited OU staff members who have gone through the Leadership Academy to discuss how we can work together – “reconnect” – to further enhance Oakland's culture.
 - Among the many ideas discussed at “Leadership Day” is one that is especially timely...
 - It's about building Golden Grizzlies Pride...
 - Think about the impact if on every Saturday, students, faculty and staff wear OU clothing.
- Post a photo
- Share on your Instagram
- Become part of a collage that we'll post on the OU homepage
 - Wherever we go, we'll your pride...
- Reconnect with other Golden Grizzlies...
- Maybe attract new Grizzlies and supporters.
- It's just one of many ways to build pride and a stronger identity about this university – our university – the university we love.

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- As you move through fall semester, take a moment to look around and appreciate the wonders of the Oakland University community.
 - On the most fundamental level, community is about caring and engaging.
- Let's begin our reconnection today as we work together to move OU FORWARD....